

99-06-13a

Let's continue our worship this morning with our scripture reading. As you will recall, our primary area of study is now focused in Genesis chapter 24, which is the betrothal story for Isaac and Rebekah. As you ruminate on the details of that story, it is interesting that although it is the means by which Isaac gets married to Rebekah, Isaac is virtually absent from the chapter.

And this negotiation and the means by which Rebekah is identified as his wife all takes place without his apparently even knowledge, much less action or participation. But for Abraham, it is a crucial element. It is something that has to take place.

It is in line and in keeping with the covenant promises that God has made to Abraham that he will be the father of many nations and through Isaac his seed will be called and through that seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And yet Isaac is now a grown man and is unmarried. Abraham doesn't know how much longer he is going to be around, so he initiates the effort to identify and procure the wife for his son Isaac, his heir.

But it brings up, by way of a general principle, the subject of divine guidance. How do you know what the will of God is in this area? How is Abraham going to identify the right woman, the one that is going to work out as the wife of Isaac, and specifically divine guidance in the area of making profound or life-changing, elemental decisions? Two or three really, I guess you would categorize them as most important decisions in terms of circumstances in your life. Who you marry, where you live, what job or occupation you pursue.

These things are real central and have a great effect on the outcome of all of your other less significant decisions. So we can look at this and think to ourselves, well, are the principles embodied in this story still valid today? Can we find grist for the mill here as far as seeking and determining the will of God when it comes to our circumstances? Having studied not too long ago, a couple of years ago now, the principles specifically related to divine guidance in a series by that name, we have some inkling of what the issues are. But we are going to see those once again as we look at this chapter.

This is, after all, a big part of the Abraham story. There is an entire chapter devoted to this. We have the story of how the servant meets Rebecca repeated twice in great detail.

So it is significant. It is something we want to understand. Why is this here? What should it mean to us, not only in the forward progress of God's plan of salvation and his calling out of the nation of Israel, but also in terms of the life that a believer leads before God? How do we find the principles that pertain to us in this story, especially given the cultural differences? We have really gotten away from the arranged marriage mode of moving forward from generation to generation.

So how do those things apply? Well, what we are going to do this morning is not only look at the details of that story, but also three other situations. We actually have four fairly detailed betrothal narratives in the Scriptures. Without going much further into that, I will just say that our Scripture reading this morning in Ruth chapter 2 is one of them, the others being Jacob and Moses.

You have Moses and Midian meeting the women at the well. You have Jacob and Rachel. You have Jacob at the well.

You have Rebecca meeting the servant at a well. And here, this one is somewhat atypical in that Ruth does not meet Boaz at a well. But we are going to see that there are common elements to all of these stories.

And in these four betrothal narratives, we are going to see common principles that help us elucidate what we want to find. That is a real bad interpretive. That is one of the things they warn you against in seminary.

Don't go to the Bible looking for what you want to find. But by comparing these stories, we are going to see the central principles that are in evidence in the first of these great narratives, which is in Genesis 24. So let's turn for our Scripture reading this morning to Ruth chapter 2. There is a name for that.

It is called eisegesis, reading into the Scripture what you want to find. I hope we are not guilty of that. Ruth chapter 2, Ruth meets Boaz.

You know the background of this. There was a famine in the land. The family in Israel headed up by Elimelech and his wife Naomi, their two sons Matlon and Kilion.

They are from Bethlehem in Judah. They have to leave the land. They can't support themselves, at least they believe they have to leave the land, and so they do.

They leave Judah. They leave Bethlehem. They leave Israel.

They go over to live in the land of Moab. The two sons get married. They die.

The father dies. You get the idea. Maybe this wasn't such a hot move over to Moab because all the males who were responsible for the decision die in the process.

But God can bring good out of bad. To make a long story short, Naomi and one of the daughters-in-law return. That story is familiar to us.

