

Noticed by Providence

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[0:00] Please open your Bibles to the book of Ruth. We're back in Ruth. We did the first chapter two weeks ago. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, I am weak and inadequate, but you are strong and you are sufficient for all that my dear brothers and sisters need.

You know where they have been. You know their tossing and turning. You know their thoughts, the wrestlings of their hearts, their cries to you.

Would you please, in and through your word, meet them this morning, comfort them, speak to their hearts this morning. Exalt your son, glorify his grace and love toward us.

Revealed on the cross. Make it fresh for us this morning from your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you are able, please stand and join me in honoring the Lord as we read from his word together. Ruth chapter two, verses one to 23.

[2:15] Now, Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth, the Moabite, said to Naomi, let me go to the field and glean among the years of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

And she said to her, go, my daughter. So she set out 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 clan of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, the Lord be with you. And they answered, the Lord bless you. Then Boaz said to the, to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, whose young woman is this?

And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, she is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.

So she came and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest. Then Boaz said to Ruth, now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young woman.

[3:38] Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.

Then she fell on her face, bowing 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?

But Boaz answered her, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

The Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Then she said, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant.

[4:44] Do I am not one of your servants? And at mealtime, Boaz said to her, come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine. So she sat beside the reapers and he passed to her a roasted grain and she ate until she was satisfied and she had some left over.

When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men saying, let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her. And also, pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her.

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up and went into the city.

Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today?

Where have you worked? Blessed be the man 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.

[5 : 56] And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Naomi also said to her, the man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.

And Ruth the Moabite said, besides, he said to me, you shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young woman, lest in another field you be assaulted.

So she kept close to the young woman of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

In his classic 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison writes from the perspective of an unnamed black narrator who feels invisible in society because of his race.

He begins in the prologue by saying, I am an invisible man. Not because of his, not because he's an immaterial ghost or because, you know, he's made of other things or ethereal things, but no, he says, I'm made of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids like any other man.

[7 : 20] But he says, I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. It's a common experience for marginalized peoples.

The poor and those employed in professions in society that are deemed menial often feel unseen or overlooked like a hapless pawn in a world run by the rich, rise of automation that leads to unemployment, persistent inflation caused by wars and tariffs beyond their control being treated as transactional functions rather than as relational humans.

And so on. Foreigners and immigrants often feel similarly unseen. They are regarded as other. Their complex national and ethnic identities and histories are erased and lumped into broad, monolithic, racial or regional categories.

They don't have the same legal recourses and rights as citizens. Their professional qualifications and credentials that they enjoyed in their home country are now meaningless because they're not recognized in their new locale and forcing them toward underemployment Unemployment!

Unseen! Unknown! Unnoticed! Perhaps some of you have felt like that lately. Does anyone see what I'm going through?

[8 : 49] Does anyone care? Does anyone notice? Our passage this morning teaches us that in his loving kindness the Lord takes notice of foreigners who take refuge under his wings.

And we're going to explore that by examining closely three the main characters in chapter 2. First Ruth, second Boaz, and third Yahweh himself, the Lord God.

If anyone could go unseen, unnoticed, unknown, it would have been Ruth. Look at verse 2 and 6 and 21. Ruth, the Moabite.

She's called a Moabite seven times throughout the book. A foreigner from a people who have a bitter and belligerent history with Israel. people of Bethlehem would have been naturally prejudiced against her and anyone from her country.

Not only that, Ruth was poor. Later in chapter 4, we see that Naomi sells the parcel of land that belonged to her deceased husband Elimelech. Whether Elimelech already sold the land ten years prior when they were moving away to Moab or whether they held on to it and because he already sold and needed to be redeemed or whether they had held on to it and now they're trying to sell it because they have no one to work the field and desperately need money.

[10 : 15] Either way, Naomi and Ruth are destitute. They have no money. In verses 2-3, Ruth proposes to Naomi, let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

This was a practice of the poor in Israel. Old Testament harvest laws specify that when you reap the harvest in your field, you are not to harvest it right up to the edge lest you leave nothing for the poor, the sojourners and the widows.

