

A SERMON FOR GLEANERS

NO. 464

A SERMON
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Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.”
Ruth 2:15-16

ALL the world depends upon the labor of the field, and the king himself is served of the plough and of the sickle. The dwellers in the country who watch the up-springing blade through all its perils, who mark the ear as it bursts from its sheath, and who anxiously observe it until it hangs downward through ripeness, and becomes yellow in the sun—these, being brought constantly into contact with clods and crops, are not able to forget their entire dependence upon “the staff of life.”

One can hardly live where the operations of husbandry are carried on, without often looking up to the God of providence in anxious prayer, and anon, lifting up the heart in grateful praise. But the most of us are condemned to live in this huge wilderness of bricks, where scarcely a green thing salutes our eyes, where if we try to rear a plant, it is but a sickly thing, neither tempting for beauty, nor fragrant with perfume. In the absence of the bright-eyed flowers, it is small wonder if we grow a little blind towards our mother earth.

We are too apt to think that *we* are independent of the operations of the country, that our trade, our commerce, our manufactures, are sufficient to support us, forgetting all the while, that in vain is yonder forest of masts unless the earth shall yield her fruit, in vain the emporium, the exchange, and the place of merchandise, unless the land is ploughed and harrowed, and at last yields to the husbandman his reward!

I would that I could recall to your memories, O ye dwellers in the city, how much you depend upon the Lord God of the earth for your daily bread. Does your food fall like manna from the skies? Do you create it at the forge, or fashion it in the loom or on the wheel? Comes it not of the earth, and is it not the Lord who gives to the fertile womb of earth the power to yield its harvests? Comes not the dew from heaven, and the sunshine from above, and do not these bring to *us* our bread as well as to those who abide in the midst of the fields?

Let us not forget this time of the harvest, nor be unthankful for the bounty of the wheatsheaf. Let us not forget to plead with God that He would be pleased to give us suitable weather for the gathering in of the precious grain. And when it shall be ingathered, let us not sullenly keep silence, but with the toiling swains who, well-pleased, behold the waving yellow crop, let us lift up the shout of harvest home, and thank the God who covers the valleys with corn, and crowns the year with His goodness.

I would order my speech this morning, so as to act in your ears as the harvest bell in our midland counties. I have there noticed a bell ringing early in the morning, and again towards the evening, which, I am told, is intended to tell the people the hour when they may go into the fields to glean, and when they must leave the field and go back to their homes. My sermon shall be as simple as the ringing of a bell, but if it suffice to remind you of the sheaves and of the harvest, if it shall but make you thank our God who gives us the fruit of the earth, I shall be well content.

Tell me not that this is not a proper theme for Sabbath day. I wot you know not what you say. Did not the disciples of Jesus walk through the corn fields on the Sabbath, and did not the Master make the fields themselves the subjects of His sermons? I fear not His disapprobation when I say, on this hallowed day, “Lift up now your eyes, and behold the fields are ripe already unto the harvest.” Do you

think that the outward creation is sinful, and that God would be worshipped on Sabbaths with closed eyes and vacant faces, which must not look on flowers and fields? There is no impurity in green grass, or flowers, or sailing clouds, or rippling waves, or ripening corn.

To the believing ear, the footsteps of the Bountiful Father are everywhere audible, and the revolving seasons do but reveal the varied attributes of God. We may gather from every rustling ear a song, and listen in every harvest field to a sermon which angels might stoop to hear. 'Tis no unhallowed theme. Come with me to the harvest field—may the Master come with us—and let us talk awhile of other things than harvests, though the harvest shall be the metaphor on which we will fashion our speech.

A word or two about the gleaning. Under the Jewish dispensation, gleaning was one of the rights of the people. The farmer was forbidden to reap the corners of the field, and if he should have left a sheaf by oversight in the field, he must not go back for it, it was to be left for the widow and the fatherless, and the poor that dwelt in the land.

Nay, the rights of gleaning went further than wheat and barley, the olive tree was to be beaten but once, and they were to leave the gleanings to the poor. So with the vintage, when they gathered the grapes, they were not utterly to clean the branches of the vines, but leave sufficient to give a taste of the delicious fruit to the poorest of the land.