There is a talk show host who got her name from the other daughter-in-law that did not choose to come back, whatever that may say about Miss Winfrey, I don't know. She got named because her mother couldn't remember how to spell Orpah, who in verse 14 of chapter 1 kissed her mother-in-law and said goodbye. You don't find many young men named Esau or whatever.

It's kind of obvious you don't want to name somebody. There aren't a lot of men named Judas. You don't typically find a whole lot of women named Orpah.

But Ruth accompanies Naomi back into the land. Chapter 2 picks up after they have returned to Bethlehem and it is the time of year when the barley harvest is just beginning. You get that from verse 22 of chapter 1. Here is our reading for this morning in chapter 2. There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech.

His name was Boaz. You may have developed a sensitivity to names now in the Old Testament. I've given you a lot of the pieces there.

You know El is short for Elohim. It's the name of God, God's title as God, rather than his personal name Yahweh, which has come over as Jehovah. Melech is the word for king.

You know that E, when you find that on the suffix E, or it's kind of a Y in Hebrew, is the possessive, the first person personal possessive. So, my God is king, Elimelech. Elimelech, my God is king.

Interesting foreshadowing since Elimelech is from Bethlehem. When God, in the form of Jesus Christ, becomes king of Israel, he is of course from Bethlehem himself. There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech.

His name was Boaz. So Ruth, the Moabitess, said to Naomi, Please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor. And she said to her, Go, my daughter.

Then she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, The Lord be with you.

And they answered him, The Lord bless you. Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this? So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.

So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house. Then Boaz said to Ruth, You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.

Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn. So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in your eyes that

you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner? Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

Then she said, Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants. Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come here and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar. So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.

And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her, leave it, so that she may glean and do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, Where have you gleaned today, and where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, The man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead. And Naomi said to her, This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.

Ruth the Moabite said, He also said to me, You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young men, and that people do not meet you in any other field. So she stayed close by the young men of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

You know how the rest of this story goes forward, but if you remember the details of the trip that Abraham's servant makes and his encounter with Rebecca, you begin to see some of the common principles that are a part of the identification process that takes place. It's what I always think of as being IFF. There's a box in military aircraft called the IFF box, and along with all the other communications and radios and radar and everything else that aircraft have, there's this IFF box so that when they're flying around in the sky, if you can't immediately tell when you see a speck off in the distance, if that's an enemy aircraft or if it's one of your own or your allies.

So the IFF is identification friend or foe, and there is an exchange, there's a signal that passes between these aircraft automatically, and the instrument panel can tell the pilot that that aircraft over there is a friend or a foe, because if it's a friend, it has an IFF box set to the same settings and it's all encoded and encrypted and everything else, but it will pass this signal that says, I'm a good guy, I'm not a bad guy, and so the aircraft electronically can identify each other. And it is one of the less well-explored, but nevertheless well-documented principles in the Word of God that among believers, especially believers who are pursuing the things of God and seeking to please God and live their lives as unto the Lord, this principle has a counterpart. And most of us as believers have experienced this, where in the course of living daily life and encountering other people, you suddenly find yourself in the company of someone that you suspect may be more than just another believer, more than just a casual acquaintance, and you find that you have your spiritual antenna out that this person may be of like mind.

I'm talking about even within the body of Christ. Because of the wide variety of beliefs and priorities that believers have in regard to spiritual things, it's always a wonderful blessing to find someone who values the Word of God, who values the opportunities that God has given us in this life and is active in the pursuit of those things as we are, or we certainly hope we are. And it's a wonderful thing to find yourself in the company of a fellow believer.

And it's interesting the means by which this information comes to light, because you often suspect it before you actually engage in enough conversation to confirm it. And you get the idea that God has worked out circumstances in such a way that this, and I think of course it's part of the work of God the Holy Spirit in providing for us and in being an integral part of our Christian fellowship, that when someone who has an active ministry of God the Holy Spirit in their soul comes into contact with someone else where the Spirit of God is at work in an active way, it's not difficult to imagine that there's going to be a connection. So I think of it as sort of a spiritual IFF at work.

