

The Redeemer

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[0 : 00] Now before we turn to the book of Ruth and to hear it, I want us to share this prayer to prepare our hearts for hearing God's words.

It comes from a collection of prayers called Piercing Heaven, from a chap called Jeremiah Burroughs. So if you're happy, you can read this with me as we prepare to receive God's word. Lord, you have given me a portion in the world. You have given me credit and a reputation among others. But what is all this to me if I am without Christ? If I do not have the one who gives grace to my soul, the one who is my all in all.

Lord, you have taught me that the distance between me and you is so great that without a mediator I perish forever. So whatever else you deny me, give me Jesus. Amen.

This will be our prayer as we come to God's word. Give me Jesus. So let's turn to the book of Ruth, wonderful book of Ruth. We're going to look tonight at chapter 2.

[1 : 13] And we'll read the whole of this chapter. Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, Naomi, let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor. Naomi said to her, go ahead, my daughter.

So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters.

The Lord be with you. The Lord bless you, they answered. Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, who does that young woman belong to? The overseer replied, she is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi.

She said, please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters. She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter. So Boaz said to Ruth, my daughter, listen to me.

[2 : 18] Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you.

And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled. At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?

Boaz replied, I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. How you left your father and mother in your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.

May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my Lord, she said.

You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant, though I do not have the standing of one of your servants. At mealtime, Boaz said to her, come over here, have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.

[3 : 20] When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her.

Even pull out some stocks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up and don't rebuke her. So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered and it amounted to about an ephah.

She carried it back to town and her mother-in-law saw how much she'd gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she'd eaten enough. Her mother-in-law asked her, where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she'd been working. The name of the man I work with today is Boaz, she said. The Lord bless him. Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, he has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead, she added.

That man is our close relative. He is one of our guardian redeemers. Then Ruth the Moabite said, he even said to me, stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.

[4 : 30] Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, it will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him. Because in someone else's field you might be harmed. So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and the wheat harvests were finished.

And she lived with her mother-in-law. So that's Ruth chapter 2. Last week we thought about the journey, the journeys of Naomi.

This week we are thinking about the Redeemer. But as we do that, I want to think about two very different stories and to think about what joins them.

So this week I find myself trying to explain the plot line of Back to the Future. If you've seen Back to the Future, the whole film makes perfect sense. But trying to explain it to someone who doesn't know is quite tricky.

But the basic idea, I guess, is that Marty McFly, in the first story anyway, has to travel back in time, having kind of messed around with history a little bit, to bring his parents together in the past or he won't exist in the present.

[5 : 36] So he has to go back to the future, goes back and forward, making sure that things work out the way they're supposed to, so that in the fullness of time, Marty McFly will be born and will exist.

How does that connect to Ruth chapter 2? That's a good question. So if we think about when this was written, this was written after King David has been born, after he has come to the throne.

So this is a story looking back. This is looking back on God's plan of redemption, recognizing here is God working to make sure that Ruth and Boaz are brought together in order to extend God's plan for the royal line, so that King David comes, so that all those rich promises from God will come to fulfillment.

So what we need to see in this story is God's control of time and God's perfect timing. We see it in lots of different ways. We see it in the fact that here come Ruth and Naomi and they arrive back, left during famine, arrive back just as barley harvest begins.

We see it in the way that they meet by design, Ruth and Boaz, not by chance. And we see that, and we need to understand it in the context of the story where it's anticipating the coming of the king, all this is happening so that the king and ultimately Messiah Jesus will come.

[7 : 08] Incidentally, there is a great book, Ruth Under the Wings of God by John Piper. It's a poetic retelling of the story of Ruth, imagining, I think it's, was it David's, imagining David's grandpa, maybe, telling the story.

But it's all in poetry. It's a very nice read, if you're interested in poetry and the book of Ruth. So that's John Piper. A dominating scene too, as well as recognizing here's God who controls time and timing.

There's this idea of kindness, of loving kindness. This Hebrew word, chesed, which is all over chapter 2. It's a really rich word that speaks of love and mercy and grace and goodness and kindness and loyalty and devotion, kind of all wrapped up together into this one word.

And what we're going to see is that kindness is shown by Ruth to Naomi. We're going to see that kindness is shown by Boaz to Ruth. And ultimately, we're going to see that kindness being shown by God himself, who has provided Boaz as Redeemer, pointing us forward to God providing the Redeemer, Jesus.

