

Ruth 2:1-9

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[0 : 00] Lord, you are so good.

And we have the amazing privilege of coming to your word. And we have communicated yourself, your heart to us.

I pray that we would take that seriously today. Seriously with conviction, seriously with joy. To know and hear from you.

To be encouraged and confronted by your wonderful word. Lord, we pray that in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, our rock and our redeemer.

Further, we pray, Lord, that where my thoughts are jumbled, your power would make them clear.

[1 : 21] Where our hearts are distracted, that you would make us focused on the deep, deep love of Jesus. For us. I pray that in his name.

And for his sake. Amen. I invite you to turn your Bibles with us to Ruth chapter 2.

If you don't have a Bible with you, we would very much love to give you one. They're on the back table there. They are already bookmarked to our passage today. What do you do when you have lost everything?

And remember that in the Lord, your story is not yet over. What does love look like?

Love actively seeks the best for someone else. Those are the two questions that Naomi and then Ruth have answered for us in the last two weeks.

[2 : 31] If you're just joining us, chapter 1 of Ruth is a story of loss and a story of love. It's a story of loss. Naomi, in the first five verses, loses everything.

She loses her economic security. She loses her home. She loses her friends. She moves to a foreign country where she then, along with Ruth, lose someone very dear to her, someone very near to her.

They each lose their husband. But it's also a story, chapter 1, of love, where they outdo each other in showing honor, in looking out for the best interest of the other.

Naomi says to Ruth, stay here in Moab, in this foreign land, where you have a chance at a husband, where you have a chance at a future. And Ruth says, no, I'm going to serve you.

Where you go, I will go. Your God will be my God, and I'm going to look after your best interests. So in the midst of loss and love, we see that God has been with them through and through it.

[3 : 59] And now they're in the promised land. Great, right? The Lord has visited Israel, and Bethlehem now has plenty. But Naomi and Ruth, they still don't have anything.

They're in the midst of a city that's now prospering, but they don't have any of that themselves, do they? Does God care about that?

Does he act? Yes, God cares. And yes, God acts. He acts through his people, interestingly enough. Let's look at that. Let's see that happen. Verse 1. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

He's going to become important soon. Verse 2. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

[5 : 07] She said to her, go, my daughter. Now the first thing you might ask is, what does that mean? What does glean mean? It simply means to gather or to pick up grain behind the harvesters, what they leave behind.

Now the second thing you might be asking in relation to that then is, isn't that stealing? Right?

Going to someone else's field, harvesting their crops for yourself?

That doesn't sound too much in line with the Ten Commandments. Well, before the people of Israel ever entered the promised land, God gave them instructions on how to use that promised land.

And they were based in his own character, those instructions, they were based in who he is. Listen, Deuteronomy 10, 18 and 19. The Lord executes justice for the fatherless and the widow.

And loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. Love the foreigner, therefore, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. See, the Lord loves the foreigner and the widow.

[6 : 21] And Ruth was both of those things. As we saw last week, love actively seeks the best for someone else. And God is a God of love, so he actively seeks the best.

For Ruth. And others like her. How? How does he actively seek their best? He gives them food, he says. Well, how? How does he do that? Well, he does it through his people.

In Leviticus chapter 19, he gave clear instructions on how to treat the harvest. Leviticus 19, 9.

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.

You shall not strip your vineyard bare. Neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. Then the Lord says this. You shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner.

[7 : 24] I am the Lord your God. God owns the fields. He owns the vineyards. And his will is that the landowners, who are stewards, really, of that land, that they serve the orphan, that they serve the widow, that they serve the foreigner.

And those are the people who are poor and disadvantaged in their midst. He asks them, commands them, to serve them by giving them an opportunity to harvest enough to survive on.

Now, the work isn't done for them. It's not a handout. They have to go gather it up themselves. They have to make it into, you know, a palatable food.

But they have an opportunity to feed themselves. And what's so interesting about this command, about reaping, is that it is the first of six statements that happen in eight verses.

And I want you to listen for the commonality of them. Leviticus 19.10. We just read it. You shall leave gleanings for the poor and for the foreigner. I am the Lord your God. Verse 12.

[8 : 37] You shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. You shall not curse the deaf, verse 14, or put a stumbling block before the blind.

I am the Lord. Verse 16. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people. I am the Lord. Verse 18. You shall not take vengeance or bear grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. What has God done? He's connected his character.

I am the Lord. To his people's actions. That's why we said last week that the kindness, the goodness, the loyalty, and faithfulness that are characteristic of God are true of his people too.

