



December 2016

Dear friends,

“And she happened upon a field.” These words have been circling my thoughts for the past months. The phrase comes from Ruth 2 where Ruth, who was new to Bethlehem, went out in search of food for her and her mother-in-law, Naomi. As Ruth worked at the field for the day, Boaz, a relative of Naomi’s, happened to come in and see her and inquired about her. I had been reading Ruth and loved how this story reflected God’s providence. Ruth and Naomi were met with a tragic heartache. They were not sure where to go or what they were supposed to do next. They headed back to Naomi’s home town of Bethlehem but there was really nothing there for them. But then it all came together when Ruth “happened” upon a field and Boaz “happened” to come to that field.

I came to Birmingham exactly four weeks ago today. I received a call on a Sunday night, drove eight hours on Monday morning, and have been here ever since. Totally unexpected, but oddly enough I continued to ponder the phrase “and she happened upon a field.” I don’t believe that it was any accident that all my ducks were perfectly in a row so that I could leave with 12 hours notice. I also don’t believe that it was an accident that we ended up visiting The Church at Brook Hills. Over the last four weeks I have continued to not only think the phrase “And she happened upon a field,” but I have seen it play out before me. It is becoming almost amusing to me as I sit back and watch God unravel new things every day that I never expected when I arrived.

While at Brook Hills I wanted to become involved in a small group to get to know people and found a group that hosts on Monday nights. I didn’t know who they were but just happened to pick a group and emailed. Due to the Thanksgiving holiday there was no meeting that week, but Jason and I emailed back and forth a little and he mentioned the ministry Grace Klein Community and sent me a link to check it out. I went online to read up and was so excited to see my two favorite words associated with a ministry: sort & organize! The following week I happened to go to Grace Klein to see what it was about. There was a lot going on at one time....unloading a truck, a woman and her two children sorting squash, someone who brought a friend in need to get some food, and another girl in her young 20’s who was picking up food to bring to an organization so they could supplement food costs. I asked all of these people where they went to church, certain that they would all be from one place, but I got four different answers. I was able to spend some time with Scott that day and I am sure he thought I was a wacko as I asked question after question wanting to know more about how this organization worked. How were various churches and even unchurched people working together for a common cause and not competing for an upper hand?

This past month I have been able to participate in the ministry of Grace Klein Community five or six times. Each time meeting new people and learning how the community and body of Christ is coming together to serve people's most basic needs of food and clothing. Working alongside Nikki, Monica, and Debbie and getting to know each of them. Talking to Jennifer about homeschooling and encouraging one another in that brief conversation. Meeting with Scott to find out how Grace Klein functions so I could take this back to my city when I return.

I "happened" upon a field that God knew all along that I would find. I came to Birmingham for the purpose of ministering to my daughter and in return I have been ministered to. I came here discouraged and unsure about what God had for the remainder of my life and I left with a vision of hands and feet doing what they are called to do which is serve others. I watched and participated in love "doing" and not just talking about doing.

So often the circumstances, or should I say storms, of life bring us to places that we never thought we would be. The big picture is nowhere in sight because we are overcome by the minute details of our everyday life. Although we can so easily lose focus and become discouraged, it is important to remember that God has not. No circumstance, trial, outcome will ever take God by surprise. He is continually working all things together for our good and His glory. I can look back over my life and fill a notebook of how I "happened" upon many things that brought me from there to where I am today and I would not change a single one of them. This week I leave to go back home, but I am leaving with a realization that this unexpected trip was planned all along.

But the best part of the Ruth story? Well, Ruth ended up marrying Boaz. They ended up having a son and through that lineage Jesus, the one who gave his life for my sin, was born. How amazing is that that God would take this woman who experienced such heartache and had no place to call home and many years later God's plan was still in motion. This is the heart of true ministry which is recognizing the love shown by God in that while we were yet sinners he gave us His Son to die for our sins. We accept His love and from His love we share it and show it to others.

In Christ,
Mary Grace Lamendola