

Scripture Reading: Ruth 3:1-5 (ESV)

"Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.' And she replied, 'All that you say I will do.'"

Introduction

Last week, in Ruth 2:8-22, we saw the beauty of faithfulness—Ruth's **humble service**, Boaz's **generous stewardship**, and God's **sovereign providence** weaving meaning into their **ordinary tasks**. With the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, we learned that chasing self-defined meaning is vanity, but **faithfulness to our God-given ordinary tasks (our lot) brings joy, freedom, and ultimately purpose in God's hands**. Ecclesiastes 3:11 declares, "**He has made everything beautiful in its time**." Today, in Ruth 3:1-5, we see Naomi and Ruth shift from **faithful diligence** to **strategic planning**.

Jonathan Edwards was a pivotal American theologian, pastor, and philosopher (1703–1758), he is widely regarded as one of the most influential thinkers in early American history. He was a key figure in the First Great Awakening; a religious revival in the 1730s–1740s. Edwards' theological writings, included a book titled, *The End for Which God Created the World*. In it, Edwards argues that **God's glory** is the ultimate purpose for all of creation, what he calls the **terminating ends**. And all human actions are what he terms **subordinate ends**.

As the narrative in Ruth 3:1-5 shifts from **faithfulness in ordinary tasks** to **wise planning** I have found Edwards, use of the terms "terminal ends" and "subordinate ends" incredibly helpful in determining the relationship between **human actions** and **divine works**. I want to take a minute and break down his terminology and explore its practical value.

Edwards teaches that **God's glory is the ultimate terminating end** = the **final purpose** of all things. While **our actions are subordinate ends**, which **serve** His eternal glory. Ruth and Naomi's **faithful planning**, like their **daily obedience**, serves as a **subordinate end, woven by God** into His **terminating end**; which is the display of His glory through redemption.

For example; Next week we will be diving into the person and character of Boaz. Remember together Ruth and Boaz are great grandparents of King David and generational great(x6) Grandparents of Jesus. We already know that Ruth is a Moabite, an enemy outsider. But did you know that Boaz's mother was Rahab the prostitute? (Josh 2, Matt 1:5). All human efforts are riddled with sin and brokenness (subordinate ends) but once again we see how God uses flawed people/family lines - to fulfill His plan (Terminal ends).

Our **THESIS** is: By ceasing to strive for self-defined meaning and embracing faithfulness—whether in **daily tasks** or **strategic planning**—we participate in **subordinate ends** that God transforms into His **terminating end**, bringing glory to **Himself** and accomplishing the redemption of the world.

We'll explore this through **three points**: **First**, Naomi and Ruth's **faithfulness in strategic planning** as a subordinate end. **Second**, their loyalty and trust as the heartbeat of their actions, and **Third**, God's sovereign redemption through broken people, **culminating in His glory, the ultimate terminating end**.

[PRAY]

I. Faithfulness in Strategic Planning as a Subordinate End

Last week, we saw Ruth **faithfully gleaning** in Boaz's field, **not chasing significance** but **living faithfully** as her God-given lot. *Likewise*, Naomi was **beginning to see God's provision**; recognizing His *hesed*—God's steadfast love—in Boaz's kindness (2:20). Together Naomi, Ruth & Boaz's faithfulness echoes Ecclesiastes 3:22: "*There is **nothing better** than that a person should rejoice in his work, for that is their lot.*" IOW: Their imperfect faithfulness before God was an end in itself; as Edwards would say, a **subordinate end** serving God's ultimate **terminating end**!

As we start out study in Ruth 3:1-5 this shift from **gleaning** to **planning** marks a profound step in Ruth and Naomi's journey. In it we see 4 clear lessons:

1. In Ruth 2, **Ruth's steadfast gleaning** and **Naomi's trust in God's provision** were **subordinate ends**—acts of daily obedience that glorified God. In Ruth 3:1-5, the narrative shifts as Naomi devises a **strategic plan** to secure Ruth's future through Boaz, a possible kinsman-redeemer. This bold act of faith **becomes a new subordinate end**, rooted in God's established design (Duet 25), **demonstrating how our actions—whether routine or intentional—serve a greater purpose**.
2. Jonathan Edwards teaches that God's glory is the **terminal end**, the ultimate purpose of all things. He writes, "*The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted.*" Naomi and Ruth's **planning**, like their **daily faithfulness**, finds meaning and joy **in God**, magnifying His glory. Their actions—**gleaning or strategizing**—point to this ultimate end, **aligning their efforts with God's eternal purpose**; even though they can't see them or can only see pieces!
3. Ecclesiastes 11:6 advises, "*In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper.*" Naomi and Ruth sow seeds of faith through **strategic obedience**, trusting God to weave their subordinate ends—**daily tasks** and **wise plans**—into His terminal end. Their example frees us from **over-analyzing**, or **agonizing** over our decisions. Everything step we take are imperfect ones forward, and our ends are subordinate not ultimate... and **God beautifully integrates them into His glorious plan**.
4. The shift from gleaning to planning in Ruth 3:1-5 also shows that our **faithfulness** includes both **daily obedience** and **wise planning**. Proverbs 16:9 states, "*The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*" Naomi and Ruth plan and execute faithfully, trusting God to fulfill His redemptive purpose. Our plans—for family, work, or ministry—are **subordinate ends**. They are meaningful - **not for our own significance** but because they serve the terminal end of God's glory.

II. Loyalty and Trust: The Heartbeat of Their Subordinate Ends

Naomi's plan is driven by loyalty and trust. Naomi loyally wants good for Ruth, and with an understanding of God's design (Duet 25) trusts that her plan in congruence with God's Word, could benefit Ruth. Her question, "*Should I not seek rest for you?*" (Ruth 3:1), shows her sacrificial love for Ruth and trust in God's design. Despite her own grief, Naomi prioritizes Ruth's future, echoing Ruth's loyalty in Ruth 1:16: "*Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*" **Their** covenant love is a **subordinate end**, a means **through which God's covenant love shines**.

Ruth's response (3:5), "*All that you say I will do*", reflects her trust in Naomi and her willingness to **execute the plan in faith**. She doesn't hesitate or seek her own agenda; she acts in **humble obedience**. This **loyalty and trust** are the **heartbeat of their plan**. Again, we find complimentary wisdom in Eccl 4:9-10: "*Two are better than one... For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.*" Even so, these women's **mutual commitment** is a **subordinate end**, serving God's **terminating end** of **displaying His glory through their faithfulness**.

For us, this calls us to cultivate *hesed* in our relationships. In a world driven by self-interest, Ruth and Naomi **LIVE OUT loyalty to each other and trust in God's Word** as **subordinate ends** that glorify God. As Edwards taught, **our actions find ultimate meaning when they point to God's glory = the terminating end of all creation**. Our love for others is not the ultimate purpose but a **means** to reflect God's love, **magnifying His name!**

III. God's Sovereign Redemption: The Terminating End Through Broken People

A profound truth emerges in Boaz's lineage. Matthew 1:5 reveals that Boaz is the son of Salmon and **Rahab**, the Canaanite prostitute who hid the Israelite spies (Josh 2). Rahab was an outsider with a broken past, yet by faith, she was spared (Joshua 6:25) and woven into God's covenant people as Boaz's mother. Her life is a testament to God's grace, transforming a flawed woman into an instrument of His redemptive plan, **a subordinate end serving His terminating end**.

We saw in chp. 2 how Boaz carries this legacy. His kindness to Ruth, another outsider—a Moabite widow—**mirrors the grace shown to Rahab**. In Ruth 2:10, we saw how Ruth marvels that Boaz would notice her, *"a foreigner."* His prayer that she find refuge *"under [God's] wings"* (2:12) reflects God's *hesed*. As faithful as they are, Boaz's actions still **subordinate ends**—acts of faithfulness—**serving** God's **terminating end**. Matthew's genealogy shows Rahab, Boaz, and Ruth—three broken figures—in the lineage of Jesus, the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer. As Edwards would argue, **God's glory is the terminating end, and He uses flawed people; intentions, activities, and lives to achieve it!**

As we have seen in the entire book, in Ruth 3, **God's sovereignty is evident**. **Naomi's plan is bold but uncertain**. In 3:12 we will see another kinsman-redeemer is closer, and Boaz could refuse. Yet Naomi and Ruth trust God's covenant love, just as they did in chapter 2. Their **faithfulness**—whether **gleaning** or **planning**—is a **subordinate end**, resting under God's wings. Eccl 3:11-12 says, *"He has made everything beautiful in its time... There is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live."* Ruth and Naomi **don't see the full scope of God's plan**, but their obedience (subordinate ends) participates in His **terminating end**, glorifying Him through redemption. Edwards' insight that *"the happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God"* reminds us that **their joy in obedience magnifies God's glory, and this is the ultimate purpose of their story**.