Also, when you gather the wheat or whatever you are harvesting into bundles and into sheaves, whatever you drop along the way, you are not supposed to go back and pick it up. You are supposed to leave it for the poor, the sojourners and widows so that they have something to eat. It was a wise, compassionate social welfare system designed for the poor and the marginalized.

It wasn't a free handout that disincentivized work or fosters complacency and long-term dependency. It preserved the principle of 2 Thessalonians 3.10, if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

[11:26] It afforded the poor an opportunity for the dignity of work. Look at how hard Ruth works in verse 7. The word continued can be translated more literally as stood.

She has stood from early morning until now except for short rest. It's not talking about her just standing around idly and doing nothing. It's saying that she was on her feet the whole day.

I know most of you work jobs where you sit all day, so it's hard to appreciate how hard it is to be on your feet all day. It's exhausting just standing all day. She was not just standing, she was standing and working, working hard to collect the gleanings.

The Old Testament approach to this kind of compassionate care for the poor and welfare as it also commands the well-to-do to be generous, to have compassion on the less well-off rather than having a penny-pinching attitude toward maximizing their own wealth and profit.

That's a good lesson for all of us too. It's great that you're trying to save for the future and for the house and for retirement, but if you are harvesting right up to the edge and whenever you have droppings, you know, gleanings that you've dropped along the way, you go back, make sure to go back every single time to collect every last one to maximize your profits instead of caring for those who are poor, sojourners, widows, then it exposes the fact that you have misaligned affections and priorities, that you don't have room in your heart for generosity toward God and others.

[13:10] Of course, during Ruth's day, as in ours, there was no guarantee that people would actually obey God's commands and have compassion toward the poor, and that's why Ruth makes this suggestion, let me go to the field and glean among the years of grain, after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

She's well aware that not everyone's going to look kindly upon her. She might go to one field and be driven out of the field and have to go to another one and then to another one and then to another one.

She doesn't know with whom she's going to find favor. She's at the mercy of others. She's poor. Not only was Ruth a foreigner, a Moabite, and poor, she was also a widow.

She didn't have the social standing and the material provision and the physical protection that usually fell upon husbands in this culture to provide for their wives.

Remember the historical backdrop of the book of Ruth. It said in Ruth 1.1, in the days when the judges ruled, as I mentioned two weeks ago, the days when the judges ruled were not happy, prosperous times.

[14:19] They were lawless times when people did whatever they saw fit. Judges 21.25 summarize it this way, in those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

These were lawless times that Ruth lived in, and women, especially widows, were vulnerable to exploitation. Throughout the book of Judges, you see women treated as disposable property.

In Judges 19, a local mob surrounds the house of a man who has taken in a traveling Levite to host him. And this mob shows up and demands to have the traveling Levite for sexual sport.

To appease them, the host offers up his own virgin daughter, and the traveling Levite offers up his own concubine and tells them, quote, violate them and do to them what seems good to you.

people doing whatever seems good to their own minds. And the Levite's concubines gang-raped all night. The times of the judges were not safe for women.

[15:33] And you see hints of this dark background throughout this chapter. In verse 9, Boaz charges the young man not to touch Ruth. Why does he have to tell them to not touch Ruth?

I mean, isn't that just what they should do normally? Why? Because if he doesn't tell them and if he doesn't use his authority to make sure they don't touch her, they might. And the word touch in Hebrew as it does in English has a range of meanings including assault, abuse, harassment.

We also see this risk, this dark backdrop in verse 22 when Naomi says to Ruth, it is good my daughter that you go out with Boaz's young woman, lest in another field you be assaulted. Ruth, as a young woman, as a foreign woman, as a widowed woman, as a poor woman, was quadruply vulnerable.

And now we can appreciate the extraordinary courage it took for, likely took for Ruth to even suggest going out to the field of strangers to glean.

[16:48] She's not looking out for herself, she's looking out for her mother-in-law who can't go out to glean. I'm going to provide for her. I told her I'll be with her till death do us part.

I need to provide for her, care for her. I don't know what will happen to me, but I will go looking for a favor where I can find it. She is a worthy woman, a woman of hesed, loving kindness, covenant loyalty.

And then we're introduced to Boaz in verse 1. The narrator tells us that he was a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech. So she is a relative of Naomi.