I would not have our Christian husbandmen less liberal under the Gospel dispensation than the farmers were under the Mosaic law. As Boaz, in his generosity gave to Ruth more than she could legally claim, so let no possessor of the soil be questioning about the legal rights of the poor to gleaning, but let him open his gates sooner than the Jewish husbandman would have done, and let him sometimes bid his men leave handfuls on purpose for the poor.

Grieved am I to observe that the custom grows with many farmers nowadays to rake their fields and get all they can from the poor of the village, and I believe some would rake the stubble seven times if they could but get one ear more, and leave less for gleaning.

I would not gather into my barn, were I a farmer, a sheaf, every ear of which rustled with the cries of the poor. I would not have the poor man's curse for all the rich man's field, nor make the poor dwellers in the village dissatisfied the whole year round because of a paltry handful of corn which I had added to the stock of my bursting barns.

Specially you who are Christian men, I repeat it in your hearing—be not less liberal than was the Jew, and if of old when there were types and shadows they left good gleanings for the poor, scatter you with a liberal hand now that we have come to the substance and the fullness of the Gospel. Rob not the poor man of his little, but earn his blessing by your abundant generosity in the time of reaping your fields.

I have now to invite you to other fields than these. I would bring you to the field of Gospel truth. My Master is the Boaz. See here, in this precious Book is a field full of truthful promises, of blessings rich and ripe. The Master stands at the gate, and affords us welcome. Strong men, full of faith, like reapers, reap their sheaves, and gather in their armfuls.

Would you were all reapers, for the harvest truly is plenteous. But if not reapers, may you be as the maidens of Boaz. I see some servants who do not so much reap themselves as partake of that which others have reaped. I know we have many in this church who are glad to eat the sweets and feed upon the fat things of the kingdom when they are brought forth each Sabbath day in the ministry of the Word.

But I see trembling yonder outside the gate, a little company to whom I am to address myself today, they are not reapers, they have not strength enough of faith to take the big sheaves, they are not as yet like household servants. They are not peaceful enough in their consciences to sit down and eat, and dip their morsel in the vinegar and be satisfied, but they are *gleaners*, and they are saying, as they stand at the gate, "Would that I might find favor in the sight of my Lord, that I might even glean in this field, for I should then be content if I might gather here and there an ear of Gospel grace."

I am sent to you. My Master sends me as one of His young men, and thus He bids me say to you, “Come into the field and glean wheresoever you will, and if in the gleaning you should grow strong and become reapers, reap and carry home the sheaves for yourselves.”

I. First then, like Boaz, I shall ask the question, “WHO IS THIS DAMSEL?” in order that I may find out who these gleaners are who are invited into the fields of Christ, that they may glean the handfuls that are let fall on purpose for them.

“Who is this damsel?” The first answer is, *she is a Moabitess and a stranger*. Ah! I know you, poor timid heart! You say, “I am sprung of an evil stock, an heir of wrath even as others, my nature is depraved and vile, how can I hope, such a one as I am, that I should ever be allowed to go into the Master’s field and glean of His good corn of grace? Oh! sir, did you know what I feel of my lost and helpless state, could you but perceive how base I am in my own eyes because I have been so long a stranger to God, and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, I think you would scarce invite me to glean in the field at all.”

Verily, my sister, you are the very person to whom I am sent, for it was a Moabitish damsel upon whom Boaz set his heart, and it was to her that he sent his message, “Abide thou fast by my maidens; go not in any other field.”

But I ask again who this damsel is, and she answers, “I am not only by nature a stranger, *but I must confess that I am now in my condition miserable and poor*, I cannot buy Christ’s grace, I can do nothing to win His love. Once I thought I had some good works, but now I have none. Once I relied upon ceremonies, but I have given them up, for I find no comfort in them. I am utterly poor—so poor, that I despair of ever in the future being richer than I am now. I am helpless, I am hopeless, I am nothing, yea, I am less than nothing. Alas! I am such a miserable beggar, that I am not worthy of the least of all His mercies.”

Do you say this? Right glad am I then, to hear you use such language, for unto you, again, am I sent, and unto you am I bidden to give the gracious invitation—“Come into the field and glean even among the sheaves.”

Now the gleaner whom I describe is not only in her own experience an alien and a stranger, and in her own present condition naked and poor, and miserable, *but she has, despite all this, a decision for the Lord God of Israel*.

