

Ruth 2: Grace and Gratitude

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[0 : 00] 2 and we'll take as our text this morning verse 20. Ruth chapter 2 verse 20. Sorry, verse 10, sorry. Then she fell on her face bowing to the ground and said to him, Why have I found favour in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner?

So a few weeks ago we started to look at the book of Ruth. We started a series called Three Funerals and a Wedding, God's Faithfulness and Testing Times.

The story of Ruth is a story that is everything. It's a story of national and personal tragedy. It's a story of romance.

It's a story of famine, a story of exile, but it's also a story of redemption and hope in difficult times. Last time we looked at Ruth, we looked at chapter 1. We saw that Ruth is all about God's love for the outsider, for the stranger.

[1 : 25] And that Ruth is also about God's faithfulness in difficult times when life doesn't make sense.

God is still in control. God is still sovereign. God is still in control. And we pick up the story this morning with Ruth and Naomi returning to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, as it says at the end of chapter 1.

So we have these two widows who have lost their husbands. They are bereft. They are broken. They are bereaved.

And they are penniless. And here we have them walking into Bethlehem. So the first thing we want to notice this morning is going and gleaning in verses 1 to 7.

Glowing and going and gleaning. And the first thing we want to notice is the law of love. The law of love.

[2 : 32] We can't understand the book of Ruth unless we understand the law of love. If you were desperate for help this morning, I wonder where you would go. Would you come to Livingston Free Church?

Would you go to the council? Where would you expect to find compassion this morning? Well, back in the time of the judges, around about 1100 BC, God had made provision for the poor.

If we flick back to Leviticus 19, in verse 9, we read about these words, When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge.

Neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare. Neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner.

I am the Lord your God. You see, God in his love had made this law for the poor. And farmers were deliberately to leave part of the harvest for the poor.

[3 : 50] So when they gleaned a field, they weren't to glean right to the edges, they were to leave a portion of the field for the poor. When somebody who owned a vineyard was gathering the grapes, they were deliberately to leave some grapes for the poor.

And why were they to do that? Was it for social cohesion? Was it because of people's human rights? Was it because of mutual treaties with other countries?

Well, Leviticus 19 tells us the reason they were to do that was because of the character and nature of God. Every single time in Leviticus 19 that God gives a command, he says, I am the Lord your God.

In verse 14 he says, You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear the Lord your God. I am the Lord.

In verses 15 and 16, he says, You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. I am the Lord. In verse 33, we're told to love the stranger.

[5 : 12] Again, why? I am the Lord your God. The reason the Israelites were to love the poor was because of the character and nature of God.

Because God loved the poor. He loved the stranger. He loved the deaf. He loved the blind. He loved the disabled. And this law of love was not just some good idea.

It was tied into the character and nature of God. And of course, we are made in the image of God and we are called to be like God.

And if God loves the poor, then we are to love the poor. And to what extent are we to love the poor? Leviticus 19 verse 34 says this, You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you and you shall love him as yourself.

We are to love the poor with as much care as we love and care for ourselves. You see, the nasty God of the Old Testament is a myth.

[6 : 34] It is a myth perpetuated by the BBC and by all the media. What we find in the Old Testament is not a nasty God but a God of love who makes laws filled with love.

And you see, this law was so wise and so loving that it gave Ruth back her dignity. She wasn't given a hand out.

She was given a hand up and she was allowed to glean in the fields and she got back her self-respect and her dignity.

And whatever kindness we show as Christians to the poor, it must always be with one eye on restoring people, on helping people to get back on their feet and helping them if at all possible to get back in to work.

So that's the first thing we notice under this heading, the law of love. But then secondly, we notice happenstances happen. Happenstances happen.

[7 : 48] We see it in verse 3. So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

Happenstances happen. How often do we say this just happened or that just happened? But there are no accidents in God's world.

And you see, through all the pain and suffering, God was leading Ruth to a meeting with a man who would ultimately save her and redeem her, her kinsman redeemer.

And you see, Ruth thought she was going to some random field to gather some barley. But all the time, God was leading her and guiding her. God knew God was in control.

And then in verse 4 we read these words, Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. All these seemingly random acts, Ruth gleaned in a random field, Boaz suddenly turns up out of the blue.

[9 : 05] all the time, God's providence was working to redeem this Moabite into the covenant family of God. And Ruth, the book of Ruth, the story of Ruth should remind us that in times of national and personal chaos, God is in control.

Now we should never think that God, because God is in control that our decisions don't matter.

Ruth still had to go out and glean in the field. She still had to work. We're not some pawns in some divine chess game. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Of course we have to make decisions. Of course we have to work. God's sovereignty should never lead us to some determinist view of God. But Ruth wanted to go.