The phrase worthy man can be more literally translated as a mighty man of wealth. Some translations wonder like the King James Version puts it that way. The word for man here literally means strong man.

It means mighty man or a hero. Compare that to his name, the meaning of his name, Boaz, which means in the strength, likely in the strength of Yahweh, in the strength of the Lord.

[17:58] It's such a strong name. Later, like when Solomon builds his temple, there are two pillars, main pillars that uphold the building, and one of the pillars they name Boaz. In the strength.

The other one they name Yakin, which means the Lord establishes. So it's a strong manly name like a pillar. Surprise, I haven't met more men with the name Boaz.

And he's also a worthy man. The Hebrew word translated worthy here can mean a number of things. It can mean valor, it can mean wealth, it can mean skill, excellence, nobility, which is why some people think it means wealthy in this context, which wouldn't be wrong.

Boaz is wealthy. He's got land, he's got servants, he's a wealthy man. However, considering that the penniless Ruth herself is later described in Ruth chapter 3 verse 11 with the exact same word as a worthy woman, I doubt that wealth is a primary meaning intended here.

That same word is used in Proverbs 31 verse 10. An excellent wife who can find. She's far more precious than jewels.

[19:14] The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. Ruth is the only named woman in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew Bible, who is called by that title of Proverbs 31, an excellent woman, a noble woman, woman of noble character.

And I think a similar meaning is intended here for Boaz. He's not merely a wealthy man. More importantly, he is a worthy man, a man of godly, noble character, a manly man in the true sense of the word, a man who does not use his strength and position to take advantage of others, to stand on top of others, but a man who uses his strength and position to carry others and to lift up others around him.

We see this in the many actions that Boaz takes on behalf of Ruth to provide for her, to protect her. He not only lets Ruth glean in his field, he encourages her to glean only from his field, under his watchful eye and protection.

And then he goes above and beyond that and instructs his reapers to let Ruth glean, not only from the gleanings, the droppings from the harvest, but also from among the sheaves that they've collected and bundled up together.

And he tells them as they're putting the sheaves together to intentionally pull sheaves, pull stuff out from the sheaves and leave them for Ruth. It's like, oh, oops, so that she could collect even more.

[20:53] And even though Ruth is a lowly servant in terms of her social position and status, in fact, as Ruth says herself in verse 13, she's not even one of his servants.

She doesn't even have the rights that Boaz's servants have. She's not even one of his servants.

And yet, Boaz invites her, tells his man to draw water for her.

Drink from that water when you are thirsty. Tells her to come here. Here's the bread that we're eating. Dip your bread into our dipping wine. And here's the roasted grain. Come have lunch with us.

Gives her so much food that she has enough left over to take home and feed her mother-in-law Naomi. You can imagine how overwhelmed and grateful Ruth must be, considering the risk that she took to go out to that field where she knew no one.

And she's overwhelmed by Boaz's care, gestures twice. She says, once in verse 10, why have I found favor in your eyes?

[22:04] That you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner. And in verse 13, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.

That word favor translates to the Hebrew word that is often translated as grace. It's the word used to describe our Lord God in Exodus 34 when he reveals himself as the Lord, the Lord, the gracious and compassionate God.

It's a word that especially applies when you're the one that's receiving a favor from a benefactor, someone who's in a superior social position than you, like in this instant with Ruth and Boaz or with a servant and a king.

And when you're treated with favor, you're not being treated fairly. Right? Like when you tell people, don't have favorites. It's like you shouldn't have a favorite kid, some people say, right?

You shouldn't have a favorite church member. You know, you should have a don't play favorites, right? It's like when you have favorites, when you favor someone, you treat them with special affection. You don't treat them equally, fairly, like everybody else.

[23:21] No, you treat them with special attention. That favor word is a key word in the book of Esther. She's someone who has favor, favor from people who see her, favor from the king.

That's why she's given access to the king that is normally not granted to people. That's why the king listens to her and not to Haman. It's because she has favor. And Boaz shows Ruth favor. even though she is a foreigner, a Moabite, a poor widow, and not even one of his servants that he's responsible for.