I think I hear her say, “If I perish, I will perish looking to the cross of Christ, I have nothing of my own to bring, but I come just as I am. The Lord knows I have no other dependence but upon the blood and the finished righteousness of Jesus Christ. I forswear the gods of Moab in whom I once trusted, the world is now nothing to me, the pomp and vanities thereof have lost all their glory, as to myself, I abhor myself in dust and ashes. I would be Christ’s, and if He will not have me, if I may not glean in His fields, I will never go elsewhere.

*‘If I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.’”*

It is marvelous, the tenacity with which some of these timid souls will hold to Christ. Just as a man, the more fearful he is of sinking, clutches the plank with a more terrible earnestness, so have I seen some of these fearful souls lay hold on Jesus with a grip which neither death nor hell could unloose. Were the times of burning to come back again, many a wavering soul that can scarce say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” would go singing to the stake, while many of those who are bold in words would prove cowardly in acts, and withdraw from Christ when it came to burning for Him.

Well, it is to you that I am sent, poor timid gleaner, come in, come into the field, and we will see if we cannot let fall some handfuls on purpose for you.

Our description, however, is far from being complete. *This gleaner is one who is exceedingly humble and self-emptied*. Just observe what she says when Boaz takes notice of her—“Who am I, that I should

find grace in thy sight, seeing that I am a stranger?" Ah! and the woman to whom I would speak this morning has such a low estimate of herself, that when she gets a grain of hope she thinks, "Ah! it is too good for me." When sometimes you half hope that Christ has loved you and given Himself for you, a sight of your unworthiness comes in, and you say, "No, this can hardly be, that such a one, so mean and so despicable as I, should ever be regarded by the lovely eyes of Christ my Lord."

I know you think not yourself to be pure, or fair, or lovely, and when you read such a passage as that, where Christ says of His spouse, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee," tears come in your eyes, for you say, "Alas! He will never say that of me, for 'I am all defiled with sin, all unholy and unclean.' Should He search the world through, He would not find a more worthless one than I, and should He turn the heap over again and again, he could not find one that less deserved to be the object of His pity than I, poor unworthy I."

Ay, but you are just the person to whom I am sent! Your Lord Jesus has heard of you, and He loves such as you are, for when you are little in your own eyes then are you great in His, and when you talk thus bashfully of yourself then He loves to hear your words, for they are words of truth.

In very deed, you are what you say you are, nothing but loathsomeness, and corruption, and depravity, and yet He who has loved you, notwithstanding all this, will never leave you till your corruption has been removed, till your loathsomeness has been washed away, till for deformity you have matchless beauty, and for unholiness His perfect righteousness. I say to you, even to you are we sent today.

Once again, *these gleaners have a very high opinion of those who are true Christians*. You notice Ruth says, "I am not like unto one of thy handmaidens." No, and my poor gleaner yonder, she thinks the saints of God are such a blessed people, she is not like one of them. When she gets into her black experience she says, "If I were a child of God I should never be like this." Knowing her vileness and her imperfections she cries, "Ah! if I were one of Christ's chosen, I should be much holier than I am. Though I love His saints, I cannot dare to hope that I shall ever be numbered with them—my goodness can never reach so high as to be joined with them in visible fellowship."

Ah! I know some of you feel that if you ever did get to heaven you would creep through some cranny in the door, and hide yourselves in some mouse hole far away, where none could see you. And today, though in truth you are the best of the saints, you think yourselves the vilest of the vile, for many there be that are very rich in grace who think themselves miserably poor. On the other hand, many who say, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," are naked, and poor, and miserable.

Poor Moabites, long an alien, having gone far into sin, and now decided for Christ, with a sort of despairing hope that may be He will look upon you, today—even today, He speaks to you. Open your ear and hear Him, forget your kindred and your father's house, for He greatly desires you, and He would have you even now come to Him and be espoused unto Him forever.

I need not prolong our description of the gleaners to whom I speak. The Holy Ghost, I hope, will find some of you out, and may He press home the truth to your hearts.