As we get into this story, which I think is one of the most wonderful stories in the Old Testament, how does this connect with ourselves today? Well, at least in this way, the story of Ruth chapter 2 should remind us that we stand in need of mercy, just as Ruth and Naomi stand in need of mercy at the beginning of the chapter.

[8 : 36] We are invited to shelter in God's protective care, just as we see Naomi and Ruth doing. And we are called to trust in our Redeemer, Jesus.

So let's have a look at this story, beginning with the first meeting between Ruth and Boaz. And we'll think a little about Ruth's faith and God's providence.

Just to remind ourselves of the scene setting, last week we saw that in God's providence there was famine, a judgment on God's people. So Naomi and family left, and Naomi described her life as bitter and empty.

But now she's arriving back. End of chapter 1, verse 22, arriving back, as we said, at the barley harvest, Bethlehem, the house of bread, now there is bread for the people of God, because of the mercy of God.

There's also a strong emphasis in chapter 1, verse 22, which we didn't read, on Ruth being from Moab, being a Moabite.

[9 : 40] You probably heard that repeat a couple of times through our reading, reminding us, from the beginning, God's grace has no boundaries. Always God's plan to include the nations within salvation.

And what we find is that Ruth herself is amazed at the kindness of Boaz to her as a foreigner. So the idea of Ruth being from Moab is really important to our story to highlight God's grace.

And also, the other huge thing in this part of the story is the fact that Boaz is now here. Boaz, who is an amazing character, a man much to be admired, a man of generosity and compassion and grace, a man who ultimately, as we read the whole story of the Bible, prepares us for Jesus.

In chapter 2, verse 1, he's described as a man of standing. And we know he's a man of standing because he's got a field, he has got wealth, but that idea of being a man of standing also refers to his moral character.

He is an upright man. In the time of the judges, when everyone's doing whatever they want and they've got no king and they're lawless, Boaz stands differently a man of moral character. So that kind of sets the scene for us.

[10 : 58] And then, chapter 2 and verse 2 moves the story on. Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, let me go to the fields and pick up a leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.

So here's some ways in which we see Ruth's faith at work. First, she goes out depending on favor and mercy. And in God's providence, she'll find that from godly Boaz.

When Boaz comes along and is talking to the overseer of his field, what we discover about Ruth is that she is working hard. She's been working from the beginning of the day. She's not really taking a break. She's working really hard.

And why is she doing that? She's doing it to show loving kindness to her mother-in-law, Naomi. We see her faith in her loyalty and her devotion to her family.

The work that she's involved in is called gleaning. In a field, when it was harvest time, there would be harvesters who would be employed to pick up the grain, but there would always be some leftovers.

[12 : 00] And that was for the poor, for the orphan, for the widow, for the foreigner. Hot work, dangerous work, as we see a couple of times in the story. Both Boaz and Naomi warn about how vulnerable a young woman could be in this work of gleaning.

But of course, it's a day where there's no welfare system. It's a time when Naomi has no man in her life to provide for her. And so for Ruth, her faith is active.

We saw it being active last week as she left home for this unknown country to show loyalty to Naomi and Naomi's God. And now she's leaving home for this unknown work opportunity.

She doesn't know how the day's going to go, where she's going to end up. But above all of this and above every movement and every decision and every conversation in the book stands the God of grace and the God who is controlling the events of her life and of every life.

How is the providence of God on display the early part of chapter 2? Well, first of all, it's God's providence that there are these compassionate laws within Israel so that a foreigner like Ruth, a widow like Ruth, can come to Bethlehem with no means of providing for herself, but she can survive and find food because of these compassionate laws set up by God to care for the weakest and the least and the outsider.

[13 : 34] And so we see God's grace and God's provision in those compassionate laws that we find in the book of Leviticus. And we also see God's providence in the way he perfectly directs events.

Verse 2, let me go to the fields, pick up grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor. verse 3, as it turned out, she was working in the field belonging to Boaz from the clan of the limelight.

By chance, as chance would have it, she happened to find the field where a kinsman redeemer would be. It's not how we're supposed to read this, is it?

When we read the history in the Bible, we are intended to see it all as being planned and designed by God and this is no different. She doesn't know what field she's going to but God does and God directs her steps.

