



# river west church

The Story Takes a Turn

Ruth 2:1-13

Pastor Guy Gray

2.26.2012

## **God Moves the Story Forward**

The beauty and power of the Book of Ruth is in the turn around. It's the radical contrast we see from its opening tragedy to its closing triumph. Amazing! It's a turn of events so remarkable, we know only the hand of God could bring it to pass. And yet, there is no overt miracle of God in the story. What we find instead is the "hidden" hand of God at work in everyday life. This is called the providence of God and it's one of the greatest themes of our Christian faith.

In Ruth 2:3, this truth is highlighted by the artistic way the scene is set up: "And she happened to come to the part of the field owned by Boaz." But clearly, there is way more than chance at work here. As we continue to read in the Book of Ruth, we find constant reminders that Yahweh, the true and living God of Israel, is ever present on the scene, for instance in the greeting of Boaz to his workers in 2:4. There is no doubt that God is the one who is at work to move these events forward to fulfill His purpose and plan.

## **Kindness Moves the Story Forward**

So, if God's hand is at work in the background of the story, what's in the foreground? The answer is unexpected: simple acts of human kindness. Did you get that? This is one of the most powerful themes in the Book of Ruth. Kindness! From beginning to end, it's the kindness of the key characters that moves the story forward. Ruth shows incredible kindness to Naomi. Her kindness is expressed in words, actions, risk and sacrifice.

Then, in chapter 2, Boaz shows incredible kindness to Ruth. Over and over we are reminded that Ruth is from Moab. She is an outsider. She is poor. She is vulnerable. It's obvious that Ruth is in danger. Why? She is an impoverished foreigner competing with locals for survival. It's a rough world and these are tough times.

Remember that this story takes place during the days of the Judges. Society is in chaos. People are stealing and raping. Violence is everywhere. Read Judges and you'll get the picture. But here, in this beautiful little story, we meet people who treat one another with respect, with generosity, with kindness. This isn't a small matter. It's the heart and soul of the story. This is what moves the story. Amazing!

## **Kindness and Grace Go Together**

One of the greatest things about the story is how Ruth the foreigner becomes part of the people of Israel. It's a dramatic turn of events – a work of God's grace. God's grace breaks through every barrier and changes lives forever. But it's the kindness of Boaz that becomes the tangible expression of the grace of God. Kindness and grace go together. In fact they come from the same word. And there's one more thing. The faithfulness and kindness of Ruth played a part in this as well. Ruth was the recipient of grace. But Ruth put herself in the "way" of grace through her choices and her actions. Ruth was a woman of great faith, but her faith took shape in her actions.

As we study the story of Ruth today, let's keep our eyes open for the transforming, redemptive power of simple acts of kindness. Let's ask how our simple acts of kindness may become the vehicles of

God's own grace in the lives of others. Let's think about Ruth and Boaz as models of those who both receive God's grace and pass that grace along to others. Let's think about the relationship between God's grace and our faith as well as our actions. All of this and more is packed into this beautiful, powerful story.