

Series: Ruth
When God Seems Hidden
Ruth 2:8-12

Sermon by Executive Pastor Billy Lloyd
Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado
Sunday morning, August 23, 2026

A reading from Ruth 2:8-12: “So Boaz said to Ruth, ‘My daughter, listen to me. Do not go and glean in another field, and do not go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you, and whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.’ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, ‘Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?’ Boaz replied, ‘I have been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband and how you left your father and mother in your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.’” The word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thanks, Alyssa. I love, I get to work with Alyssa a lot, finance, and she’s really a joy to work with. I am so happy that they are here at Waterstone. Good morning. How are you? Today we are diving into the second chapter of Ruth. She has been around for a few weeks now. We have been going through two books, Joshua and Ruth. In both of those books, we are looking at how God works. Sometimes God works in these really big ways, miraculous ways, and sometimes God works in ways that are a little harder to see, a little more intimate ways, personal ways, and today we are going to look at that second piece of how God works in our lives for our good in ways that sometimes we can’t see.

In the book of Ruth, chapter two, we encounter a great story. The biggest part of this is really the beginning of a love story, the love story between Ruth and Boaz, a brand-new character that we are going to see in this second chapter of Ruth, but before we do that, a disclaimer. This book has a lot of names, and I am a notorious person. Maybe your parents are like this. Maybe you are like this. I do not know, but I am a person who, when I want to call one of my kids, usually the person I’m calling is the third name on my list, Chipper, Drew, Abby, all the time, and there are a lot of names. If I mix them up, I’ll try to fix them, I promise you, but that’s how I encounter names sometimes.

Before we start, I just want to give you a little bit of what we heard last week, just to bring us all up to speed with the book of Ruth. In Ruth chapter one, we have a family. We have Elimelech, Naomi, and her two boys, Mahlon and Chilion, and they are in Israel. Israel is experiencing a huge famine. It is really hard for anyone to survive, and so Elimelech takes his family away from Israel and goes to Moab, a non-Jewish community, and lives there. His two sons marry two Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah, and they live there. Then sometime later, Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, dies, and her two sons die, and that leaves Naomi, the mother-in-law, and two daughters-in-law by themselves in a land that is foreign to Naomi. So, Naomi says, “I need to go back home. I need to go back to my homeland, to my father’s land in Bethlehem in Israel in order to survive, but you two girls, Orpah and Ruth, this is your homeland. Moab is your homeland. You stay here, and I’m going to go back and try to survive by myself.”

Orpah says, “Okay, I’m going to stay, and she stays,” but Ruth says, “No, I am going to go with you, Naomi. I’m with you,” and she makes this very famous statement, “Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.” She makes this commitment to Naomi to go with her to her homeland, and so now Naomi and Ruth are in Israel, in Bethlehem, and it is not Naomi who is the foreigner. It is Ruth who is the foreigner coming to live in this land. So that is where we find ourselves.

There is one more thing that happens at the end of that first chapter that is important. We’ll talk about it a little bit later. When Naomi arrives back in her homeland in Bethlehem, all of her relatives say, “Hi, Naomi, we’re so glad to see you. It has been so long. We have missed you,” and she says this. She says, “Do not call me Naomi. You call me Marah, because the Lord has made my life bitter,” and so all the things that have happened, moving away from her homeland, her husband dying, her sons dying, being destitute and poor, has made her bitter, and she blames that on the Lord, and that is important as we go through today

So, this morning we start at the beginning of chapter two, and there is a lot of scripture here. Not all of it is on the screen, so I’m going to invite you, if you have your phone, you can pull up your Bible app and read along in Ruth 2, or there’s a Bible right in front of you in the racks. I am just going to invite you to read along, and we’ll try to stay together on this, but Ruth chapter two, starting in verse one: “Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz,” and so suddenly the first thing we see is this brand new character, Boaz, and all we know of him is he is part of Elimelech’s family, and he is a man of standing, probably a wealthy man. That’s what we know at this point, “and Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, ‘Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor,’ and Naomi said to her, ‘Go ahead, my daughter.’ So, she went out, entered a field, and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. ‘The Lord be with you.’ ‘The Lord bless you,’ they answered, and Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, ‘Who does that young woman belong to?’”