This narrative and entire book points to **JESUS, who fulfills God's TERMINATING END**. As Edwards taught, all things exist for God's glory, and **Christ's life, death, and resurrection display it supremely!** Ruth, Boaz, and Rahab's story, even with their history of brokenness, foreshadows our redemption in Christ, who **transforms our flawed, imperfect lives into instruments of His glory**.

IV. Faithful Work in Subordinate Ends

Naomi's plan requires effort, just as Ruth's gleaning did in Ruth 2. Trusting God in daily obedience does not mean sitting passively on our hands or making no plans. Naomi observes Boaz's habits and **crafts a culturally appropriate plan** (3:3-5) and tells Ruth, *"Wash... anoint yourself... put on your cloak ... go down to the threshing floor... note where he lies... uncover his feet ... lie down... he will tell you what to do."* IOW: Do what you can, trust God for the rest. Ruth **acts with courage**, prepares herself and goes in faith to the threshing floor. Her efforts are **subordinate ends**, serving God's greater purpose of glorifying Himself.

Again we see, all the main characters accepting their lot, **working faithfully** in both **daily tasks** and **strategic plans**. Their **effort** shows that **faith is active**. In the NT James teaches the same thing (2:17) *"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* And while our faith is **active**, our **activity** is not

ULTIMATE! As J. Edwards might say, our work is a **subordinate end**, meaningful only as it **rejoices in God and exalts His glory** = the **terminating end**.

V. Application: Lets take a look at what it means for us Participating in God's Terminating End

Ruth 3:1-5 builds on Ruth 2:8-22, showing that **faithfulness**—whether in **daily tasks** or **strategic planning**—is a **subordinate end** that God weaves into His **terminating end**. Here are four applications, drawing from Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Edwards:

1. Embrace our Lot as a Subordinate End

Like Ruth's gleaning or Naomi's planning, our tasks—work, parenting, serving—are God-given subordinate ends. Ecclesiastes 3:22 says to rejoice in your lot. Trust that God uses our obedience to glorify Himself, the **terminating end**.

- **Reflect:** Are there any decisions or plans you have been putting off planning or making out of fear that, in light of this truth, you can make with joy, hope, and faith?

2. Plan Wisely as a Subordinate End

Naomi's plan was a faithful act, not a pursuit of self-defined meaning. Make plans for your future, but submit them to God's sovereignty. Ecclesiastes 11:6 encourages sowing seeds faithfully, trusting God's harvest.

- **Reflect:** What plan (only with daily faithfulness) is God calling you to pursue in faith?

3. Work Diligently for God's Glory

Ruth and Naomi's efforts show that **faithfulness requires work**. Do your tasks—**daily** AND/OR **strategic**—with faithfulness and excellence, knowing they serve God's terminating end (Col 3:23, *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."*)

- **Reflect:** What 2-3 specific ways can you work heartily, faithfully, joyfully to magnify God's glory?

4. Trust God's Terminating End Through Brokenness

Boaz's lineage as Rahab's son shows that God uses flawed people. Your past doesn't disqualify you; it's a subordinate end God redeems for His glory. Jesus, our Kinsman-Redeemer, transforms your life into a reflection of His terminating end.

- **Reflect:** In what specific ways can you rest in His grace, rejoicing in God as Edwards urges?

Conclusion

In our study today we have seen that faithfulness—whether in **daily tasks** or **strategic planning**—is a **subordinate end** that serves God's **terminating end: HIS GLORY**. Naomi and Ruth's loyalty, trust, and effort, under God's sovereign wings, echo Ecclesiastes' call to rejoice in our lot. Boaz, Rahab's son, shows that God uses broken people to fulfill His plan, pointing to Jesus, who displays God's glory through our salvation. As Edwards reminds us, *"The happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted."* Let's cease striving for self-defined meaning and embrace our subordinate ends, trusting God to weave them into His eternal purpose... his **terminating ends**! Church, may our faithfulness glorify God, bringing in peace and confidence and redemption to the world around us. Amen.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your glory, the terminating end of all things. Forgive us for chasing meaning apart from You. Like Ruth and Naomi, help us to be **faithful in our daily tasks** and **wise in our planning, rejoicing in You as we serve Your eternal purpose**. Thank You for using broken people, like Rahab and Boaz... like us... to fulfill Your redemptive plan. May our subordinate ends magnify Your glory, reflecting the faithfulness of Jesus, our Kinsman-Redeemer. In His name, Amen.