She was encouraged by Naomi. She wanted to work. She wanted to provide for her family. And you see, notice time and time again in the book of Ruth, it was when Ruth was in the path of obedience that God blessed her.

[10 : 26] It was when she was in the path of obedience that was then that God blessed her. She wasn't sitting at home having a pity party. She wasn't sitting at home filled with self pity.

She was in the path of obedience. She was out trying to provide for her mother-in-law and it was there that God blessed her. So we see there are no accidents with God.

Just when we think God has lost control, we find out that God is in control all the time. And then thirdly under this heading we see a foreman and a foreigner a foreman and a foreigner in verses 4-7.

Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, whose young woman is this? At this stage Boaz hasn't got a clue who Ruth is. He just sees this young woman in the field.

But why did Boaz notice Ruth? Well it could be something to do with verse 7 because the foreman says that Ruth said please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reaper.

[11 : 35] So she came and she has continued from early morning until now except for a short rest, literally a short sit down. Isn't it amazing that as this businessman walked along his field there was something about Ruth that set her apart.

Her industrious work set her apart. Her diligence set her apart and Boaz noticed her and it prompted him to say who is this woman?

Isn't that amazing? That this new grace filled character of Ruth was reflective in the way that she worked.

And I wonder if that's true of us who are Christians that there is something about the way that we work, the way that we carry out our responsibilities, the way that we bring up our kids that sets us apart.

St. Ferguson says in his little book on Ruth, the Lord's people should have a something about them. Something about the way they talk and walk and react and the manner in which they live that expresses the fact that they are not so much citizens of this world as citizens of heaven.

[13 : 08] there is something about the Christian that should set them apart. There is an amazing story in St.

Ferguson's book on Ruth about how St. Ferguson became a Christian because his Sunday school teacher became a Christian by somebody in his office.

and he says that this man walked past the typing pool way back in the 70s. And there was three typists. And there was one typist that worked harder than the other two typists.

And eventually one day this guy said, what is it about that woman? And one of his colleagues said, she's a Christian. And that man became a Christian and through that man St.

Ferguson became a Christian. There was something about the way that she worked, there was something about her diligence that set her apart. And we see that in Ruth.

[14 : 18] We see, as we said in our first study, the quiet symphony of God's grace is playing beautifully through these early few verses of chapter 2.

At this stage, Ruth has no understanding of what's going on. She has no understanding that she is gleaning in the field of her kinsman redeemer. But all the time, God is bringing her closer to redemption.

We see God's law of love that finds Ruth happening to work in a field and then she happens to be spotted by her kinsman redeemer because of her grace filled character.

So that's our first point. We see all these things happening in God's sovereignty. Going and gleaning. But then secondly, we see reward and refuge in verses 8 to 13.

Reward and refuge. And the first thing we want to notice is the humility, the humility of grace. We see in these verses the exchange between Boaz and Ruth, this beautiful conversation between Boaz and Ruth.

[15 : 34] And it culminates in this scene in verses 10 to 12 when Ruth falls at Boaz's feet to acknowledge her unworthiness or to receive grace as a foreigner.

You remember that Ruth has been through a nightmare. She's lost her husband. She's lost her father-in-law. She's travelled back from the land of Moab.

She's left her people behind. She's been through this nightmare of tragedy and loss. And now she listens to this speech by Boaz.

Do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young woman. Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you?

And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn. Imagine how Ruth would have felt after this nightmare that she'd been through and suddenly Boaz offers her all this kindness.

[16 : 46] What does Boaz offer her? He offers her comfort. He offers her protection. He offers her community. He offers her provision.

He offers her purpose. her hope. And how does Ruth respond? How does Ruth respond? Does she say, I'm glad you offered me all that because that was my rights under the Levitical law?

No, she falls on her face as an undeserving sinner falls at the feet of Jesus. Boaz has shown her kindness love and mercy and she falls at his feet.

She knows that she is a foreigner alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenant of promise. But she has embraced the faith of the Israelites.

She has trusted in the covenant God Jehovah. And for the first time in years, somebody has shown her kindness and she's overwhelmed.

[17 : 59] She's broken. She's humble. And the first mark of grace in a person's life should be brokenness and humility.

Arrogance and pride can never coexist with grace. When you fully understand the grace of God, you are broken.

It humbles you. It lays a sinner low. So we see the humility of grace but then also we see how Ruth is richly rewarded.

Now as Christians we might feel a bit uneasy about this word rewarded that we have in this passage. Boaz says to the Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel.

But what Boaz is praying for with Ruth is he's praying that all the years of trauma and tragedy and loss that God would repair, God would recompense her, God would put right all the tragedy that she has suffered.