And in doing that, Boaz is imitating God who is gracious with people like that. Isn't that how God drew near to us?

Ian, do we deserve anything from our Lord God? Aren't most of us Gentiles? Not even part of the original chosen people of God?

[24:25] Aren't we the people whose ancestors persecuted the people of God, rebelled against God, and worshipped and went after idols? Aren't we the ones who have all sinned against him?

Ones who were alienated from him? Aren't we the ones, as Paul describes in Ephesians 2, those who were separated from Christ, the uncircumcision, the Gentiles and the flesh, separated from Christ, alienated from the common wealth of Israel, apart from God, without God and without hope in the world, strangers to the covenants of promise?

That's what we all were. And yet, God showed us favor. Gracious, gracious, graciousness.

He showed us grace, unmerited favor, undeserved favor in sending his own son, Jesus, to save us, to call us as a people for himself to belong to him.

That's what Boaz is doing, extending the favor of God. Why did Boaz show Ruth so much favor? I know what some of you guys are thinking. he's making his moves.

[25:39] I don't know. I'm not sure about that. At least maybe not yet. Because he's very surprised. He's a little too old for her. So this text very artfully and subtly kind of builds tension.

So he mentions Ruth as a young woman. And then the first servant, his foreman, that he mentions is a young man. young woman, young man.

Oh, I wonder what could happen. And then again and again, young men, young women. And I think there's this tension builds. What's going to happen to Ruth? Is she going to find something?

Is she going to find love? And then there's this amazing plot twist later on when she proposes to Boaz. And Boaz is like, what? It's like, me?

It's like, how kind of you, your covenant love, your faithfulness in seeking home for your mother-in-law and to continue the line of your deceased husband by seeking to marry a kinsman redeemer who is too old for you, rather than going after the young men, he says.

[26:49] And so it's building up. And so I'm not sure he's making his moves yet. But this whole chapter is structured in a way that gives us an answer to that question.

It's structured chiastically. The first half of Ruth chapter two mirrors the second half of Ruth chapter two. And that means there's a matching element.

Every verse has a matching counterpart in the second half. And then when you get to the middle, that's the part that stands alone. It's the part that alone doesn't have a pair. And that's verses 11 to 12.

The structure intentionally brings our focus to that. I think I have this to show. So you can see it in verse 1 to 3. You have the introduction with the focus on Boaz. And in verses 20 to 23, you have the conclusion with the focus on Boaz.

Workers bless Boaz and Boaz notices Ruth in verses 4 to 5. Naomi blesses Boaz for noticing Ruth in verses 19 to 20. Ruth gleans in Boaz's field in verses 6 to 7.

[27 : 47] And then Ruth brings back what she gleaned in Boaz's field in verses 17 to 18. And then Boaz provides for and protects Ruth in verses 8 to 9. And then Boaz provides for and protects Ruth again in verses 14 to 16.

And then Ruth's amazement at Boaz's favor in verse 10. Ruth's amazement at Boaz's favor in verse 13. And that, like a shining arrow, is bringing its attention to verses 11 to 12.

All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me. And how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

The Lord repay you for what you have done. And a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

That's the key verse. That's why Boaz is showing her favor. That's why God's showing her favor. In showing covenant loyalty and steadfast love toward her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth has done what is pleasing to Yahweh.

[28 : 52] But Boaz recognizes that in throwing her lot in with Naomi, Ruth has done more than simply that. Look at how he phrases it in verse 11.

How you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. Does this remind you of anything else in scripture in the Old Testament?

This is exactly what the Lord God, Yahweh, called Abram to when he first chose him and his descendants to be his people. Genesis 12, 1 to 3.

Go from your country, your kindred, and your father's house to land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation.

I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Remember what Ruth said vowed to Naomi in chapter 1 verse 16.

[29 : 52] Your people shall be my people and your God my God. In following Naomi to Bethlehem, Ruth has switched religious spiritual allegiances.

She has chosen the Lord, Yahweh, as her God. And so Boaz says to her in verse 12, the Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Because he is your God. So yes, Boaz is providing for Ruth and protecting her, but he's doing that because ultimately, Yahweh, the Lord, is taking notice of Ruth and taking care of her.

Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, is merely an instrument in the hands of our divine redeemer.

Naomi remarks in verse 20, may Boaz be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. It's that recurring word again, hesed, kindness, loving kindness, covenant loyalty.

[31 : 02] But whose kindness is Naomi speaking of? Look at verse 20 again. Whose kindness is Naomi speaking of? Is it Boaz's kindness? Is it the Lord's kindness?

Yes. The answer is both. It's intentionally unclear in the narrative. It's not spelled out because it's both.

Boaz is certainly showing kindness to the living and to the dead, showing kindness to the living, Naomi and Ruth, to the dead, their deceased husbands, Elimelech and Melon, respectively, but ultimately it's the Lord who is showing them kindness.

And this is in answer to Naomi's prayer early in chapter 1, verse 8. What did she say to her daughters-in-law in chapter 1, verse 8? May the Lord deal kindly with you, hesed.

And now, the Lord's doing exactly that. The Lord is treating Ruth with kindness because he's looking out for her in answer to Naomi's prayer. Even that prayer that Naomi uttered in the depths of her own despair and bitterness and disillusionment, the Lord heard and he's now answering that in

the kindness that Boaz extends to Ruth.

[32:18] And I love verse 3. It's ironic. Ruth happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. delightful understatement.

How did Ruth just happen to come to that one field belonging to Boaz, her potential kinsman redeemer? The Hebrew word used here is the word that's used for chance.

In 1 Samuel 6, the Philistines come under the judgment of God and the wrath of God because they steal the ark of God from the tabernacle. and these Philistines are experiencing all kinds of plagues and judgment from God because of the ark.

The ark is not supposed to be with them. It's supposed to be with Israel. And so the Philistines are like, okay, what do we do? All right, let's tie the ark to some cows. And then let's see if they act strange, if they act like they're possessed by something and they walk directly to Israel and take the ark back where it belongs, then we know that this is the doing of Israel's God.

He's bringing these plagues upon us. But if the cows just wander off wherever they want to go like the cows normally do, then we know that this is not the Lord's doing.

[33:36] It is happening to us by chance, by coincidence. It's the way it's translated in 1 Samuel 6. So it's a really interesting choice of word.

It is an intentional understatement. Ruth happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. You don't happen to come to something like that. This is the Bible we're talking about here.

In the Hebrew worldview, in the biblical worldview, there is no such thing as chance or luck.

Proverbs 16.33 says, the lot is cast into the lap, but every decision is from the Lord.

Your every dice roll is from the Lord. He's sovereign over everything, every Adam, everything that goes down in the history of humanity.

He's sovereign over all of it. She didn't just happen to come to it. And you see there in that statement, God's providential care, even in invisible ways that we often don't notice.

[34:38] When I was a sixth grader in South Korea, my dad happened to be, just happened to be the one engineer that his company in Korea decided to send to a partner company in Seattle.

One engineer. Because of that, my family, who had never ever planned to move out of Korea, ends up in the United States. A year or two later, the company that he left in Korea goes out of business. He's the only guy from the company who still has a job to provide for our family. and here, I receive a great education and I grow much deeper in my relationship with the Lord.

When I was a busy college student planning my future and studying hard and showing no interest whatsoever in women, I just happened to go to the university retreat where Williams College and Amherst College, we're doing the retreat together.

And then I meet this beautiful woman and then my life is never the same again. That's my wife, just so you're wondering. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right.

[36:02] When I'm wandering from church to church, because I have these reformed convictions, my theological convictions, but also these convictions about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not wondering where to go, I just happened to talk to the one friend who knows about a sovereign grace church in Haverhill, Massachusetts in seminary.

So end up in that church, disciple there, mentor there, ordained as a pastor there, and sent out to plant a church in Cambridge, Massachusetts from there.

It just happened to happen. Sheer luck? I think not. I think sometimes we worry a little too much about our lives, about our plans.

I have to get all my ducks in order. I have to have all these plans set out. I have to have everything happen exactly the way I envisioned, because who else is going to do it for me? I have to look out for myself.

No one else is doing it. I need to make sure things go well because no one else is doing it for me.