And this is something that we are going to see documented in these stories. And there is a basis for it. It's not a mystical thing.

It's not a still small voice. It's not some extraneous piece of information. There is a way that these things are communicated.

There's a way that this knowledge comes into being in the minds of people. We're going to return to the Ruth story here shortly, but let's turn back for the moment back to Genesis 24 and refresh in our minds the details of the meeting that Abraham's servant has with Rebekah at the well. You recall, of course, at the beginning of the chapter, Abraham's commissioning of this servant.

I mentioned before that because this is his senior servant and is in charge of all of his goods, this is the functional equivalent of Joseph in the household of Potiphar and later

Joseph in the land of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh, fully trusted by Abraham. What kind of a man is going to receive this kind of trust from Abraham? Well, we know what kind of a man Abraham has become, and someone to whom Abraham is going to entrust everything, including the most important issue in Abraham's mind, which is the marriage of his son. You know this man is going to be a believer.

He's going to be a man of faith. He's going to be a godly man with whom Abraham shares spiritual fellowship. It isn't going to be just an administrative functionary of some sort.

This is a man after Abraham's own heart and someone that he has a close relationship with, a personal relationship with, I'm sure a deep affection for. It may, in fact, have been Eliezer that Abraham originally envisioned would be his heir before Isaac was born. There are many commentators who just assume that this is Eliezer.

When you read their commentary, they just say, Eliezer went to the well, Eliezer met Rebecca, and so forth. But we can't document that. The Bible is careful not to name this servant, and we explored that idea last week.

But he puts his hand under Abraham's thigh. This is the most solemn oath that can be sworn. And even with this close relationship and with the trust between Abraham and this servant, Abraham still makes him swear.

And this indicates the degree of solemnity and importance that attaches to this mission. So, he gives him a general instruction and some specific prohibitions. You are to go back to the land where my family dwells and find a wife for my son.

Under no circumstances are you to allow Isaac to leave the land. You're to go and bring someone back. God will send his angel before you in verse 7, and you will take a wife for my son from there.

And this has to be a young woman who is willing to leave her family, the land of her birth, her kindred, and come to the land of promise, just as Abraham has done. Isaac is not to leave the land of promise and go back to the place that Abraham has left. She is going to be someone of like mind with Abraham, someone who is willing to abandon all with the hope of that same promise.

And there's a lot wrapped up in this. There's a lot implied in it. You think about young women today.

It's hard even to make a geographical move for the sake of a job or the sake of some circumstance in life. Girls have friends. They have connections.

They have a life that they've established. People in general do. But you think about teenage girls in particular and the close friendships that they develop and the emotional

fragility in some cases that comes to the surface when all of that is going to be disrupted by a move and the difficulties involved, and especially to go by oneself to a place where you don't know anyone.

You're going to be married. You're going to spend the rest of your life in this foreign land with someone you've never met. The basis upon which someone would make that decision for themselves, which basically is up to Rebecca, whether or not she is to go.

Her family asks her, Do you want to go do this? And when she says yes, they support her. But the decision is really made by Rebecca. And that's very important because it indicates the like-mindedness and the faith that is implicit that God is going to take care of her and that this is in fact a part of God's plan.

Well, what does she base that on? Let's revisit the details. What are the facts? She makes this decision in the space of 24 hours because the servant arrives one day, meets her at the well, he eats an evening meal and spends the night, and he leaves with her the next morning. So she doesn't get the chance to play 20 questions with the servant and she doesn't get the chance to become a pen pal with Isaac or anything else.

This is what we would term a snap decision. Does it have a basis? Well, once the servant is given this commission by Abraham, it's interesting because look at verse 9 again. The servant puts his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning this matter, I will go and find a wife for your son.

