

1

One Monday morning Eleanor, a member of a former congregation, called to inform me that her husband, Bob, had gone into the hospital in a nearby community. After explaining what had happened, she said, “He’s seems to be doing better. I don’t think we’ll be here long. I’ll be here most of the day with him, but there’s no need for you to drive over here to visit.”

I went about my morning routines at church—getting information ready for the bulletin and newsletter, answering phone calls, meeting with the Bible study group. Later that afternoon, I had the feeling I needed to go see Eleanor and Bob. I don’t know why, but I just knew I needed to go visit. I hopped in the car and drove to the big city hospital, parked my car, asked for the room number, and took the elevator to Bob’s room.

There I found Eleanor sitting by the hospital bed. A look of grief was etched upon her face. When I entered the room, she exclaimed, “I told you not to drive over here, and yet, I’m so glad you did. Bob’s condition has taken a turn for the worse since I

spoke with you this morning.” She gave me an update on his health, and then she asked, “What prompted you to come over here?” I explained that I just had a feeling I needed to visit, and then she replied, “You’re in the right place at the right time. Somehow God’s Spirit prompted you to show up.”

Have you ever had that happen? You just happen to show up at the right place at the right time? Some might call it a coincidence, but I wonder if God’s Spirit might nudge us slightly in these times, prompting us in a certain direction. As the old anonymous saying goes, “A coincidence is a miracle in which God prefers to remain anonymous.”¹ I call it a God Moment.

Being in the right place at the right time seems to be what happened in Ruth’s life. As you may recall from last week, she and her mother-in-law Naomi traveled from Ruth’s homeland of Moab back to Naomi’s home in Bethlehem after their husbands died. In addition to being a widow, Ruth was a foreigner, an immigrant from a rival nation, who had promised her loyalty to Naomi.

Since they had few resources and needed a source of food, Ruth offered to go into the fields to glean the leftovers after the harvesters went through the fields. This was a common practice that landowners permitted as a way to feed those in need. It's sort of like what we do through our modern-day food pantries—we provide food for those who run into difficult times, providing a means of survival for the vulnerable in society.

The Hebrew uses the word קָרָה (*kaw·raw*) to describe what happened next. The NRSV translates the word with the phrase “as it happened,” while the CEB translates the word as “by chance, it happened to be.” The root of the Hebrew word means to meet or to happen, but some forms of the verb carry an extra meaning: to meet without arrangement, or chance to be present.² In other words, Ruth happened by chance to be in the right place at the right time, for Boaz took notice of her and inquired about her. When he learned that she was helping care for Naomi, he suggested Ruth remain in his field and glean with the other women and drink

freely from the water supply. He also explained that he told the young men not to harass her.

She was quite surprised, and she inquired, “How is it that I’ve found favor in your eyes, that you notice me? I’m an immigrant.”³

Boaz replied that he had heard about her kindness toward her mother-in-law Naomi and felt that God would reward her. He then invited her to have lunch with him in the fields, and after they returned to harvesting, Boaz instructed the harvesters to leave behind extra grain for Ruth.

When Ruth returned home to Naomi with an abundance of barley, she told her about the kindness of Boaz. Naomi exclaimed, “God has remained faithful to us, even during all our loss and death. And even more amazing—Boaz happens to be my relative!”

Ruth and Boaz happened to be in the right place at the right time. A coincidence? Or more than that—a God moment.

When have you found yourself in the right place at the right time?

3

- When a friend has received bad news and you're there to listen.
- When you visit someone homebound who exclaims, "I had a feeling someone would come to visit today."
- When you need to find a parking spot in a crowded lot to get to a very important appointment.
- When your finances are running low and you get an unexpected check in the mail.
- When you don't feel like getting up in the morning for worship, but you drag yourself out of bed and hear something later that morning that brings you hope.
- When you have a dream that seems so real that you have to follow it.

Sometimes our dreams might prompt us to move in a certain direction, to move us in the right direction at the right time. There's a story told by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber,

about a man who lived several centuries ago with his five daughters in a humble house in Prague.

One night, he had a strange dream. He dreamed that far away, in the city of Krakow, was a treasure buried under a bridge. He awoke and dismissed the dream, but the following night the dream visited him again. In it, he saw himself digging under the bridge and uncovering this treasure. He awoke, surprised to have had this same dream, but went about his day.

That night, he dreamed the exact dream yet once more, and when he awoke he could no longer ignore it. That same morning, he set off on the long journey to Krakow. When he arrived some days later, he searched the city until things began to look familiar and he came upon a bridge exactly like the one in his dream. But just as he put his foot on the shovel, a guard came along and said, "What are you doing, digging under a public bridge?"

The man from Prague told him all about the dream. The guard listened and then began to laugh. "You are a foolish man. Everyone may dream such nonsense. In fact, for three nights, I have dreamed that in Prague there is a man and buried beneath his fireplace is a treasure. The dream is very vivid, but do you think I would waste my time pursuing such a crazy dream?"

The man hurried back home to Prague, went inside his house and immediately began digging under his fireplace. Indeed, buried there was a

④

treasure that was sufficient enough for him to live comfortably for the rest of his life.⁴

Sometimes we spend our lives searching for value, hoping to find joy or treasure somewhere else. Oftentimes we overlook the treasure that is right here among us.

Naomi followed her dream to return home, and when she did, she found a treasure waiting there for her—a treasure discovered when Ruth happened to be in the right place at the right time. For when

Ruth and Boaz met, something unexpected happened, a story that I will continue in coming weeks.

In the meantime, remain open to God's Spirit moving in your life, one who might nudge you to be in the right place at the right time toward a God Moment.

¹ <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2015/04/20/coincidence/>

² Enhance Strong's Lexicon, #7136.

³ Ruth 2:10, CEB.

⁴ www.rabbilevin.net/find-a-treasure/