II. Having beckoned to the gleaner, I shall now, like Boaz, ADDRESS THE REAPERS.

The ministers are the reapers, and thus speaks Boaz to them—"Let her glean, even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

The first command Christ gives to His ministers is—"Rebuke her not." Ah! I fear me, my brethren in the ministry, that we have often rebuked where we ought to have comforted, and perhaps our unwise speeches, when we did not mean to do it, have been very hard blows to the afflicted in Zion. It is an ill thing for the strong cattle to push with horn and shoulder. We are very apt, unless we have much trial and trouble ourselves, to lose the lady's hand which is so necessary for a physician of souls. We keep the lion's heart, but oh! the tender hand and the downy fingers, we are not so ready to keep these in dealing with sore consciences.

I know some preachers who never went to Martin Luther's school—they may have prayer and meditation, but they have never been schooled by temptation. And if we are not much tempted ourselves, if we are not emptied from vessel to vessel ourselves, we are in very great danger when we are dealing with these Ruths, lest we are hard with them, and rebuke and reproach them, when instead thereof we should hear the Master say, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem."

Now I take it that we do very much reproach these tender ones *when we set up standards in our ministry to which we tell them they must come or else perish*. Some do it in *experience*. I have heard old divines and like Elihu, I have been ready to rebuke my seniors when they have taught their experience, in all its length and breadth, as necessary for all the people of God. The experience of the advanced saint must never be set up as a standard for the young beginner.

There are mountains for us to climb when our bones are firm, but these mountains are not for babes. There are depths into which we are to dive when we have learned the art of plunging into them, but these are not for little children, who must be dandled on the knee, and fondled at the breast. When we describe some dark passage in our lives and say to the young convert—"You must have felt all this or you are not a child of God," we are reproaching when we ought to have comforted, and rebuking where we ought to have consoled.

So have I seen a standard of *grace* set up. Some Christians are eminent in their graces, their faith is valorous, their courage defies all danger, their hope is bright and sparkling like a diamond. But if in our preaching we tell young converts that their graces must be equal in luster to the fathers in the church, what do we do but rebuke Ruth when we ought to have let fall handfuls of corn for her to gather?

And so too, with regard to *doctrinal knowledge*. I have known some Christians well-schooled in these matters, and deeply read in theology who, when they meet with one who knows no more than this, that he is a sinner, and that Christ came to save sinners, will ask hard, wrinkled questions, which are more fit for an assembly of divines than for a babe in Christ. And because, forsooth, the little child cannot untie a Gordian knot, because the babe cannot crack the hard shells of these theological nuts, they send him away and say, "The root of the matter is not in you, you have not passed from death unto life."

Oh! let us not do this, dear brother reapers, let us sooner cut ourselves with our own sickle than cut Ruth therewith, let us rather be patient, and very tender, and receive the weak in the faith, as Christ has received them. Let us, like our Master, not overdrive the lambs, but carry them in our bosom, and gently lead them when they need our tenderness and our care.

There is also another way in which some rebuke these gleaners, who should rather be invited and comforted—that is, by denying their faith when it is mixed with unbelief. It is marvelous, it is miraculous, that a spark of faith can live in the midst of an ocean of unbelief. You will find men who, at times, fear that they believe nothing, in their own apprehension they are so beclouded and bemisted that they have lost their way, and do not know where they are, and yet they are true believers for all that.

Some of us have passed through crises of our being in which, if we had been asked our very name, we could hardly have told it, for we were so utterly distressed, so lost and cast away by reason of overwhelming blasphemies, or incessant temptations, that we could scarce tell our right hand from our left. And were we therefore without faith? Nay, there was still a little faith, there was an undying principle still within us when death had made us wretched men.

So we must not talk to these young beginners as though the uprising of their corruption disproved the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but we must succour them. We may tell them of the dragons we have fought, and the giants we have slain, but we must use discretion even in this. And when they are in the Slough of Despond, we must not leave them to sink there up to their very necks, but go lend them our hand to pull them out. For they may be on the right road even in the slough, and they may still have their faces to Zion, though those faces may be besmeared with the mire and filth of that dreadful bog. Let us never rebuke or reproach these timid ones, but help and sustain them.

But further, Boaz gave another exhortation to the reapers—“*Let fall handfuls of purpose for her.*” In our ministry there should always be a corner cupboard for the tried and timid saints. I think there should never be a sermon without a Benjamin’s mess for the children. There should be strong meat for the men, but there should always be milk for the babes. Ready to adapt our ministry to all sorts of people, if we forget any, we should never forget these!

