

Shame To Hope God Of Rescue - Ruth2:1-23

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[0 : 00] inside a man of of standing from the clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz and Ruth the Moabite said to 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 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 you 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 and your homeland and came to live with the 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. 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 stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up and don't rebuke her. Gary thank you.

Let's pray before we open God's word together. Father God we thank you for your word to us this morning. We thank you for this book of Ruth that you have left for us to to open up and that inside its pages Lord that we would learn from you and we would learn about you. Help us as we we look this morning to be changed by your word in Jesus name. Amen.

[3 : 34] So if you've been here the last few weeks we've been we've been on a journey. We've been on a journey with Ruth. We've been on a journey with Naomi. Last week we left them at the side of the road. They'd just come from Bethlehem and or they'd just come to Bethlehem from Moab and we remember that Moab is is a place that isn't isn't liked by God. It is seen as one of God's enemies and so the idea of going to Moab is bad. The idea of coming back from Moab is extremely shameful. Coming back from Moab as a widow and coming back from Moab without your children and then bringing you know Johnny Foreigner along with you. This isn't going to to look good in Bethlehem. It is it's scandalous and so what are we going to find? We find Ruth actually. We looked at in home groups if you have the time I do encourage you to come along to home groups. They're a great place. They're they're a lot more relaxed. There's less people. There's more tea and coffee and we can get together and we can you know we can chat about life. Chat about things and also chat about God's word and that's an aside. It was free. Nobody asked me to say that but yeah home groups are good and and so Ruth is the one who's encouraging Naomi. She's saying Naomi I'm coming with you. I want your God to be my God. She's saying that's it. I'm all in. I'm with you and they arrive at harvest time. She's the one that seems to be encouraging Naomi at this point.

If she grew up when I did in the 80s she probably would have flicked on to her cd player because we didn't have iPods in those days and she might have sang this song. She might have said you know when your day is long and the night the night is yours alone and when you're sure you've had enough of this life well you know just hang on. Don't just don't let yourself go because everybody cries and everybody hurts sometime and the chorus of that song goes on and it's it's an encouragement to hold on. To hold on. You see we live in a broken world that can change in a moment.

In the blink of an eye somebody goes shopping in Douglas and comes back and their car's on fire. That was only a couple of weeks ago. Tragedy can strike at any moment at any place and none of us have any control over what's going to happen. And whether it's a fire in a shopping mall or whether it's the death of a loved one. We live in a broken and a fallen world and so Ruth is there and they're alone. They're back in Bethlehem. And Ruth's saying hold on. There's hope. But is Ruth correct? Is you know REM are they correct? What is their hope to hold on to you or hold on for? Can we actually find hope in this broken world?

And if so where can we get it from? Who provides the hope for us? And so we look again at the text in verse 3. Verse 1 to 3. Let's look at that together.

[7 : 00] And so it tells us in verse 1 that Naomi has a relative. We have a new character comes into the story. He's announced as this man Boaz. He's a man of standing. He's strong. If you're interested, I was alerted to the fact that Downton the movie is out. So whoever the character is in Downton, you know the strong, handsome, silent hero. This is Boaz here in this story. He's the Mr.

Darcy of the Pride and Prejudice. This is Boaz. He's the strong, man of upright character with influence. And we're introduced to him. And not only that, we're told a few more details that he's from Elimelech's clan. So he is related. And we know his name. We know he's Boaz. And that's it. But it can do and raise a few questions for us.

Who is Boaz? What will happen? Ruth has pledged her life to God and to follow Naomi. But what about God's people? Who will she meet? Who will she find? Are they going to like her?

Will they accept her? She's given her life to the God of Israel and to Naomi, but she has no hope that as a foreigner that she's going to be accepted by this new people. What kind of people does she expect to find? And will the God that she's put her trust in, will he live up to his reputation?

And will his people reflect his character? So we're going to find that out in this chapter. It's exciting. I think it's exciting. And poor Ruth, she doesn't ever lose this tag of being the Moabite, does she?