Now we see God's hand in the book of Ruth, we see it in the sending of the famine and now in the sending of bread and now sending Ruth to just the right field so that her Naomi can be provided for. And so if you imagine, here's King David hearing the story of his family and God looking after his family, isn't he going to be praising God?

[14:54] Thinking, I can trust God in God's promises because look what he's done for my family in the past. Perfect directing, perfect timing as well. Verse 4, it really brings out God's control.

So Ruth has arrived to the field of Boaz and just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. Coincidence? Absolutely not. This is God's design. As Boaz was getting ready in the morning, getting his cloak on, getting his sandals on, getting his breakfast, walking to his field.

God was planning that timing perfectly so that the two of them would meet. God's kindness, God's provision for Ruth, for Naomi, for the family of David, for the world.

When we think about Jesus coming. And think too about the way God provides. What a perfect choice this man Boaz is. Look at his first words as we meet him.

Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and he greeted the harvesters. The Lord be with you. The Lord bless you, they answered. And then he asks about Ruth, who does that young woman belong to?

[16:04] So remember, time of the judges. Everybody's doing exactly whatever they want to do. A time of real spiritual decline. But here is Boaz as a shining light. Living under the rule of God, wanting the blessing of God for those who work in his field.

He's got a wonderful work environment where his workers respect him. They seem to be happy.

They're glad to see him. He notices a foreign girl and he wants to show attention to her so that he might show her kindness as we discover.

God's looking after Ruth and Naomi by bringing this wonderful man Boaz into their lives. So this first part of Ruth chapter 2 really reminds us that God works in providence to achieve his goals.

To bring Ruth and Boaz together to establish this family line that David will come from, this family line that Jesus will come from, all those promises given to David of an eternal king, an eternal rule to be fulfilled in Jesus.

God's working that out in time to make sure it happens. So to read a book like the book of Ruth is an invitation to us to trust in our God, in the circumstances of our lives.

[17:17] To read the book of Ruth is to understand as Paul wrote in Romans that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Now of course the Bible doesn't shy away from the mystery that there is sometimes in what God brings into people's lives.

It doesn't hide from us famine. It doesn't hide from us the death of a husband and two sons. But ultimately, ultimately for Naomi who felt that she'd went away, you know, she'd come back empty, God is going to be filling and providing and blessing.

And there is hope in God's faithfulness. God will keep promises to Israel, to David, again as David and as Israel hear the stories, they remember in these dark times here is God by his grace establishing this family, this royal family.

There is hope for King David and people beyond. There is hope for us in the darkness that God by his grace is still at work and God always keeps his promises.

Well from this first meeting let's think about this first conversation between Boaz and Ruth. It's a wonderful conversation that really highlights Boaz's kindness and Boaz's generosity but also highlights for us God's grace.

[18:44] So just to go back to the start of the day imagine Naomi waving Ruth goodbye knowing that the fields were dangerous places to be.

What would her hope be? What would her prayer be as she sent Ruth away? Surely that she'd be kept safe that she'd be able to find some food to provide.

perhaps there'd be a good man who would protect and keep her safe. And it's nice to think about that to think about how God chose kindness above and beyond kindness in sending Boaz in reminding Naomi that God is for her.

Well anyway here's Boaz. Boaz's first words to Ruth my daughter listen to me. So we learn a few things about Boaz from that short statement.

First we understand that he's an older gentleman clearly Ruth is younger than him. We also understand that here is a man who cares uses tender family language but I think the most important thing that we see here remember he's speaking to a Moabite from Moab he's just been told that he wants to break that barrier down.

[19 : 58] He's not going to treat her as an outsider as a foreigner rather he's going to invite her in because that's what grace does. And Ruth is surprised by that. Verse 10 why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me a foreigner?

This isn't normal behaviour this is grace behaviour from Boaz. Look at some of the things that Boaz does. He says to her stay here with the women who work for me. Stick with them because I'm going to make sure that there's enough grain for you.

And notice too that he gives a warning to his men. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you.

Here's early anti-bullying policy anti-sexual harassment policy being employed by Boaz.

When she finds herself thirsty get a drink from the water jars the men have filled. She's being treated generously being treated again as an insider not as an outsider.

Now this first expression of grace it causes Ruth in verse 10 to bow down with her face to the ground. She bows to show honour.

