

“The Sufficiency of Christ”
 Pastor Sam Richards
 Sermon for 11 August 2024
 Texts: Ruth 2:14-3:12; Eph. 5:22-28

Our text, Ruth, transpires in the dark times known to us as the time of the judges—times in which we are told **everyone did what was right in his own eyes**. That has a contemporaneous ring to it as the opening ceremonies of the Olympics and the boxing matches between men and women illustrate about our day. And yet God was quite active. Getting things done and securing the perpetuation of **the seed of promise**. That seed only came through Elimelech in a most circuitous manner—which appears to be God’s way throughout time. I mean that God allowed a famine and Elimelech fled to Moab (a tiny kingdom on the eastern border of the Dead Sea). He found sanctuary there with his wife Naomi and his two sons. And they were refugees there for ten years. The sons took wives of the Moabites. Now Moab was the son of Lot by incest and this meant that the sons of those marriages would be severely restricted, religiously discriminated against(?) This was due to Balak, a former king, joining with Mediates in hiring Balaam, a prophet, to curse the Israelites (Num. 22:1-20) as they journeyed towards the Promised Land. Now Ruth, a Moabitess, was chosen of God to be an ancestor (great-grandmother) of King David. So famine was the precipitating cause of the move to Moab and Naomi was the bait to attract Ruth, who had married Mahlon who subsequently died as had Elimelech and Chiilon. These deaths left two generations of widows so Naomi decided (?) Return to Bethlehem and Ruth decided to return with her. So there is the circuitous bit. God was arranging for Ruth to come into the orbit of Boaz. **God was governing/directing, protecting and preserving both Naomi and Ruth despite their obliviousness to his divine and sufficient headship**. They were grieved, burdened and miserable even as God extended his arm, or wings to show mercy to them. Despite feeling bitter, and discouraged, Naomi demonstrated selfless love by looking out for her two daughters-in-law: **The Lord grant you that you may find rest each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept.** (Ruth 1:9)

The sufficiency of divine provisioner, Headship, is underscored in this account. Because it is important to notice that God is sufficient even where there is no vicar, agent, or human savior to mitigate life’s harsh circumstances. The loss of loved ones does not nullify divine care, provision and providence. *Far from it!* God locates us and relocates us according to his plan and purposes—it may appear random, even accidental; but it is not. The point of the mission to Moab was to secure Ruth and bring her back for Boaz so that the seed of promise might be preserved and perpetuated. God had determined that the messiah would come of the Davidic line **and this book records that intervention for us!** Take comfort and encouragement from the sufficiency of God to bring about his will. However, Boaz is merely the icing on the cake of this redemption. Remember, God took Naomi to Moab (due to famine) and stripped her there of husband and sons (Mahlon was not the right husband for Ruth(!)) And drew her home destitute, vulnerable, helpless and with no resources except God himself. I don’t know how to explain away the process of destitution/of preparatory impoverishment except to embrace the promise in it.

Ruth, as the chosen woman, showed pluck when she resorted to the fields of Boaz, the wealthy, single kinsman of Naomi, her mother-in-law. She is entirely humble, she

has no idea of the huge role she would play in the salvation of the world! She is caring for Naomi, loving on her mother-in-law and learning to trust and love the God who brought her back to Bethlehem! Boaz **passed by**, greeting his workers and noticed her in his field and one reaper introduced her as the Moabitess damsel who had returned home with the widow Naomi. She has worked all day, he reported, taking a brief rest **in the house**. Boaz invites her to glean in his fields. **Follow them and do not glean elsewhere. I have entrusted the young men not to trouble or molest you and feel free to share our drinking water.** (vv. 4-9) She was noticed, found grace with him and expressed gratitude for it all. And he relates all the good press she has received since coming to Bethlehem. *This textures the meaning of **he noticed her***; perhaps he put a face to her name would be a more suitable claim. Boaz is loving his wife as Christ loved the church, *as a type of savior*—giving of himself (**take of my water, my grain, my sustenance/ substance/wealth**) *interceding* for her, encouraging her, enhancing her, empowering her. *Just as every husband is appointed to do in a Christian home!*