No, no, no, that's not true. It's not true that no one else is doing it for you.

[37:15] You have a sovereign God who is providentially watching over every detail of your life. Because Ruth has come under the wings of Yahweh to take refuge in verse 11.

This is what's happening to Ruth. This image of taking refuge, under the wings of Yahweh is a richly biblical and vivid imagery.

The law of Moses, the Torah, or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, it begins with the Lord God hovering as his spirit over the face of the waters in Genesis 1 verse 2.

And then that Pentateuch, the first five books of the concludes in Deuteronomy 32, 10 to 12, with the Lord God hovering again over his people, Israel.

And it says that he encircled Israel. He cared for him. He kept him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.

[38:28] The Lord alone guided him. No foreign God was with him. It's the same word, flutter, hover, same Hebrew word. The psalmists, throughout the Psalms, often speak of us taking refuge under the shadow of the wings of Yahweh.

Where are you taking refuge this morning? Is it under the wings of Yahweh or is it someone else's wings? Is it your own wings? Maybe you're a single woman wondering if any man will ever notice you.

Maybe you're out of work and wondering if any employer will ever notice you. Maybe you're languishing in your marriage and wondering if there's any help or change forthcoming.

Maybe you're dealing with chronic pain or illness that everybody else seems to forget, but you know for sure you can't ever forget because it's real and present. Maybe you've been unable to have a child for a long time and you grieve silently because no one knows.

Whatever situation you're in, wherever you are, remember that the Lord takes notice of you. He cares for you.

[39:44] In Genesis 16, when Sarah, her mistress, mistreats her and her master and the father of her child, Abraham, leaves her, hangs her out to dry, Hagar is forlorn and then she flees.

But in her plight, who notices her? It's Yahweh. He notices her and cares for her. So that Hagar calls the name of the Lord who spoke to her, you are a God of seeing.

For she said, truly here I have seen him who looks after me. When nobody else sees you, even when your earthly pastors and shepherds fail to see you.

Ed and I feel like that all the time. There's so many needs, so many precious saints and brothers and sisters, so many things that you suffer and you struggle with and you wrestle with and we want to care for everybody but we can't care for everybody the way we would like.

Even when the Lord, even when we fail you, even when your brothers and sisters fail and we don't notice you and we don't see you, the Lord God takes notice of you. He sees you.

[40:58] He's the God of seeing. Psalm 34, 15 to 18 says, the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

That's our God. That's Yahweh. And come under his wings. Take refuge under his wings.

In Matthew 23, 37, Jesus cries out in lament over the unrepentant city of Jerusalem. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I, would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing.

Prophesying of his crucifixion, Jesus said in John 12, 32, and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, he's talking about the cross, will draw all people to myself.

[42:10] the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross are the very wings of Yahweh inviting you.

Come under the auspices of my wings. Come under this cross. Come under the shadow of the cross that provides refuge for sinners, refuge for embattled sinners, shelter for those who are receiving the withering attacks of the enemy, the condemnation and accusation of Satan.

Come under the shadow of my wings. Come under the shadow of the cross and there you will find rest. There you find refuge.

On the cross, Jesus died for our sins. He took our place. He bore the pain, the wrath, the punishment, the shame, the condemnation that we deserved like a mother bird hovering over her young, protecting them from predators and the elements.

He took it all on that cross. So that's the invitation.

[43:31] Yahweh, the Lord, is the one who notices foreigners, strangers, the outcasts, sinners like you and me.

So come take refuge under his wings today. Let's pray. Oh, Lord God.

We find such comfort under the shadow of your wings. Oh, Lord, we know well that outside of that protection, we would not last.

We are guilty sinners, guilty as charged. Condemnation is what we deserve. Eternal damnation in hell is what we deserve.

Yet how can it be? That my Lord should die for me. Oh, Lord, we love your cross.

[44 : 58] Thank you for stretching out your arms and your wings over us in mercy, in grace, in undeserved, unmerited favor, in loving kindness, covenant loyalty.

Taking undeserving servants, the lowliest servants, rebellious servants, and adopting us as sons and daughters of the kingdom of God.

O Lord, help us to stay, stay near the cross, under the refuge of your wings.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.