So, it is important to note here again, Ruth and Naomi are two single, widowed women. They are poor. They are desperate. They are at risk, and Ruth decides to go into the fields and glean the barley. It is the barley harvest. Now, what is gleaning? I think all of us have an idea of what gleaning is. It is what happens, the poor, the widows, those who are most vulnerable, they go into the fields after the workers have harvested all the grain, and they can pick what is left over off the ground. If there are any stalks up, they can pick it, and in that way, they can survive. They can feed themselves. They can avoid starving, and it is a great way for them and landowners, that was part of what they did, but you need to know this. It was not just like a great idea that the landowners did. “Yeah, I should do this for people who are poor.” No, this idea was actually mandated by God. This practice was part of the Jewish culture. It was a little bit of a social assistance program to help those who were poor and needy and needed help.

This comes from Leviticus 19, part of the Levitical law given to the nation of Israel. Leviticus 19 starting in verse 9: “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.” So, God commanded his people to leave some of the harvest in the field, and this is what Ruth knew. This is what Naomi knew.

This was very, very dangerous for a young woman with no husband being around a bunch of field workers. She would have been very scared, but as we just read, Boaz saw her. He said, “Who is that woman?” He saw her. He noticed her, and then he says to her in verse 8, “My daughter, listen to me. Do not go and glean in another field, and do not go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the women. I have told my men not to lay a hand on you, and wherever you go and whenever you are thirsty, you get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.” So not only did Boaz see Ruth, but also did he provide protection for her and a way for her to survive.

What I want you to see today is that not only does God see us, and God does see us, and this is paralleled in this story of Boaz, and we’re going to see this the whole morning of how this story of Boaz, how he cares for Ruth and her family parallels how God sees us and cares for us, but understand this as we begin today, that God sees you. God loves you, and when she realizes that, when Ruth feels seen by Boaz and protected by Boaz, she answers this, Ruth 2:10 on the screens: “At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, ‘Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?’” Ruth knows her place in this story. She knows how it usually works out for foreign young widows in a land like this, and she is wondering, “Why are you showing me favor? I do not even belong here. I am a foreigner,” but Boaz sees her. He provides for her. He makes a way for her to survive and live, and her response is, “Why do you look at me? Why do you know me?”

Can I ask you a question this morning? Have you ever been the foreigner? Have you ever felt like the outsider, where you do not belong, where no one really sees you? I remember a bunch of years ago when I first came to Denver to work in the ministry in the early 90s. It was before Sarah and I got married, and I worked in an office with a bunch of people around my age, a little older, and they said, “Hey, let’s go to church on Sunday.” I’m like, “All right, I’ll go to church with you on Sunday.” They said, “We are going to meet in this spot at whatever time, and then we’ll ride down together.” We were actually going to a church. It may still be around, but back then this was like the hip, cool church. Everybody went to this church in the early 90s called Crossroads Church up in Denver, and so I said, “All right, I’d love to go to church,” and so I wake up, and I am from, I have said this many times, I am from Hickville, rural Georgia. We have a certain way that we go to church, and so I get up and get ready for church. I have got a suit on. Don’t laugh yet. It is not even funny yet. It is not even there. Give me a minute. Suit on, tie, dress shoes. I mean, I look good, and I show up at the meeting spot, and I get out of my car, and they’re all looking at me like, “What in the world are you doing?” They’re in shorts, jeans, T-shirts, and this is the furthest. I do not understand any of this. Honestly, I do not, and I am not making fun. I did not understand. I am like, “What? How in the world?”

So, we got to this church, and it was packed. They did multiple services, very similar to what we would feel here, and we get there a little bit late, and we walk in and there’s literally no other seats except the front row, and so we all go to the front row. They are singing these songs that I had never heard before, and I look up on stage, and this is the part I remember the most. I’m going to show my age here, but some of you remember this, but I looked up, and this bass player was playing on stage, and he had on a really tiny little tank top, and he had on, do you remember in the late 80s, early 90s, you would wear the big baggy, really colored pants, or at least guys my age did, and then like flip-flops? I mean, he looked like

he was going to the beach, and he is up on stage, playing bass, and I am sitting there, and it is really hard for me to even engage in what is going on, because I feel so, I mean, everybody in the room can see me, especially the pastor. He can look right at me and see my suit, and I never felt so in the wrong place in my life, and it is still a true thing. I have told that story to my family many times.