[19 : 22] This word repay or recompense is the same word that is used in Joel chapter 2 verse 25. I will restore to you the years which the swarming locusts have eaten.

It's the same meaning. Boaz wants God to restore to Ruth all the tragedy and all the grief that she has suffered. Boaz knows all that Ruth has done.

It's been told him there in verse 11. All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me. Boaz isn't suggesting some perverted version of the prosperity gospel.

He's not wanting God to shower her with some financial blessing. He wants God to restore to her all the years of tragedy and trauma.

It's a bit like Abraham in Genesis 15 when God says to him, Fear not Abraham, I am your shield and your reward shall be very great.

[20 : 30] The reward is the Lord himself and a relationship with the covenant God. But then thirdly under this heading we also see wings of refuge in verse 12.

under whose wings you have come to take refuge. We often find in the Bible this imagery as we've sung this morning about the eagle.

God being like the eagle. And what Boaz is saying here is he wants this grief stricken and vulnerable widow to come under the care and protection of the covenant God of Israel.

Remember that the eagle imagery is used before the Ten Commandments are given in Exodus chapter 19. God says you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians how I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself.

God is likened us to an eagle that saves people, that redeems the children of Israel by grace. We see it used again in the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 verse 11.

[21 : 46] Like an eagle that stirs up its nest that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them up on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him.

No foreign God was with him. We see this beautiful imagery about God's love for people. In that same chapter in Deuteronomy 32 it talks about God keeping them as the apple of his eye.

And we see this imagery of wings used again and again in the Psalms. Psalm 17 Hide me in the shadow of thy wings from the wicked. Psalm 36 that we sang, How precious is thy grace.

Therefore in shadow of thy wings, men's sons their trust will place. Psalm 57 Yea in the shadow of thy wings my refuge I will place until these sad calamities do wholly overpass.

What do God's wings demonstrate? They demonstrate safety. They demonstrate refreshment.

They demonstrate stillness hope and hope and refuge and rest and hope.

[23 : 08] And if anyone needed those things it was Ruth. This frightened vulnerable widow with no sense of belonging finds rest under the wings of Jehovah the covenant God.

A God who loves the stranger. A God who loves the widow and the orphan. children. And isn't that what we need this morning? We need shelter under the wings of the Lord.

You see God's love for Ruth it wasn't general it was personal. And isn't that our problem? We think of God's love as general. We don't think of it as personal.

A.W. Tozer says God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love. Imagine the love of God as if you were the only person for God to love.

And you see what Ruth tells us, what Ruth teaches us is that God loves outsiders, he loves outcasts, he loves strangers, he loves the broken and he loves the filthy.

[24 : 27] He loves to cover sinners under his wings of love. As Augustine says, Jesus Christ knows you individually as though there was not another person in the entire world.

He died for you as certainly as if you had been the only one. He knows the worst about you and is the one who loves you the most. God's love for Ruth was a personal love.

It wasn't a general love and he was drawing her under his wings of refuge. So we see, secondly then, reward and refuge and then lastly and briefly we see kindness and kinship.

Ruth had no community. She had no people. But what do we see in verse 14?

She's offered a place at the table. She's offered a place at the table. What does it mean to be at a table? It means to belong. To be invited to a meal.

[25 : 43] You belong. And that's what Ruth needed. She needed to belong. And you see, we started by talking about this law of love from Leviticus 19.

But you see, the law of love, it was meaningless unless it was carried out by faithful landowners like Boaz. And you see, in Boaz we see faithfulness and kindness at work.

Boaz, he didn't do the minimum that was required of him. He overflowed with generosity and kindness and love to the poor.

He invites this foreigner, this nobody to sit at the table with the reapers. She was invited to eat the bread and dip bread in the wine.

She was offered roasted grain. She had so much she had to take a doggy bag home with her. And Boaz instructed his reapers to allow her to glean in the field not just at the edges.

[26 : 54] And they were to leave sheaves for her. You see to Boaz love and law were one. God Boaz loves God and therefore he loves his law.

No detail of God's love was too small for Boaz. I think the Ferguson says love does not ignore the law because it is more important than the law or act as if it can abandon the law because it is more important than the law because its nature is to love.

Rather love shows what the intention of the law really is. It is the fulfillment of the law not the rejection of it. So Boaz heaps blessing upon blessing on Ruth and Naomi in fulfillment of the law but also because he is filled with love for the stranger and the widow.

So he gives Ruth a place at the table. But then we see this word loving kindness in verse 20. We're almost finished.