My brother, would you minister to these gleaners? Let me remind you first, that our ministry must be *plain*, for these timid souls cannot feed on hard words. Dr. Manton once preached in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and a great crowd went to listen to him. A poor man who had walked fifty miles to hear the good doctor, afterwards plucked him by the sleeve and said—“There was nothing for me this morning.” The doctor had preached a very learned sermon, full of Greek and Latin quotations which the poor countryman could not understand, but the doctor had not expected him, and there was nothing for him.

I think there should always be in our ministry some things for poor Ruth, so plain and so simple that the wiseacres will turn up their noses and say, “What platitudes!” Never mind, if Ruth gets a handful of corn, our Master at the last shall know who did His errand best and served Him with a perfect heart.

And then, if plain, we must remember too, that it must be very *elementary*. We must be often laying again the foundation stone, teaching faith in Christ again and again, as Luther says, repeating justification by faith every Sunday, because men are so apt to forget it.

Oh! you fine preachers who elaborate your learned essays, who work all the week long to addle your own brains, and then spend the Sunday in muddling your hearers, would that you would remember these poor gleaners, who want none of your fine stuff, none of your glorious flights, none of your rounded periods, but who will be better far content if you will tell them that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and point their eyes to Calvary and bid them look and live.

We must let fall handfuls on purpose for the weak and ignorant. And then again, our preaching must be *evangelical*. Weeping eyes need Christ to dry them, tender hearts need Jesu’s wounds to make them whole. A man who lives without temptation may enjoy a Sunday’s sermon without Christ in it, but give me a man who is tempted in the week and I know he wants Christ, give me a man who has lost money in the week, or that has been subjected to ridicule for Christ’s sake, and I know that you might as well offer him the husks that swine eat as offer him anything but Christ crucified visibly set forth before his eyes.

Oh! we must get back to this, all of us who are preachers, we must forget what we learned at college, we must leave behind what we pick up from learned books, and come out to tell Ruth just that which she most wants to hear, that Boaz welcomes her to the field, and bids her glean till her hands are full.

But then, brethren, you will notice that these reapers were to let handfuls fall *on purpose for her*. Well then, you reapers in God’s field, let your preaching be very *personal*. Oh! I love it when I draw the bow not to do it at a venture, but to single out some troubled heart and speak to you all as though there were but one here, not pouring the oil over the wound, but coming up to the edge of the gaping sore to pour *in* the oil and wine.

These poor Ruths will not dare to take the corn unless we put it right in their way. They are so fearful, so timorous, that though it seem to be scattered for everybody, they think it cannot be for them, but if it be *there*, put *there* so that they cannot mistake it, then they say—“Well, that is for me, ay, that is what *I* have felt, that is what *I* want,” and they cannot, unbelieving though they be, they cannot help stooping down and picking up the handful that is let fall *on purpose* for them.

Then, if it be so, our preaching must always be very *affectionate*, for if we let fall a handful with a scowling face, our Ruth will go to the other end of the field rather than pick it up. Oh! brethren in Christ, it is after all our sympathy with our fellow men which is the great engine the Holy Ghost uses in converting them.

It is not merely telling out the truth which is the power. God, if He had willed it, might have made statues which could preach, and they could have preached as well as we do, and infinitely better if the Lord had poured the words out of their cold lips, but He made *men* preachers that men might feel for

men, and that our words might come out from our hearts, and so go glowing into the hearts of the afflicted.

Oh! let *us* then who are reapers for Christ, be very tender with poor Ruth, and often when we forget the strong and leave the mighty man to take care of himself, let us go to the gate to pull in the fainting Mercy, and invite Christiana and her little children to sit down and rest. So would I do this morning, and therefore I pass on to our third point.

III. As myself a reaper for Christ, I must try to follow the example of the reapers of Boaz, and LET FALL HANDFULS ON PURPOSE FOR THE GLEANER.

I am afraid I shall not be able to give you such handfuls as I would, but they shall come out of the right field. Oh! you timid and troubled heart, let me drop before you now *a handful of precious promises*. “He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” Does not that suit your case? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak, a bruised reed, out of which no music can come, weaker than weakness itself, a reed, and that reed bruised! He will not break you, He who broke Rahab by His right hand will not break you.