Some of us today feel that way. Some of us walk into this church today, and we feel like the outsiders. There are people in our lives every day who feel like the outsider. There are outsiders. They are vulnerable, and yet even the vulnerable and the foreigners, they need our help. This morning I am not getting in any political arguments about immigration or anything like that, but I will say this, that many times those who are here from other countries are the ones who need the most help, and in my opinion, and I think God's opinion, if they are here, we need to help and should help. It is why Waterstone partners with many local organizations like North Littleton Promise, that helps provide resources and care for a vulnerable community, and as followers of Christ, I believe that's our call, to help those who need help, but you know what?

It is not just that the culture at large that needs help. As I have already said, there are people that show up here in our church every week who feel like the outsider to you. You feel alone. If you are here today, and that is you, you feel like no one sees you, and from the leadership of Waterstone and Waterstone at large, I want to say we're sorry. We do love you. We do want to see you. We want to welcome you. We want to show you the love of Jesus, and sometimes we messed up. Waterstone, those of us who call Christ our Savior, Christ followers, I ask you when you're here, when you're living life, look beyond your friends. Look beyond those that you're comfortable with talking to and look for those who need a friend. They are here. You do not see them. They are here, and I believe that is what God calls us to do, and that is what Boaz did for Ruth. When we really think about it, we are all Ruth's. We are broken. We are poor. We are desperate sinners who need grace from a loving God, and it is only when we realize how generous God has been towards us that we can live generously to others. God has been so generous to us. So Waterstone, I ask you to live that way, to see others and love others.

Back to the story. Not only does God see us, but I believe this story shows us that God knows us, knows us intimately and acts on our behalf. Back to scripture, verse 11: "Boaz replied to Ruth." After she said, "I am a foreigner," he replied to her, "I have been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people who you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel," and this is key, "under whose wings you have come to take refuge." That is who we come to. We desperately come under the care, under the wings. This is a picture of a mother hen with her wings covering her children, protecting them, providing for them. That is where we come for that protection of the Lord.

It is the question that we all ask all the time. I ask this, you ask this. The question is this, "Does God really care about me? Does God really see me? Does God really love me?" It is the question that David wrote about in Psalm 8. "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you have set in place, what is mankind, that you are mindful of them, human beings, that you care for them?" In other words, "Lord, you have done all this. You created all this. How can you see me? How can you care about me?" and I believe the story of Boaz and Ruth gives us a picture of how this

happens. If you go back to the beginning of the chapter, verse 3, it says that Ruth went out and entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters, and then it says, “As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.” “As it turned out.” That is the phrase. In another translation, it says it this way: “It just so happened that Ruth was working in the field of Boaz.” You guys, this is a little bit of Bible sarcasm. I want you to get it. Actually, I like sarcasm. I get accused of being a little sarcastic. One of my staff members gave me a plaque in my office that says, “If only sarcasm burned calories.” I do not know if that is a comment about my sarcasm or my weight. We will leave that to them, but this is a little sarcasm. This is saying, “As it turned out,” wink, wink, “it just so happened.” What they are saying is that Ruth just went out and did what she had to do, which was to provide for her family, and God worked it out in a way where she showed up in the field of Boaz, a man who is going to protect her, a man who is actually her relative. This is not an accident, but it is one of those things that if we are not looking closely, we do not see. The question is, how do we see God working?

