

"PROVIDENCE AND ACTION"

Date: 2020-11-22AM Context: Emmanuel - AM GRA PM

Series: Resilience in Ruth Title: Providence and Action

Readings: Rut2:2-3; Rut2:19-20; Est4:14 Cited: Rom8:28

1. INTRO TO READINGS

Two readings:

First from Ruth ch.2 where Ruth goes to glean in the fields and she lands up on the field of Boaz who would one day be her future husband.

The second is from the book of Esther. It is the story of the Israelites who were in Persia when an evil man named Haman was plotting to destroy them. Esther was an Israelite girl who'd been handpicked by the King to be his Queen. Neither Haman or the King knew that Esther was an Israelite and her uncle Mordechai comes to urge her to stand up for her people...

2. READINGS

RU 2:2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." 3 So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

RU 2:19 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," she said. 20 "The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

ESTHER 4:12-14 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

3. SERMON

3.1. Intro - Let's talk about Providence

Was it coincidence that

- Ruth landed up on Boaz's field
- and Esther became queen when Haman was hatching his plot?

Someone said a Coincidence is when God performs a miracle and decides to stay anonymous.

The Theological word for this is "Providence".

And in a nutshell providence means that God is at work - providing - in the ebb and flow of history...

3.2. But there are some misunderstandings of Providence.

1. The first is that everything that happens is what God wants or likes...
We must start by affirming that God is Sovereign.
Nothing happens that He does not allow.
But not everything that He allows is what He likes.
Does God *like* famine and war?
Does He *want* it?
But He allowed us free will and with our free will we broke the world.
He allows the consequences of our free will. But he doesn't like it.
The two circles in the picture tell the story...
And so Providence are those moments when God acts in our history to bring what He has allowed in line with His will.
2. The second danger with providence is that we can turn every event and happening into a sign or turn ourselves inside out trying to figure out what something means... Sometimes things happen because we live in a broken world.
3. The third danger is that we can become fatalistic. Everything is God's will - the rich are rich because God wants it and the poor are poor because God wants it...

Providence in Ruth

1. Very plain
2. When she went out to work
3. Would require her engagement

3.3. Providence in Esther

1. Came as a pointed message - you will have to step up
2. God could use someone else
3. God places us carefully - thoughtfully - package of experiences and gifts.

3.4. Providence in our own lives

1. Learning to think back with gratitude
2. Learning to be alert in the mundane
3. Grabbing the opportunities.

3.5. Conclusion

These are topsy turvy times.

God allows the brokenness of the world to intrude into our lives.

But He is at work.

Paul writes to the church in Rome (lions and gladiators in the Colosseum)

And we know that in all things God works for the good

of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

God will whisper in the "and it turned out that..."
and He will shout in the moments we must stand up...
But He's at work...