In verse 20 we see Naomi said to her daughter in law may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

[28 : 13] Ruth goes out to glean we're told in these verses in verse 17 she goes out to glean and we're told that she gleaned an ephah of barley 30 pounds worth of barley this widow who was empty handed and hopeless suddenly she's gone home with a sack on her back of 30 pounds of barley she's got a doggy bag from lunch and she's got 30 pounds of barley she staggers in to Naomi's house with this massive bag of barley and Naomi exclaims may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead as we saw in our first study this word kindness is the Old Testament word hesed it's one of these big words in the Old Testament it's used 250 times in the Old Testament God is a

God of loving kindness of covenant commitment and faithfulness and love to his people you see the picture here these two widows they stagger into Bethlehem empty they come in penniless they come in hopeless but you see they shelter under the wings of the Almighty they experience loving kindness from Boaz and suddenly they stagger in with more than they can carry and you see what we see is Boaz demonstrating grace and mercy and kindness to these two widows and it is pointing us forward to the grace and the mercy of the ultimate kinsman redeemer the Lord Jesus

Christ and as we said a few weeks ago how much theology did Ruth understand how much did Ruth know of of the scriptures almost nothing but in Naomi and Boaz she knew a lot about God she knew in Naomi all about the faithfulness of God and testing times and in Boaz she saw the grace and the mercy and the love of Jehovah and then just lastly we see the redeemer revealed the redeemer revealed you see the drama in chapter 2 comes to this big climax in verse 20 Naomi also said to her the man is a close relative of ours one of our redeemers one of our redeemers you see again we see

God's love in the law in the Old Testament this law of the near kinsman what did a kinsman redeemer do he had to seek justice if one of his relatives was murdered if somebody was in debt he had to pay off the debt so that that person could come back out of slavery if family property was sold he had to buy it back what's this all about what's all these obscure laws in Leviticus and numbers what are they all about they are pointing us forward to the ultimate redemption every single page of the old testament is pointing us forward in types and shadows to the ultimate redeemer the lord jesus christ all the sacrificial systems all the slaughter of thousands of passover lambs they're all pointing us forward to the lord jesus christ who would one day buy us back from from the slavery of sin but wait a minute don't we need a redeemer who is like us don't we need a kinsman redeemer who is a near relative to us as it says in galatians 4 but when the fullness of time had come god sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who are under the law so that we might receive adoptions as sons you see god had it all worked out from eternity past god had a kinsman redeemer just like us a near relative christ had to become a human born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons we left chapter 1 a few weeks ago at the time of barley harvest we saw two women who were full of sadness bitterness who were lonely and who were in poverty and at the end of chapter 2 again it's a time of harvest but the scene has completely changed it's a time of hope it's a time of comfort it's a time of provision and you see what we see in Ruth chapter 2 is how god's overruling purposes can be seen even in the mundane and the ordinary and the everyday aspects of life such as daily bread as we said last time the lesson of the book of Ruth is that there is a river running through all the events of history winding its way both to the mountain tops of blessing and into the valley of despair and desolation in all the chaos and loss of chapter 1 god was there all along he was working out his purposes through suffering and you see most importantly in Ruth chapter 2 we have the redeemer revealed the identity of the one who is going to redeem Ruth is finally revealed and the amazing thing is that we can read [35 : 33] Ruth chapter 2 with new testament eyes and see the redeemer who is ultimately going to come in the lord jesus christ and as we go into chapter 3 and chapter 4 we'll see much more deeply who this kinsman redeemer is and how his character points us to the kinsman redeemer in the lord jesus christ as we saw in chapter 1 what Ruth is all about is that in all the chaos and all the rebellion god is quarrying for diamonds in the book of Ruth he is quarrying for diamonds he is lifting up Ruth as a trophy of grace a foreigner a stranger an outsider is embraced into the covenant family of god in love is given provision and is given a hope and a future and the big question for all of us this morning is do we know this kinsman redeemer in our lives do we know this kinsman redeemer god is the god who welcomes the outsider and the stranger into his covenant family and he welcomes each one of us this morning to come into the family of god the ultimate kinsman redeemer has died for you and for me that we can know him and love and enjoy him for eternity and the great question is do you know him this morning do you know him as

Ruth knew him a provider a protector a person who can give you refuge and hope do you know that kinsman redeemer well if you don't come to him this morning embrace him shelter under the shadow of his wings well may god bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh lord we thank you for sending the ultimate kinsman redeemer and we pray oh lord that you would help us to shelter under those wings of refuge this morning bless your word to us we pray in christ's name amen let's conclude our service this morning by singing to god's praise the final verses of psalm 146 very appropriate word psalm 146 verses 8 to 10 the lord doth give the blind their sight the bowed down doth raise the lord doth dearly love all those that walk in upright ways psalm 146 in the scottish psalter on page 446 and we're going to sing to the tune weatherby verses 8 to 10 to god's praise