I will bring her back. I will not take your son out of the land. But this servant figures out all of the details.

Abraham doesn't give him any guidance. Abraham doesn't pray to God and ask for a sign. Abraham doesn't give him any specifics.

He just gives him the mission. And this, by the way, is the mark of a great leader. And if we were studying other principles, like the principles of leadership and good administration, you will note that Abraham does not micromanage his servant even though you can't imagine an issue or a mission closer to Abraham's heart than this one.

Abraham doesn't look over his servant's shoulder and micromanage him in the execution of this. He gives it to him and he turns him loose. He has confidence in him.

He has allowed him to be over his entire household and to have all of the goods at his disposal. And he turns him loose. He assigns him the mission and he lets him go.

He backs away and lets the servant figure out how best to do this. So you'll notice in verse 10, the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed. Why? Because all of his master's goods were in his hand.

This servant figured out what to take. He didn't take donkeys. He didn't take sheep.

He didn't take goats. He didn't take a retinue. He certainly didn't take Isaac, which had been prohibited.

What does he take? He sits and thinks about this. I'm sure he engaged in prayerful consideration of how best to fulfill this mission. And he arrives at the conclusion that the best thing to do as far as packing for the trip is to take ten camels.

He takes ten camels. He's got some servants along to tend these camels. One guy can't drag ten camels, ride one and carry the other nine behind, leading them or something.

He takes an appropriate number of man servants along to tend these camels. And the camels are bearing the baggage for the trip, the food, the gifts, that will be involved in the dowry exchange for the family in the event that he finds and identifies this candidate for betrothal. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.

He knows from long association with Abraham where Abraham has come from, and so he goes back there. He leaves the land of promise and goes back to the place where the family of Abraham currently resides. You will notice he does not go back to Ur.

He goes back to Haran, which is the city of Nahor. Is this significant at all? If you think about the value as far as illustration or symbolism in the story of Abraham's life, Ur of the Chaldees, when he leaves Ur of the Chaldees, this is Ziggurat town. This is the place where they worship celestial bodies.

This was the place they've uncovered in archaeology that the Ziggurat, which was designed for astrology and worship of heavenly planets and stars and so forth. The family of Abraham, when God told him to depart from his family and his household and his kindred and so forth, well, he hasn't really done that when he leaves Ur. They, as a family clan, leave Ur and arrive at Haran.

It is the departure from Haran where Abraham separates himself from others who are apparently believers enough in God to abandon a very well-established and profitable family business situation in Ur and go to Haran. In my mind, and if somebody wants to think differently, I wouldn't argue with them, but to me this speaks of the difference between salvation in terms of faith in God, leaving Ur and traveling toward the land of promise, but then when you have the stop in Haran, Nahor and the brothers of Abraham, they make it that far, but they get comfortable there. They set up shop there, and when Abraham finally decides, you know, I've really got to keep going, I can't get delayed here in the fulfillment, this is where you have believers parting company and a believer stepping out in faith in pursuit of the high calling of God, no matter what it takes.

And this is where Jesus talks to the disciples and he says, sometimes you have to leave your father and your mother and your brothers and your sisters and you have to, there's

going to be a separation. Jesus says, I've not come to bring peace but a sword, because it's going to, in some cases, divide families. And what's involved here is dedication to the goal, whatever it takes to be pleasing in God's sight, even if you have to leave other believers behind who are not so motivated.

So what do you have in Haran? You have believers there. You have people who acknowledge God, but at some point have settled into a comfort level. We're going to find out later on in the story that this family up in Haran not only believes in God and uses the name of God in their conversation and in pronouncing blessings on people and so forth, but they've also got little household terapheme, they've got the household idols.

So they have God and cultural accommodation to the people that they're living among. So at some point, in my perception, they've sort of gotten comfortable and stopped moving forward. But they're believers.