You are like the smoking flax, no light, no warmth, comes from you, you are on the contrary, like flax that smokes, giving forth a foul, offensive smell. But He will not quench you, He will blow with His sweet breath of mercy till He fans you to a flame.

Do you need another? “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” What soft words! Your heart is tender and the Master knows it, therefore He speaks so gently to you. Will you not listen, and obey Him, and come to Him, come to Him even now?

Hear him yet again—“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” Or would you hear Jesus Christ speak to you again?—“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Or again, “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” Do you not remember ten thousand such passages as these?

“When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee; when thou goest through the fires thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” Or this, “Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” Or this, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions.” Or this, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Or this, “The Spirit and the bride say Come, and let him that athirst Come, and whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.”

Or this again, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money, come and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Oh! my Master’s field is very rich, behold the handfuls. See, there they lie before you, poor timid soul. Gather them up, make them your own, for Jesus bids you take them. Be not too bashful, but take them, feed on them, and go on in the strength of this meat all your days.

Well, I have dropped a handful of promises, now let me try and scatter a *handful of doctrines*. But Ruth starts back, for she is afraid to glean in the wheat fields of doctrine.

Nay, but Ruth, here is the doctrine of election, come and glean that. Fear you not, poor timid soul, ’tis a sweet and blessed truth. Hear it—“God hath chosen the weak things of this world, and the things that are not hath God chosen to bring to nought the things that are.” “I thank thee, O Father of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Does not that suit you, timid soul? Are you not as a babe, as a weak thing, and as a foolish thing? Oh, there is a handful on purpose for you, in the doctrine of electing love.

Hear you another, the doctrine of justification by faith—“not by works of righteousness which we have done he saveth us, but through Christ Jesus; we are saved through what Jesus hath done on our behalf.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but hath everlasting life.” What say you? Does not

that suit you? You have no good works, can you not trust Christ and *His* good works on your behalf. Is not this a handful on purpose for you?

“Yes but I fear,” saith one, “that if I were saved I should yet fall away, for I am so weak.” There is another handful for you—“I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.” Is not this a handful on purpose for you? “I have made and I will bear, even I will carry; even unto hoar hairs I am he, and unto old age will I carry thee.” What more do you want? I tell you, Ruth, there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which, if it be rightly understood, will not yield handfuls on purpose *for you*.

Indeed, my Master’s Gospel, though it is a chariot in which a king may ride, is like an ambulance used on the field of battle, in which a man with broken limbs may ride comfortably too. Oh! it is soft riding when Christ carries in His arms, and He does this for such as you are. Broken in pieces all asunder, with your thoughts like a case of knives cutting your soul and conscience through and through, Christ has made His Gospel to suit *you*.

The other day, when one of our brothers was sick of consumption, we sent him a waterbed to rest on, and the comfort it gave him was indeed delightful, but oh! Jesus Christ’s bosom is something softer than that. Though you be never so weak, though you be like a sere leaf driven in the wind and broken of the tempest, you shall yet find perfect peace and quiet in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is a Gospel *on purpose for you*.

Once more, we have some handfuls to drop that we have gathered in another field, we have been to promise field and to doctrine field, *now let us go to the field of experience*. Do you not know, Ruth, that your experience is no exception to the rule? There are thousands such as you are, and I too, who speak to you this morning, that you may know the truth of this matter, I tell you that once upon a time I stood like yourself shivering at the gate, and I said in my soul, “His mercy is clean gone forever, He will be mindful of His covenant no more.”

For years I cried for mercy but did not find it, and I wrote my name among the damned, and said I must perish, for God had shut up the bowels of His compassion. But He has never despised the cry of His prisoner. I looked unto Him and was lightened, and I am not ashamed to confess that there is light nowhere but in Him.

“Oh,” say you, “then your experience is something like mine!” Just so, it is, and so there is a handful on purpose *for you*. I know the devil tells you, you are lost in a by-road where Christ’s mercy never travels, but it is a mistake, you are in the midst of the king’s highway. I know he tells you that you have got to the ends of the earth, but my Lord puts it—“Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.”