[21 : 08] She recognises that she's been shown favour. And it's really interesting to remember that this is you know part of the story of the royal family. Just as many people would come to King David and would bow and seek favour and seek mercy.

It's what we find Ruth doing before Boaz. She's amazed by grace. I wonder as we're here today are we amazed by God's grace?

Are we amazed by what he has done for us in our Redeemer Jesus? It's easy to become complacent to the wonder of the gospel isn't it?

Back to Boaz. As she asks the question why have I found favour in your eyes? Boaz replies in verses 11 and 12 it's because he has heard of Ruth's kindness to Naomi.

He has heard of the favour that she has shown of the sacrifices that she has made of the devotion and the loyalty of her heart and in her actions. And there's a wonderful prayer request that Boaz makes for Ruth.

[22 : 19] Verse 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done may you be richly rewarded by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

So she prays that the Lord would be on her side that the Lord would show favour and then there's that wonderful picture just this morning thinking about that wonderful picture of God as our father here Boaz gives us the picture of God being like a protective mother bird ready to gather chicks under her wings at the first sign of trouble Boaz knows the Lord offers protection to all who identify with him and with his people.

It's a wonderful image that we are invited to understand to receive to experience ourselves to find refuge in the shadow of God's wings.

Ruth's response to all this verse 13 May I continue to find favour in your eyes keep showing me favour keep showing me mercy this is remarkable she feels at ease despite being in a very vulnerable kind of a setting she feels that she's been shown favour despite her low standing she's so grateful she's amazed but Boaz isn't done here either so we get to verse 14 takes us to the end of the day so a lot's happened already but now we get to meal time and what does he do at meal time he shows this Moabite from Moab hospitality again here are barriers being broken down come and sit with everybody else Ruth here is a welcome that's being given there's this wonderful little phrase in verse 14 when she sat down with the harvesters he offered her some roasted grain here is Boaz the boss and he's serving

Ruth the foreigner that's a great gospel picture of God's grace and the way that God in Christ serves us and there's that generous provision so he makes sure that she's got all that she needs and more for her meal and then sends her home with a huge load of grain as well to think about Boaz it is to think about someone of godly character to think about that godly character in the context of the judges makes it all the more remarkable here is a man who is consistent in seeking to

reflect God's character and God's values in his life to bless his workers and now to extend blessing to Ruth and we'll think in just a few minutes how he functions within God's word as a type of Christ teaching us more about Jesus our redeemer but to think about someone like Boaz sometimes when it comes to the stories in the bible people can be a bit worried about what do we do with these stories is it okay to say be like

[25 : 25] Boaz it is this is a great legacy to pursue to seek to be generous and compassionate and protective and kind like Boaz to look to honour others to look to welcome and show hospitality that's a wonderful thing for us to seek to pursue and to pray to be more like Boaz of course ultimately we want to see him representing Jesus but he also shows us how we can live for God and also when we think about Boaz we need to understand that the way the story is being told is that it becomes clear for us that God is showing grace through Boaz God's solution to Naomi's crisis is Boaz he's the redeemer it's interesting that and I guess if we think about our own experience when we find ourselves in trouble and in need so often what does God use to answer our prayers and to meet our needs so often it's other Christians it's other people in the church

Naomi and Ruth were in crisis God's response godly Boaz and encourages us to keep our eyes open for how we might be answering the prayers of others as we seek to extend mercy and kindness and care to the folks around us let's move to the end result verse 17 to the end and to think about Naomi for a couple of minutes think about Naomi's praise and to think about God's redeemer so Ruth returns home at the end of the day and the focus really returns to Naomi and again the book of Ruth is a short book but it's a beautiful book and it's a very honest book as well it conveys a lot about the faith journey of Naomi she goes through a lot she experienced hard things from the hand of God in chapter one hard to see anything other than bitterness hard to see God's mercy and kindness but now now light is shining

God's grace is shining she's beginning to see God at work in ways that are for her good and to bless her she can see that now she's growing in faith her heart is getting soft as she sees God's grace towards her and we see it in how she responds so Ruth comes back at the end of the day we're told that the barley she gathered amounted to about an ephah which is about 13 kilograms which the books tell me is a few weeks worth of gleaning ordinarily and Naomi is stunned where did you glean?