Verse 2 says, And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, Let me go into the fields and pick leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor. And Naomi said to her, Go ahead, my daughter. And so she went out, she entered a field, and she began to glean behind the harvesters. And as it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech. And so the background to these three verses, I believe, is that Ruth has a hope in God's word. If you want to take a note down, if you want to go to Deuteronomy 24, and you can read through verses 17 to 22, we won't go through. But there is the law about gleaning. And so what is the law about gleaning? Well, in short, it's this. If you have a harvest field, don't pick every grain of corn. Leave some. And who are we going to leave it for? Well, we're going to leave it for the widows. We're going to leave it for the foreigners. And we're going to leave it for the poor and the orphan to come along and so that they can pick it after you. And one of the memories of this is because you were foreigners, you were slaves in Egypt, and you were mistreated, but you're not going to, this nation, this godly nation isn't going to be like Egypt. And so God's making provision for the poor and for the widow in this law of gleaning. And that's what's behind these three verses here. In fact, that's what's behind this chapter. This command of God and the law in Deuteronomy chapter 24. And so I'm assuming that in some cases, Naomi has told Ruth this, and she's worked it out, that actually the word of God says that I should be able to go to a field,

[10 : 40] I should be able to turn up, and I should be allowed to gather corn so that we can survive. And so off Naomi goes. So she has these three ideas. She says that she's going to be able to get provision. She's going to be able to hopefully find favor and grace in the people of Israel. In fact, she's looking for an individual that's going to be gracious and give her favor, and that she's going to find acceptance. And she expects those things from the people of God. And so my question to us this morning is, what do people expect of us? You know, when they hear about the Bible, they hear about Christians, and they hear about Christians who are meant to love one another and love their neighbors, when they meet us. Do we live up to the billing? Do we reflect the love and the character

of God that we know? It's a challenge to us. It's a big challenge. But this is what Ruth expects to find.

And so we have to say, does she get it? Does she find that? Because we have to remember that the context of the whole book of Ruth is taking place in the time of Judges, when everybody was doing their own thing. Is she going to find people that actually are living God's standard? They're living God's way at a time when most people are doing their own thing. And just there in verse 2, she wants to go to the fields.

She wants to pick up leftover grain. And in verse 3, it tells us she goes out, and as it turned out, she ends up in Boaz's field. Isn't that good? We've heard about this man, Boaz. He's of normal character. So what's he going to do? How's he going to influence this story? Is he going to help Naomi and Ruth? We don't know. But Jesus commands that we would love one another. He commands that we would love our neighbor as herself. And this is what she expects in the law. This is what she expects from this new community that she's given up everything to be a part of.

What's she going to discover? So let's look at verse 4. This is where it gets exciting. And if you're into your romantic dramas, it starts to hot up a bit.

Just then, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem, and he greeted his harvesters, and he says, The Lord be with you. And the Lord bless you, they answered. Boaz is a good boss. He comes, and we know he's a godly man, and he greets them with a greeting.

[13 : 30] He's saying, God be with you. It's a nice greeting. It's a nice way to introduce Boaz to us. And then Boaz, he asked his harvesters.

He's seen something that's different in his field. There's all of his normal workers, and there's the ladies and the men, and he spots something different, and he calls over his charged hand, and he says, Who's that girl?

Who's she? She catches his eye. But what he actually says is, Who does that woman belong to? Who owns that woman?

Who is that woman's protector? Who is she? Whose daughter is she? Who is her husband? Who's her protector? Where does she come from? And we get the answer, and the overseer, he replies, Well, she's the Moabite that came back from Moab.

As if Moabite didn't tell him exactly where she came from. He has to emphasize the fact that she's not from around here. And she said, Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves, behind the harvesters, and she came into the field, and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.

[14 : 55] And really what she's saying is, Well, that's the foreigner that came back from Moab. She's the odd one out among here, but she's been here all morning, and she's a really hard worker. She hasn't really taken a lot of time to rest.

And so he is, in one sense, he's impressed by her dedication, but he's still not sure about whether or not he should accept her or not. He still sees her as an outsider. And so this is then magical. This is a big old moment. What is Boaz going to do? Is he going to tell her to, you know, What are you doing? Get away?

You're a foreigner. You're a Moabite. I don't want you in my field. Clear off. Is that his response? And in verse 8, it says, So Boaz said to Ruth, My daughter, listen to me.

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.

[15 : 58] And I have told the men, Do not lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars that the men have filled. See, she had heard God's word and it told her about a God of refuge.

And so she's receiving all of these things all at once throughout this chapter as we read through it, as you look through it, as you go home. She's given protection.

She's given kindness. And she's given grace. Boaz doesn't throw her out.

Boaz embraces her. In fact, Boaz says to all the young men, because she's vulnerable and she's not belonging to anybody, he says, Hands off. She's under my protection.

Anybody touches Ruth answers to me. He's laying down the law. He's saying no. And then he's saying to Ruth, he's saying, You know, if you're thirsty, you can go and get water.

[17 : 05] He's not treating her like someone who's poor. He's bringing her in and treating her, I suppose, you could say, like a hired worker. Only there's no benefit to Boaz because anything she

gets, she takes away.

And so he's treating her with real kindness, real grace, and real protection. And these are the things that Ruth thought she would find in the people of God.