They're of the household of faith, but they're not those who are pushing forward and seeking the things of God at any cost. They've accommodated, they've compromised, they've gotten comfortable. So it's fascinating to me that Abraham, living in the land, when he realizes that a wife for Isaac has to be identified and obtained, he doesn't look among the sons of Heth, who apparently are very honorable men who accompanied Abraham in the battles against the Confederation of Kings when the people of Sodom were captured and fought along with them and so forth, the Hethites.

Abraham has a warm business and apparently personal relationship with them, but he doesn't want Isaac's wife to come from the Canaanites, from the indigenous peoples of the land. He wants her to come from the household of his father. And in symbolic terms, this reminds us of the fact that we don't want to be unequally yoked.

If we're a believer, we want to be united in our close personal relationships with other believers. And so Abraham says, I've got to go back to the people I know are of the household of faith, and that's my family up in Haran. Not any of my other cousins and distant relatives back in Ur, but the ones in Haran.

And this is a reminder to us, in its illustration value, that we may not always be in agreement with our fellow believers who may be in denominational churches or who may be in that category of Haran believers. But when you want to accomplish important things, it's much better still to be in the household of faith than it is to just go out to the world and to treat believers who don't necessarily have the same priorities or the same understanding of scripture or place the same value on the things of God. It's still better to be dealing with believers than unbelievers.

Now, I've heard there's a truism floating around that, well, you haven't really been cheated or you haven't really been scandalized until you've been scandalized by a fellow

believer. And in some cases, believers can do you worse in a business dealing or something than unbelievers. A lot of times you'll find more integrity in business than unbelievers than you do in some of your fellow believers.

People are going to be looking at their own personal experience in this regard, but the picture in the Word of God is you look at the nation of Israel and all the laws and things, and the Israelites were to marry Israelites. It doesn't make any qualification about how much of an Israelite they were, even the marriages outside, such as Ruth. These are people who are proselytes, who come to and voluntarily join and become a part of the nation of Israel.

And you think about the outside women you know of, like Rahab, Ruth, and some of these others. They come and become a part of the nation voluntarily. So this is the pattern, and it's something to keep in mind.

So now, when you think in practical terms, you think, well, so now when I want to call a plumber, should I go get that Christian directory where everybody has the fish on their van and this kind of thing? Not necessarily. The pattern that we're seeing here, and which will develop more fully as we go forward this morning, but what you can already remember from Ruth chapter 2 and from this chapter, is that God is going to bring people together. God is in control of circumstances.

We have to be alert, we have to be watchful, and we also have to be receptive and not have a bunch of preconceived notions about what we're going to find or how someone is going to act, but be open to the fact. You realize that Abraham is sending his servant back to Haran. You imagine Abraham thinks, you know, the people in Haran weren't willing to come down here to the land.

But is Abraham holding a grudge? Is Abraham saying, well, they're just as bad as the people in Ur? No. He says, you go back there and look for someone, because if there's anyone who's going to be like-minded, they're going to be coming from there. This is a great thing to remember, that it's not a bad thing to have fellowship with believers anywhere, because we all came from somewhere.

If we assume ourselves to be these vast spiritual giants that have gone way down the road of God's plan and so forth, well, we all came from somewhere. We didn't start this way. Just having a sensitivity to the things of God and trying to please God in life.

Where else are you going to find someone who may be in that same category? Well, certainly they're going to start out somewhere in the household of faith. So that's the first place to look. Abraham realizes that Rebekah is this future daughter-in-law.

Where else are you more likely to find someone who's going to make that same step? This is where Abraham started out, is in that same household. So what better place to

look? And the old adage, well, when you're a believer, and you're in your late teens, early twenties, and you want to date and find somebody, well, go to church. Well, that's not a bad idea.

If you're a duck and you're wanting to link up with another duck, well, go to the pond. Go to the place where ducks are found. It's not a rocket science leap to realize that.