Naomi takes all of this in when Ruth returns home with and **thanks God** for his provident care for them. The kindness of Ruth is matched by the goodness of her “savior,” her benefactor, Boaz. And one piece of this painful providence was Boaz having lived single with all the loneliness and singleness that such social standing entails. God is ministering to them, as they minister to one another—a truth that remains true/valid in the church even today. Naomi climbed out of the pit of loss and sorrows and Ruth persists in working alongside Boaz’s maidens and lads for some time. Naomi ruminating over these conditions reaches a conclusion: **My daughter shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee.** (Ruth 3:1)

Now my further point in exalting Boaz as Naomi’s kinsman redeemer, is to exalt the sufficiency of Christ as our Savior, Redeemer. Boaz is wonderful, but Jesus is perfect. . . perfectly sufficient to save. Jesus saves eternally whereas the best Boaz can muster is temporally. He can love Ruth, support and protect Ruth, guide and direct her—they can have a marriage, have a family and work things out for this life. But Jesus rules over that and everything to follow! That the greatest love story—the triumph of grace in a fallen, broken existence. And we grow most, and learn obedience through what we suffer. Every weary footstep, every sweat-drop, every tear, every blister counts. Ruth recounts the growth of a woman into godly womanhood and to the office and duties of a wife and mother. After they married, the children came; and one of them was the seed of promise.

As husband is to wife, so is Christ to the church! (Eph. 5:22-23) This means that Christ holds a dignified place **as the head of the church, our Husband**. He is uniquely appointed to govern, protect, preserve and provide for the body. **It is his office, his anointing and his duty to do so.** Put another way, he needs no vicar, no deputy distributor of salvation! He is mighty and merciful enough to save all entirely on his own. So we declare, “He is sufficient.” Okay, sufficient for what? Sufficient to instruct, direct, guide, govern, protect and help all the needy of all the world.

Appointed to govern, protect, preserve and provide for the body and able to instruct, direct, guide, govern, protect and help all the needy of all the world—all at once and all on his own—that is what sufficient means. We may partake of his anointing, or draw on his fullness but none of these are necessary, none needed.

Jesus is all on his own a sufficient Savior. He is our mighty and merciful head, there is none other.

Technically, *we don't save lost sinners*, we simply follow-up on what God has already done, working up and submitting for completion. We are grace chasers/pursuers, not grace fountains. We can lead people to where the water is, **they must choose to drink**. Jesus saves. As husband is to wife, so Jesus is good to us, the body, his church. His arms are the ark we sail on and in and so we are kept secure.

The first benefit of his headship is that: his goodness. Jesus does what he does because he is the head. He doesn't tyrannize, terrorize, or trample, or beat, or plunder and pillage the church—*all of which things the devil tries to accomplish!* He doesn't use old fashioned words, like poise the church—burden, or weigh her down—he doesn't peel or flog us—the doesn't flog us (whip us while hung for punishment)—no, he pursues her peace and prosperity.

Christ knows that sin is the great cause of our suffering and thus has come to remedy sin—conquer it, defeat death and destroy the grave.

He didn't come from heaven to do a lesser thing . . . because we had messed up, or screwed up, or fatally blown it; no, he came because we were in agony, and torment—hopelessly entangled in sin's viciousness, murder, loss and treachery. He opened the way where none existed before. That was his great accomplishment. It is true some will ask what they need to be rescued from—**and we have an answer. from depravity, evil, darkness!** You may not be in deep right now, but it will happen if it hasn't. You will be betrayed, trapped, or tricked and fall and fail due to sin's power and endure its misery.

There are three things to be learned about Christ's sufficiency and they are these: 1. The goodness in the kind of salvation. 2. The Person of the Savior—He Himself does the work. 3. These are the parties involved, namely the body of Christ, the church. Christ, the perfect Savior is sufficient in every way . . . and to the uttermost, redeeming body and soul together. **He saves from all kinds of misery —and from the greatest, gravest evils.**

Ponder how before sin came and captured us, how happy and free from misery we were! Well, that is the state to which we shall be restored when our glorious Savior appears in a heaven built for the ages. After the infection is past, and guilt, retribution, punishment, domination and the remainders of sin are removed, utterly taken away-and wrath also mitigated, curse of the law cancelled, the venom of outside crosses, satanic tyranny. Power of death and torments of hell entirely removed. We shall be his happy people once more.

Amen.