And so this is Ruth's response. She can't believe it. She thought, you know, if we get a few stalks of corn and make a wee bit of flour and get home and me and Naomi can eat, well, surely that would be great kindness.

But Boaz goes way beyond her expectations and at this, it says in verse 10 that she bowed her face to the ground and she asked him, Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?

It's even how Ruth sees herself. Ruth sees herself as the outcast, as someone who's outside the community. She's doing this because she has a belief, but she still feels like an outsider.

[18:20] And this is wonderful. These words, verse 11, Boaz replied, I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law. Obviously, gossip worked quite well 3,000 years ago, just as it does today.

Since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and your homeland and you came to live with a people that you did not know before.

Boaz has been told, we don't know how he knows, we're assuming it's Naomi has leaked out the information, but he knows about her commitment, not only to Naomi, not only to coming to the land of Israel and to Bethlehem, but her commitment to the God of Israel.

And he understands exactly what it is that she's given up. And we know that by the introduction of those words that you have left your father and mother. You had protection, you had security, you had somewhere to belong and you have come to somewhere that you don't belong.

And not only that, he actually gets why she's done it. He knows why and we learn that in verse 12. And this is the outstanding verse if you can have a better verse in a chapter, this is it.

[19:44] And these words are wonderful. He says, 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.

Say, how smart is Boaz? Boaz realizes that yes, you're here with Naomi. Yes, you've left your father and your mother. But as we learned and we looked a little bit deeper on Home Group on Wednesday night, Ruth's commitment was to Yahweh.

She was rejecting the gods of the Moabites and she wanted to know the God of the Israelites. She wanted to know who this God was and she wanted to align herself with him and she wanted to take refuge in the wings of God.

and this is a wonderful picture. It's a picture of a bird protecting its chicks by surrounding the chicks with its wings protecting it from harm from the elements nestled cozy in all those feathers.

It's a nice and cute little bird. Fragile little bird. And Boaz is saying God's going to bless you for what you've done.

[21:14] You've come here to take refuge and I believe that God's going to give you refuge. And so we find that all of the despair of the previous chapter is renewed and that there is hope.

Hope in this refuge. And so the narrative continues and Ruth continues and she comes back and she says 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. He's being so kind.

He's going the extra mile. He is going beyond what's expected and Ruth is blown away. And it doesn't stop there.

You go on verse 14. It's dinner time. What's going to happen? She's been working out all day. And so I think this is even more remarkable because I don't know this it's not in the text but I reckon all the workers on their own you know as they do in the boss he has his special little bit of food.

[22:26] And he comes to eat beside the boss is it you know the supervisor the manager no he calls over Ruth the Moabite the foreigner and he calls her over to his table in verse 14 at mealtime Boaz said to her come over here have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.

I remember many years ago when I was a little bit younger and I hadn't a clue you were going out to dinner parties and things like that and you experience new foods.

I can remember the first time someone says well do you know you want some balsamic vinegar and bread. Like what? Bread? Balsamic vinegar? Uncouth you know.

No idea. The idea that you can dip bread and put balsamic vinegar in it with a wee bit of oil and it's tasty. So that's what they're doing here. They're coming over in the text and they're having a little bit of wine vinegar and bread.

And when she sat down with the harvesters he offered her some roasted grain and she had all that she wanted and she had some left over. We follow on there in verse 15 and as she got up to glean Boaz gave orders to his men.

[23 : 48] Do you know what? He almost takes the shackles off and he more or less says look just let her take the combine harvester there and just give her the whole field. He gives her open season.

He basically says as much as that girl can carry let her have it. In fact you see when you're cutting down the big heads of grain just drop a couple and say look here there you go.

And when she's doing it make sure you treat her kindly. Don't ever dare rebuke her. Let her do and let her have as much as she wants. He's gone from let her work and let her follow and he's realizing he wants to be God to this girl in the sense that he wants to fulfill what he believes about her.

He wants to bless her because he really truly believes that God this is the thing that he should do because he wants to bless her because she's come back to find a God of refuge and he's trying to be that refuge for her.

And so it goes on and she works all day and she works hard and she works all day and she gathers up a lot of stuff. And also she has enough lunch that she takes some home to Naomi.

[25 : 08] Naomi it says there in verse 17 so Ruth gleaned in the field until evening and then she had threshed the barley she had gathered it and it amounted to about an ephah.

And you're all saying what's an ephah? And I'm saying I don't know. But I'm told it's about 22 liters. And so I reckon that not only that that's quite heavy so it tells me that this girl Ruth must have been a fit girl.

She was a bit strong to carry 22 liters around. 22 liters of milk I don't think I could carry that very far. But she's going back home.