Oh, but you think you are the last man! Ah! but Christ loves to take the last and make them first, while the first he often leaves to be last. Yes, but you have written bitter things against yourself! Never mind what you have written, what a mercy it is Christ did not write them, and that on the contrary, He has written sweet things of you, and has said, “Return unto me, saith the Lord, for I am reconciled unto thee.” Soul, my Master—would that He were here to speak for Himself, for my poor words are so feeble compared with His—my Master woos you this morning. Instead of offering you a gleaner, He offers you Himself. You came to be a gleaner, He would make you His spouse.

See, Boaz comes to you. Will you have Him? The ring is in His hand, come, stretch out the finger of your little faith, and let the deed be done. Say, “Unworthy though I be, I hope, my Lord, I am Thine, no other would I have to serve, to love, to trust, Jesu, just as I am, take You me, and make me what You would have me to be.” ’Tis done, the marriage is ratified, and by and by, it shall be consummated before the eternal throne in your everlasting bliss.

I have good reason for being earnest in trying to comfort this Ruth, because, though she is a stranger, she is a sister of mine. I am a stranger too, we both come from the same land, and the same howling

wilderness. She is in trouble, and my soul has known trouble too, the self-same trouble as hers, and I would fain bring her to the port of peace.

Besides, she is to be my Master's wife, and I would be on good terms with the mistress of the house. It is ill for the reaper to have an enemy in the mistress, and since I know that this Ruth shall by and by find Boaz to be her next of kin, I would fain do her a good service and bring her to her Master's house, if so my Lord would honor me.

IV. I close then, my sermon of this morning, by stirring up timid and troubled ones to do what I know grace will make them do ere long. I say then, to you who are thus troubled in your consciences, since the field is open to you, and we bid you glean, since Boaz himself commands us to let fall handfuls on purpose for you, do your duty, and be bold to believe today.

You have been afraid to trust Christ hitherto, trust Him now. Venture on Him, 'tis a poor word to use, but do it. Though something tells you you have no right to trust Christ, do it, right or no right. Now, flat on your face before Him, with no confidence but in what He has done and in what He is doing still, be bold to believe in Him at this moment, and you shall live.

And having believed in Him, do you be industrious every time the Word is preached to pick up every ear of comfort in the sermon. Ruth must bend her back, though it be but one ear she gathers at a time. Think it worth while to hear a sermon in never such a crowd, if you may get but one ear of comfort, for one ear is a great thing for one who deserves none, and but one word of mercy from the lips of Christ should be accounted more precious than rubies to a soul that deserves to hear Him say, "Depart ye cursed."

And when you have gathered one grain, and another, seek a retentive memory to keep in your hand what you have gathered, or else you will be like a silly gleaner who stoops to glean one ear, and drops another at the same time. Carry home what of truth you can. Take notes in your heart. And when you have gathered and have your hands full, take care to discriminate.

Ruth, we are told, threshed her corn and left the straw behind, and took home the good wheat. Do you the same. There is much straw in all our sermons, much that our Master would not have us say, for we are poor, poor creatures, and but fallible like yourselves, but do you leave the straw behind, and take home the good wheat, and do us this service—do not take home the straw and leave the wheat as some do. There are many foolish gleaners who, if there be one word of ours awry will tell it to our discredit, but our Master's Words they will forget.

And lastly, while on your knees in prayer you are beating out the sermon in meditation, turn your eye to my Master, go you to Him and say to Him, "Lord, I am content to glean, though I get but one ear of mercy, but oh! that I had You! Oh! that You would give me Yourself! I have no beauty, but oh! You do not love us for *our* beauty, but for *Your* beauty which You do cast on us, Lord, look on me. All I can say is that if You will save me, I will praise You on earth, and I'll praise You in heaven, and there shall not be one before the throne more grateful than I, because there shall be none who shall owe so much to Your unmerited, rich, free, sovereign grace!"

Sinner, if you do that now, my Master will accept you. Trust Him *now*, poor hearts, trust Him now! Away, you black devil of hell, away, away! Wherefore will you molest these lambs? You timid and troubled consciences, hear not what your doubts and fears, and hell, and the devil would say, but come now to my Master! His wounds invite you—His tearful eyes invite you—His open heart bids you come. Come and trust Him, He cannot reject you if you trust Him just as you are.

God help you to do it, and you shall see sin forgiven, your foes trampled under your feet, and you yourselves shall meet the great Boaz at the marriage supper, and to Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.