where did you work? blessed be the man who took notice of you she knows there's no ordinary effort where were you? she seeks blessing for this unnamed generous landowner notice Naomi's all about where did you glean where did you work but Ruth when she answers goes to who did I work for the name of the man I worked with today is Boaz Boaz is God's answer to their crisis and listen to the change you can hear the change in Naomi from chapter one the Lord bless him he has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead Naomi praises the Lord for Boaz Naomi recognises God's care and kindness and compassion and loyalty and devotion to her it is being found through Boaz that man is our close relative he's one of our guardian redeemers or kinsman redeemers and this is this is huge in the Old Testament the kinsman redeemer what kind of things would they do well they as a general rule they they were to act for the well-being of a family member who found themselves in a crisis so it could be that they got themselves into debt and they had to sell themselves into slavery where the kinsman redeemer could buy them back the kinsman redeemer could serve to protect property the kinsman redeemer could act to make sure that justice was done for a family member at times a kinsman redeemer could even marry someone and have family to preserve the family line so it's big news that

Boaz is kinsman redeemer and what Naomi can see is that Ruth's day of work has not been a chance in kinsman God has directed this God has shown favor God has shown kindness to her and so the scene ends with Naomi giving the wisdom to Ruth it's good for you to stick with this man to stick with his workers to stick in his field and so she does for two harvests stays under the protection and the provision of Boaz Naomi is beginning to see that God the God of providence is able to work all things for good Naomi brought back empty but now she's being filled up and this is the beginning of the story for her and again as we think about what God does in this women's life you know involved in the history of the nations involved in this family encourages us

[31 : 10] God knows us God sees us God is able to take care of us so we can trust and take refuge under his wings we also see what happens when God's love breaks through we see the wonder of God providing a redeemer and response from both Ruth and Naomi is to turn to praise one example for us in light of the gospel in light of God providing Jesus to trust in his mercy to

praise him for his love that's where we'll close today we'll close recognizing that we too need our great redeemer Jesus because just like Ruth and Naomi we are utterly dependent on mercy our need as people runs far deeper than even the terrible situation facing

Naomi and Ruth deeper than poverty deeper than famine our crisis ultimately is spiritual that debt of sin that we have that guilt that is ours the just judgment that we face and God's solution is to send Jesus to be our kinsman redeemer why did Jesus become one of us so he could represent his family line humanity became one of us so that he might pay the price to buy us back to give us freedom instead of being slaves to sin he bears the guilt he experiences the judgment so we can know God's blessing to shelter under his wing to trust in Jesus is to receive something far greater than grain something far greater than physical needs being met is to find forgiveness is to find right standing with God is to be welcomed in is to have a glorious future to look forward to

Boaz is wonderful one of the great characters of the Old Testament but Jesus it is a greater redeemer just like Boaz and even more so Jesus shows grace to outsiders whenever we read the gospels you never go far before you find Jesus loving welcoming showing compassion to those on the margins of society to those from other nations to tax collectors sinners and those who were despised the New Testament reminds us that we by nature are foreigners to God's promises not by nature in covenant with God but by Jesus we can be brought all the way in just like Boaz and even more so we find Jesus our redeemer is gentle and protective

Jesus who said to the crowds come to me all you who are weary and burdened I will give you rest Jesus the one who wept over the city of Jerusalem and what did he say as he wept how I longed to gather you under my wings but we're not willing Jesus is waiting to show compassion and protection and gentleness and Jesus promises for those who trust in him none can pluck them out of my hand he never abandons those who he commits to save just like Boaz but even more so Jesus our redeemer is known for his generous provision the water that Jesus gives is the water of life the bread that Jesus provides is his own body broken for us on the cross the extent of his generosity is that he gives his life so that we might truly live and just like Boaz

Jesus the redeemer is for us the kindness of God Jesus is God's provision for our crisis the cross is the expression of God's redeeming love of his mercy and his compassion it is for us the promise of his loyalty and his faithfulness and so as we close is to ask the question will we be like Ruth will we be like Naomi will we fall on our knees amazed by God providing a redeemer will we bless God for giving us Jesus' son to redeem us will we find refuge and hope in him now let's sing together our closing hymn which is there is a redeemer and let's stand together as we sing person these go to [36 : 34] Hughes ■■ to North■