She's going to Naomi. Naomi's been away worrying all day. Where's Naomi got to? Where's Ruth got to? You know you think of the dangers. Boaz has had to tell his workers you know you've got to leave that girl alone.

So the vulnerability of Ruth is very real and so Naomi is she worrying? Is she fretting? What's going to happen? What is she going to see? You could almost imagine her sitting waiting out looking over the horizon waiting for Ruth to return.

[26 : 25] And we see that in verse 18 she carried it back to town and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over and after she had eaten enough.

And then here's the big question over dinner. And her mother-in-law asked her where did you clean today? Where'd you get everything?

And it was a follow-up question. Where did you work? Blessed is the man who took notice of you. And so then Ruth told her mother-in-law all about the one whose place she had been working.

And the name of the man who worked there today was Boaz. You can almost, you know, the anticipation of Naomi. 22 liters of flour and wheat and this roasted grain and, you know, who took notice of you?

Who caught your eye today? Who was good to you? Where did you get such kindness and such grace? Naomi didn't expect it. Ruth didn't expect it. Do we expect it?

[27 : 36] What do you expect when you pray and you come to church and do you have high expectations of a loving God who wants to bless us?

It's not a prosperity idea of blessing, but the heart that God wants us to come to him because he cares for us.

And so Naomi's thrilled, obviously, and she says, the Lord bless him. Bless the man who took notice of you. Oops.

And so we have this little dialogue between Naomi and Ruth. And then some little detail comes out. When she finds out that it's Boaz, she uses this term. She says, oh, that's great.

He is one of our, the old word is kinsman redeemer. Or the NIV here says guardian redeemer. And everybody's going, what's that? Is that a Marvel movie? A guardian redeemer.

[28 : 43] And so again for that, I haven't got the reference, and we'll go into that a little bit more probably next week. But a guardian redeemer was this. If you were in trouble and you were a family member, the law said that your closest living relative had the right to come and buy you out of slavery or pay your debt and bring you back into your inheritance so that you wouldn't lose the inheritance that God had given the children of Israel.

And so Naomi's saying, this is great, you've gone to Boaz, and you know what? He could possibly redeem us, he could get us out of the situation that we're in. He could help us. He could care for us, he could bring us in. And so now the scheming wheels of Naomi start to work. We see that next week, how she tries to work it out, and she's thinking, there could be a future here. Everything that I thought was bleak, she's now suddenly full. Her stomach is full, her cupboard is full, and now she's thinking that the future is full. The emptiness of chapter one is wiped away in one day.

And so for the next few days she works out a strategy of survival. She says, Boaz says here, read the text, Lord bless him, Naomi said to her daughter-in-law.

[30 : 10] He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead. And 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.

And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it would 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 wheat harvest were finished, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

So she's got a job. She has somewhere that she can go every day, and she can continue to keep the cupboard full. And there's the hope that Boaz could be the man, Boaz could be the redeemer. See, we all need a redeemer. Could Boaz be the redeemer for Naomi and Ruth? The gospel tells us that we need a redeemer.

We've been singing this morning about the great redemption. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. And what do we need redeemed from? The Bible tells us that we are lost in our sin, that we need forgiven.

[31 : 26] Ephesians 1 says in verse 6, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves, that is Christ. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

You see, Boaz is a picture of Christ. Boaz is the picture of our protector. Boaz is the picture of our provider.

In the Old Testament, this little book is showing us something about our Lord and Savior. He's the person that when we come into his field, he makes sure that we're protected and that there's water for us to drink and that there's roast his grain for us to eat.

And that no harm will come to us. And he did that by being able to buy us back by going to Calvary. If you don't know Jesus this morning, if you've never heard the gospel, you can see it here in the book of Ruth. That's what Christ did for you. He accepted the foreigner into his land.

[32 : 40] And in fact, all of us really were foreigners. We were far away from God. We were far away from the grace of God and it is only through Christ that we have been brought near, brought into his nation.

We were thinking also on Wednesday night about that great verse in 1 Peter. It says that we are a holy nation. That what we have become by coming to know Christ. And so we need a redeemer. My question is, do you know that you need a redeemer? The idea of you get those little coupons and you can go in and you can get one pound off your shopping, you redeem the coupon. Well, this is way better than getting one pound off your shopping. Christ has died to pay for our sins so that we might know him, that we might be forgiven, that eternally when he returns or when we die, that we get to be in his field forever.

We get to be in his field under his protection, under his provision for all eternity. We're going to stand, we're going to sing a song, before that I'm going to pray.

[33 : 52] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the glorious truth that we find here in church. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.