I ran across this story, a church in rural Nebraska in 1950, small little church, Wednesday night. I grew up in church where every Wednesday night we had a Wednesday night program and choir practice. They were having choir practice on Wednesday night, and it was scheduled to start at 7.30 p.m. At 7.36 p.m., six minutes after the choir practice was supposed to begin, a natural gas leak caused a huge explosion and destroyed the church building. Here is the deal, though. They had about fifteen choir members. All fifteen choir members had something come up that caused them to be late for choir practice, and this was unusual. I would think in a rural, farm town, I would think most people are usually pretty punctual in small towns. At least the small town I grew up in was pretty punctual. They all had something come up. The pastor and his family were delayed because of a problem with their daughter’s clothes. Random. One member’s car did not start. Two students were delayed because they were working on homework. One person took a nap and overslept. These stories go on and on, and some of us can see that story and go, “Wow, what a great coincidence,” but I look at that story and go, “God, how do you do that? God, how can you save these people from death, certain death?”

When we think of stories like that, it brings up some real problems in our minds, in our hearts, because the idea of providence, of God intervening, of God acting on our behalf, is very hard for most of us to work through. Why does God save some from an accident but not others? Why does God save some from a natural gas explosion in a small church, but thousands die on 9-11? Why does God provide safety and security for Ruth and Naomi, but refugees all over the world are trafficked and taken advantage of? These are very hard questions. In my own life, when I think about that question, I ask the question, “Why did my brother die from cancer at thirty-four years old?”

You have the same story. You have the same questions. I know you do. Understand this, God can handle your struggles. God can handle your questions. God can even handle your anger at Him. He loves you, but the problem is, and the problem we see in Naomi, is that if we’re not careful, sometimes we want to blame God for all the bad things that happen, but we can forget about Him when the good things happen. We live in a world where there are pain and death, and I do not know why God intervenes sometimes but not others, and this is where faith comes in, the faith that says, “God, your ways are higher than my ways, and even when I do not understand it, I trust you.” That is our response, and that is a very difficult response, and I want to acknowledge that fact.

We see this idea in Naomi's response. If you remember back, I told you about the end of the first chapter of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth come back to Naomi's homeland, and her family, Naomi's family sees her, and they welcome her back, and they say, "Naomi, we have missed you," and she says this, "Do not call me Naomi. You call me Marah, because the Lord has made my life bitter." Losing her husband and sons has caused her to be bitter, and she blames the Lord, and then we see her now. As Ruth has been out in the fields gleaning, bringing back, actually it is crazy, because Boaz provided for her far more than what she could ever imagine. After she gleaned the barley, and after she threshed it, which is separating the seed from the other stuff, she ended up with like fifty pounds of grain, a huge amount of grain, and she brings this back to her mother-in-law and says, "Look, the Lord has provided," and follow along with me in Ruth 2, verse 19: "Her mother-in-law asked her, 'Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.' Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. 'The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz', and she said, 'the Lord bless him.' Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead,'" and we will stop there for just a minute.

Do you notice what is happening here? When the bad things happen to Naomi, she blames God. When the good things come, when God provides for her, she thanks Boaz, and what she does not see is that God provided the way for Ruth to work at Boaz's land, that God opened the door, that God was working behind the scenes to provide for her family, and what she does not know yet is that Boaz will come and redeem her family and give her a new life, and she does not thank God. She thinks Boaz. That is the risk for us. What Naomi does not understand and what we do not see is that God is not only working in this story. God is not only working in this story to bring wholeness to Naomi and Ruth, but God is actually working in the big story, the big story of all time. God is working through Naomi and Ruth and Boaz to bring redemption to the entire world.

You heard a few weeks ago, as Paul was preaching about Rahab in the book of Joshua. Just as a reminder, Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho, and as Joshua was going into battle to take over Jericho, he sent some spies into the land, into the city. This prostitute Rahab found them. This is a really short version, found them, protected them, hid them when they were being hunted, provided a way for them to escape back to Joshua and the Israelites, and the spies tell her and God tells her, "Because of your kindness, when I destroy this city, I am going to spare your life and the life of your family," and that happens. Where we find ourselves in this story is Rahab eventually, it seems like, integrated into the land of Israel. She lived there as a foreigner, integrated into the land of Israel. She married a man named Salmon, and they had a young son named Boaz. Are you starting to put the picture together, and Boaz having a mother who was a foreigner? We do not know. Rahab could have been that widow who was gleaning in the fields behind the workers just to survive. We do not know. All we know is this: Boaz had a mother who was a foreigner, and he sees a young foreigner who needs help with his relative, and what we are going to find out in a couple of weeks is how he comes and redeems this family. It is a picture of how God redeems us, but do you see the story that God is working out through time?