But to be open to the fact, don't be looking at every duck in the pond and saying, oh, you're not as good a duck as I am, or you're not as big a duck as I am, or you don't quack as loud as I do, or you don't have as big a webbed feet, or whatever it may be. There is sort of a spiritual elitism that has crept into some parts of Christianity, and you see it especially in our preference for denominations or denominational distinctions. A Baptist is real suspicious of a Methodist, or a Presbyterian is real suspicious of a Lutheran, or whatever.

And we shouldn't be that way. We're believers, and what we're looking for is not where are you, but where are you willing to go. Abraham doesn't judge his future and daughter-in-law by where she is, but where is she willing to go.

Is she willing to leave and come to the land? If she is, she's good enough for my son. And so this is the commission that the servant has. And when you think about Ruth chapter 2, what is it that first impresses Boaz about Ruth? She was willing to leave Moab and come back.

And this is the most significant fact in his mind. And this is known about her. This is her reputation.

Boaz has had no personal contact with Naomi, but when Naomi returns, this creates a little bit of a stir there in the Bethlehem area. And there were a lot of people probably looking down their nose at the family of Elimelech. We stayed here and stuck it out, and they went off to Moab.

They abandoned the land. They didn't have enough faith. They couldn't stick it out.

They weren't tough enough, strong enough. And look what God did to them. Sure, there was a lot of head shaking, a lot of clucking of the tongue when Naomi comes back.

And you can tell that Naomi feels somewhat browbeaten when she comes back, that maybe they had done the wrong thing. But you don't find that kind of prejudice in the mind of Boaz, do you? You don't think, well, anybody that those Elimelech bunch would have married can't be much of a woman because they didn't stick. They didn't stay.

Things got tough, and they bugged out. Boaz didn't bug out during the famine, did he? And he probably suffered huge financial losses. But you get the idea that there are certain things that Boaz values.

And when he hears this story, he hasn't even met the girl, but he already knows the story. And in his mind, he already has her pegged as someone, here's somebody that's got integrity. Look at what she's willing to do.

She is willing to leave the land of her birth and seek protection under God's wing. That's how he views it. Turn back to Ruth chapter 2. And when Boaz comes from Bethlehem in verse 4 and says to the reapers, The Lord be with you.

And they answered him, The Lord bless you. What does this tell you about Boaz? Just in his conversation, in the greeting with his reapers, you get the idea that this is more than a casual thing. It's funny to me.

It makes me chuckle every time I think about it. All of the people that are trying to eradicate God out of the schools, trying to get the Ten Commandments out of the courtrooms, they don't want any Christian references, they don't want any prayer ball games. They're trying to eradicate any of the things that made this country what it is.

And it's the tolerance that's built into Christianity to live and let live, that's what has let all of the weird religions and cults and things thrive and prosper. We didn't throw out the Buddhists and the Muslims and all of these other wild and wacky things that came in because our country is founded on Christian principles. But now people are methodically trying to eliminate all the Christianity in the country, which is the very thing that let them be here in the first place.

But it's funny to me because, you know, no prayer in schools, no scripture reading, this, that and the other. Can't play at the ball game. But every time somebody has a visit, and then when someone's leaving, they say goodbye.

Where does the word goodbye come from? What is the etymology of the word goodbye? It's God be with ye. Goodbye is just a contraction of God be with you. And these people say goodbye every day.

Every time they hang up the phone, goodbye. And they don't even know the extent to which these things have infiltrated. So in some ways, people can say goodbye and there's no inkling in their mind.

They're not saying God be with you. And if they knew they were saying that, they'd have to start saying farewell or something. But you get the idea from verse 4. This is not just a casual thing.

You get the idea that there's a spiritual element and a spiritual connection between Boaz and his reapers and that he cares for them and that they're all literally sort of singing out of the same hymnal here. They're of the same mind. And when Boaz comes to them and says to the reapers, the Lord be with you.

May you prosper in what you're doing. And they answer him and say, the Lord bless you. They're glad to be working for Boaz.

