

Handfuls of Purpose

Ruth 2: 15-18

As I considered this passage I tried to imagine how Ruth must have felt that morning as she made her way to the field of a stranger. She was new in Bethlehem. She did not have the privilege of knowing which field belonged to whom. She had no way of knowing who might be willing to show her kindness. No doubt her heart was filled with anxiety and anticipation.

As we already discovered, a day that began with uncertainty would end with joy and abundance. This is a wonderful testimony to the goodness and grace of God in our lives. We too have likely encountered days much like this one. Many times, I have faced an uncertain situation and found God to be faithful in supplying my need. I have experienced days that were filled with doubt and dread but ended with peace and victory.

We have considered one of the most familiar passages in the book of Ruth. It was on this day that she was blessed with handfuls of purpose. I want to examine these verses and consider the [facts](#) associated with: [Handfuls of Purpose](#).

I. The Gracious Hand of the Lord (15-16) – Ruth may have known little about the God of Israel, but she was about to learn a profound lesson in His grace. Here we find:

A. A Work of Providence (15) – [And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not.](#) If you remember, God had made provision for strangers to be allowed to glean among the corners of the field, reaping the leftovers of the harvest, but He had said nothing of an obligation to give them of the best. Here Boaz had instructed the reapers to allow Ruth to glean even among the sheaves, that which had already been harvested. He was in essence saying, “Let her reap wherever she pleases.”

- To us that may seem coincidental, but we are assured this was no accident. Ruth hadn't merely stumbled upon a field that was owned by a compassionate and gracious man. She was led there of the Lord. He had already prepared the heart of Boaz to provide for Ruth even though he was unaware of God's plan. [Her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, V.3.](#) Our lives are not set to run according to chance or circumstance. God is sovereign God and in charge of our lives. We may not recognize it or even be aware of Him, but He is working in our lives!

B. A Work of Purpose (16) – [And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.](#) Boaz was not content to let Ruth simply glean where

she desired. That would have been blessing enough, but he commanded that they let handfuls of purpose fall for her so she might gain what she needed with ease. He wanted to ensure her needs were met. He didn't provide a means for the blessing; he provided the blessing!

- We serve a Lord who is actually concerned and actively working in our lives. God expects us to live upright before Him. He expects us to work and provide for ourselves within our means. But He has not saved us and left us alone. Just like Boaz, He doesn't just provide the means to receive a blessing, but often He provides the blessing out right!

C. A Work of Provision (16) – This reveals a beautiful picture of grace. Why did Naomi and Elimelech leave Bethlehem? Why had Naomi made the decision to return? A heart of disbelief had led her away because of the drought, but the hope of bread brought her home. Ruth had come to the field of Boaz in search of grain and she would not leave disappointed or empty handed. Long before she ever made it to the field of Boaz, the grain had been planted and the harvest was now ready. God made provision for her before she ever arrived at the place of need.

- God is well aware of your situation. He knows exactly what you need and He is more than able to provide. There is nothing we will ever face that is beyond our Lord's ability to meet. I am not saying there won't be burdens. I am not saying Christians never face adversity. Living for the Lord does not always bring material wealth, but God will provide for our every need! [Psalm 37:4 – Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.](#)
- Now consider this wonderful truth. Long before we ever reached the place of spiritual hunger or sensed our need for the Lord, provision was made for us. Long before we saw that we needed a Savior, He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sin! God provided our salvation before we ever knew we were lost. In fact He provided for redemption before He even created man. What a wonderful and gracious Lord we have the privilege to serve!

II. The Grateful Heart of Ruth (17-18) – The remaining verses show how Ruth responded to the goodness of Boaz. God has offered a provision for all and He stands watching to see how we will respond. Notice:

A. Her Work (17) – [So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.](#) This simple statement reveals much about the work of Ruth. In it we see:

1. Her Eagerness – Ruth gleaned in the field until even. She had been presented with a wonderful opportunity and she was not about to let it pass. She was eager to glean all she could while in the field of Boaz. He had offered an abundant supply and she took advantage of it.

- Do you ever consider what is available to us in the field of God's grace? He has prepared a table before us, even in the presence of our enemies. We have the opportunity and privilege to sit at the Master's table and enjoy His goodness. We should glean in the field of grace at every opportunity, seeking all the Lord provides.

2. Her Effort – She gleaned until the evening, and beat out that she had gleaned. God had made an abundant provision through Boaz, but her blessing did not come without some effort on her part. She had to actively pursue that which was offered. Ruth had to work in order to receive.

- That is a truth many need to realize today. Many desire the blessings of God, but few are willing to put forth any effort to receive them. We cannot earn our salvation, but I do believe God expects some effort on the part of His people. If we are to receive God's goodness, we must be willing to do our part in order to receive it. God has never blessed laziness and He isn't going to start with us. If you desire the blessing of God, seek and serve Him!

3. Her Ephah – Ruth went to the field of Boaz that day hoping to find any means of provision. Little did she know that she would leave with an abundant supply. God not only met her immediate need, but He went ahead and provided for the days to come. An ephah was about a half-bushel, more than enough to provide for her and Naomi for a whole week.

- I am convinced we sell God short many times through unbelief. He is not broke and He is not feeble. God has the ability and the resources to meet whatever need you may have. In fact, He has the ability to pour out such a blessing that you will not be able to receive it all. God has the power to fill your cup to overflowing. He can bless us so abundantly that it runs over to the benefit of those around us.

B. Her Witness (18a) – And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned. It created quite a stir in Bethlehem when Naomi and Ruth arrived from Moab. Ruth may have not known any who dwelt there, but I can assure you that she was known of them. Can you imagine the conversation that day as Ruth returned from the field of Boaz with an ephah of barley? Surely, they wondered where she had been. Whose field has she gleaned in? Who had shown favor to one from the land of Moab, an undeserving Gentile? I can assure you that Ruth's gleaning did not go unnoticed.

- Isn't that how it was in our lives? Imagine the conversation that has taken place concerning some of us. What in the world has happened to him? How was her life changed so drastically? Where have they been to be so happy and content all of a sudden? What an opportunity we have to carry our ephah into the city and proclaim the goodness and mercy of Christ our Lord. What a joy to be able to share His grace with those who as of yet have not received Him!

C. Her Wealth (18b) – [and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed](#). Ruth had more than she needed and was able to share of her abundance even after she was satisfied. Naomi also benefited from her encounter with Boaz. One had gleaned in the field of grace and the whole family was blessed.

- Have we not received far more than we deserve? Are we not wealthy in the Lord? My salvation isn't sufficient for my family, but they have benefited from my relationship with Christ. [Acts 16:31 – And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.](#) [Acts 16:34 – And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.](#) What a privilege we have to share our wealth with those around us. I pray God will stir our hearts so that we will determine not to hoard that which we have received but share with those who are still lacking.

Conclusion: I rejoice for the provision of my Savior. I praise His name that He was willing to die so that I might be forgiven and inherit eternal life. I am comforted knowing that He is actively working in my life, providing handfuls of purpose along the way.

I am saddened though by the thought of those who have never met the Lord or experienced His abundant blessing. Have you trusted Christ as your personal Savior? If not, may I ask which field you are gleaning in? If you are laboring in the field of the world, come to the field of grace and receive that which is already provided for you!