Well, there is a bigger story, and the story is this. Not only is God working out this story, not only is He redeeming Rahab and Ruth and Boaz, but also is He actually setting up the redemption of all man. So, what we do not know, and what you will find out, Rahab is the great, great grandmother of King David.

Ruth is the great grandmother of King David. Who comes through the line of King David? Jesus, our Savior, our Messiah. So not only is God working in the small story, but also is God setting his redemption story for all time, and through this story comes the savior of the world. This is what God does.

So back to the story. At the end of Ruth 2, starting in verse 20, Naomi is talking about Boaz. She is giving Boaz all the credit for doing this, and then she makes this statement. “She added, ‘This man is our close relative. He is one of our guardian redeemers.’” “Guardian redeemer,” is also translated as a more popular term, “kinsman redeemer.” It is the word “goel” in the Hebrew. What is she saying here? This is something we are going to hear later, but this is how the Lord redeems us. This is how Boaz redeems the situation. This is how God redeems us. A kinsman redeemer is someone who can come in and basically fix a situation in his family. It could be a close relative. He can come in, and maybe a relative has gone into debt. A kinsman redeemer can come in and redeem that, pay back the debt, and make his life whole. In the situation of Ruth, a kinsman redeemer can come in and marry a widow and give her back her life. That is what a kinsman redeemer can do.

Very quickly here, there are three characteristics of what a kinsman redeemer is, and I want you to see that. These are the three criteria, so to speak, of what it takes to be the kinsman redeemer. Number one is he must be a close relative. We have already heard that Boaz is a relative of Elimelech. He is a relative. He has the means. Number two, he must be able, meaning he must have the financial resources to actually do something about the situation. We know Boaz is a very rich man, and number three, which I think is most important, he must be willing to help. This is key. Boaz was under no obligation to help in this situation. It was completely voluntary to come in and fix it, and that was what Boaz chose to do.

As we look at the story of Boaz, we can see the story of God. We can see the story of Jesus, our redeemer, and how He walks into our life and how He can redeem the whole world and redeem us. Number one, He must be a close relative. Jesus laid aside his rights as God, became a man, came to this earth, born of a virgin, and is our brother. He must be able. Jesus is perhaps the only one, not perhaps. Jesus is the only one who is able. He lived a perfect, sinless life to become the sacrifice for our sins, and number three, He must be willing. No one made Jesus go to the cross. He did it completely of his own free will. Knowing the pain, knowing the torture, Jesus walked to the cross for our sins.

Today if you are here, today if you feel like the lonely one, that no one sees you, today if you do not know that Jesus is your redeemer, I invite you to make that bold statement. Accept the Lord’s redemption. Accept the Lord’s forgiveness. Accept his care. Know that God is with you, and if you’re here today, and you feel like God doesn’t see you, I pray that through the story of Boaz and Ruth and how God works that you will recognize that God not only sees you, but God knows you. He acts on your behalf. He loves you, and He redeems you. This morning, I do not know where your heart is, but we’re going to have some prayer ministers around the room, both during the song, after the song. I invite you to come and receive prayer. Ask someone how to know Jesus as your Savior. Would you stand, please, and let’s pray.

Father, we love you so much. Father, we thank you for this. God, these stories, they are not just stories. It really is the story of how you work all things for good. Even things intended for bad and evil, you work them for good, and we thank you for that. God, you so loved the world that you gave your only Son so that the world can know you. Help us to know that truth today. Thank you. In your name, amen. Let’s sing together.

Glad you are here today. I am going to pray for us as we go. Would you please bow your heads? God, we do thank you, and God, we do ask for you to make yourself known to us more. God, we trust that you are working, but we sometimes do not see it, and so God, we need your eyes. Holy Spirit, please give us your eyes to see your work and know that you are with us every moment of every day. That is our prayer today. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Go in peace. We'll see you next week.

37:55 minutes

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