They think what a great thing. If you've ever been a believer and been employed by another believer who really sought to please the Lord in dealing in their business, you know what a great blessing this is. And you pray to God to continue to bless that person.

And that person hopefully is grateful for you and thanks God that they have the blessing of having faithful employees who are of like mind. It's a great area of blessing. But you get the idea that there's something more to Boaz.

He's not just a man who owns a lot of land. He's a man who cares about the things of God. And this is reflected even in his dealings with his reapers.

So then in verse 5, Boaz says to his servant who is in charge of the reapers, whose young woman is this? And once again, as we see in Genesis 24, there are a lot of principles of good leadership and good administration that come out in these stories. Boaz has an eye for detail. Boaz doesn't just come out and say, well, how much did we glean today? How much more grain is going to be in my silos by the end of the day? He looks around to see how it's going.

He inquires after the health and well-being of his people. He notices someone he hasn't seen before in the field. And you think, now, how many people are likely to be out there gleaning? But Boaz is a frequent visitor, and he notices that there's someone new.

And it catches his eye, and so he asks the servant. And you'll notice that these servants, as faithful and good workers, they know the answer to this question. They're paying attention.

They're not just, oh, boy, I can't wait for this day to be over. They're diligent. They're faithful.

They have inquired. They know who this is. They know why she's there.

They allowed her to rest in the shade. They had this little house that she could rest in, and they extended hospitality to her. The servant who was in charge of the reapers answers and says, it is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

You'll notice she's a Moabite. What is the relationship between Israel and Moab? Is this a friendly, warm, you're my cousin, I'm your cousin type of thing? Where did the Moabites come from? They're the product of the incest of Lot and his daughters that we just covered a few chapters ago in Genesis. The Moabites are a thorn in the side of Israel.

There's not a warm, fuzzy relationship. You think about maybe some nationalistic

prejudice that might have existed in our country in the last century, like right after World War II, how happy were we with the Japanese or with the Germans? There's a lot of aftertaste that's left in people's mouth when they have a bad experience. But you'll notice that the servants of Boaz are not evidencing any prejudice here.

They didn't say, oh, well, she's a Moabite, and we made her stay well back after everybody else had cleaned. We just let her take up the rear there and pick up the worst and the crummiest grain. These are people of faith.

You have to look at the evidence of character and the evidence of how people live and what they say, because this is the reflection. It's amazing to me. This is the way our lives should be.

You don't hear these people making a lot of overt protestations about their faith or their spirituality. You just see it in the way they live their lives. You see the integrity, and you see the character, and you see the desire to please God in how these people conduct their business, how they do what they do.

Look at the faithfulness of Abraham's servant, the diligence with which he carries out this mission. He's got a family back there in the land of Canaan. He is selfless and dedicated to try to do the very best job that he can, and you see it in every detail of what he does.

He's a godly man. He prays at the drop of a hat or the drop of a turban or whatever they had back then. This man falls on his knees and prays.

He's attuned to God. He's seeking God's guidance. He's glad for the reassurance that there's an angel of God going before him.

These are those people that have that mind, that not just leave Ur and get to Haran. These are people who have left Haran and come to the Promised Land, spiritually speaking. They're seeking to please God.

They're those people that Jesus described as walking that narrow road that goes through the straight gate that leads to life, and the important things in life are going to be found on that narrow road, and the important people in life are going to be those fellow travelers on that narrow road. One of the great principles of divine provision in life and blessing in life is going to be the association that we have, that genuine Christian fellowship that we have with people who are on that road. Wonderful blessings, wonderful forward steps in the plan of God come in our associations with those people.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up and see what is here to be observed that we've often overlooked in these stories that tells us this is how God identifies. This is how God enables us to exchange that IFF signal, and how in so doing, the synergy, the coming together of God's word and God's spirit in the

souls of these people is where God works to accomplish his purposes.

Let's pause here and take a break.