Now this is going to be hugely important when in a few moments we meet Boaz. It's going to help us understand who he is, what he's doing, and because the actions of God's people are tied to God and his character, it's going to help us understand our Lord.

[9 : 59] And then it's going to reflect back to us again. God's people. Whose lives, whose hearts, whose actions are to look like his. And it's going to help us understand who we must be and how we must live.

So Ruth is going to take advantage of this gleaning system with which God intends to provide for those who can't provide for themselves.

Where does she end up? 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, who was of the clan of Elimelech. She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

Oh, really? Really? What the Hebrew text literally says there is her chance chanced upon the part of the field belonging to Boaz.

[11 : 13] And if you know Rob Buttermore, that's going to rub him the wrong way. He doesn't like that idea of chance. And actually, that's the point here. One writer put it this way. The Orthodox Israelite knew there was no such thing as chance.

Proverbs 16.33 says, The die is cast, but every decision is from the Lord. In reality, the narrator is screaming, See the hand of God at work here.

The same hand that sent the famine in chapter 1, verse 1, and later provided food, chapter 1, verse 6, is the hand that brought Naomi and Ruth to Bethlehem precisely at the beginning of the harvest. chapter 1, verse 22, and has now guided Ruth to that portion of the field belonging specifically to Boaz.

I want us to recognize that in the midst of this, God is there, even though her chance chanced upon the field of Boaz.

[12 : 31] And so we see here that God is loving, and he is in control even when he is silent.

God has not spoken to anyone yet. no one has had a revelation from the Lord, but he has been here in the midst of their lives.

God is loving, and he is in control even when he is silent. Let's reflect on that.

How has that been true in your life? how might that be true of your life right now and you don't even notice it?

how might you encourage someone in your life with that truth today?

[13 : 51] today? And how might we walk into tomorrow with more joy and more confidence because God is loving and in control even when he is silent?

when we look at God's word he reveals himself to us and we have hope we have comfort and we have joy in him.

So let's look at how God directs their paths verse 4 and behold Boaz happened to come from Bethlehem and he said to the reapers the Lord be with you and they answered the Lord bless you then Boaz said to his young man who is in charge of the reapers whose young woman is this and the servant who is in charge of the reapers answered she is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab she said please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers so she came and she continued from early morning until now except for a short rest then Boaz said to Ruth now listen my daughter do not go to glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young women 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 what did we say about this gleaning system the Lord expresses his love through his people whose hearts and lives look like him God's people are the instrument of God's blessing in the world that means you and me let me put this another way because God shapes his people's hearts to look like his God shines through them in the new testament Jesus said I am the light of the world in

John chapter 8 he also said in Matthew chapter 5 you are the light of the world Christ shines through Christians and we see the Lord shining through his man Boaz how does Boaz express the Lord's love first he reaches out now God had already reached out to Boaz's people that's their national history he freed them from slavery in Egypt and brought them to Israel he gave them access to himself through the temple system and now Boaz reaches out a penniless widowed foreigner like

[17 : 58] Ruth would never approach a strange man a wealthy man who had servants who had fields who was established in the community verse one said that he is a worthy or a strong man in the community Boaz had to make the first move to reach out to her love reaches out God and that's our experience too isn't it God has reached out to us one writer put it this way grace means that God makes the first move to come to our aid not because we deserve anything but because he loves us and wants us for himself God took the initiative in salvation when we were spiritually dead as we saw back in the fall in Ephesians chapter 2 without strength while we were sinners while we were his enemies what does that do in us how does that change our lives well love reaches out if you are a

Christian that means that God has already reached out to you and he is in the business of making your heart look like his which means your life is going to look like that too and I think it's really easy for us to think that we are living faithful Christian lives when we stop doing enough of the bad stuff and we don't think about actively loving like reaching out it's enough to stop swearing and stop looking at that website stop being mean maybe just by avoiding a person altogether but not actually reaching out in love God is holy not just because he doesn't sin he loves he has loved us and he's molding our hearts to look like that and so if our hearts truly look like his we will reach out in love too now that can be really really simple

I'm not saying necessarily that this is going to be something that radically makes you uncomfortable it can be just as simple as saying after we greet someone saying how you doing just asking that second question how you really doing that's love reaching out in a very simple small way but a very powerful meaningful one too so the first way that Christ shines through Boaz is that Boaz reaches out like Christ does second Boaz provided for her now that had been Boaz's experience hasn't it

when God saved Israel he brought them to the promised land a land flowing with milk and honey as we have read in the

Old Testament and Boaz has reaped the benefit of that he's a land owner he is in charge of the harvest he has many servants working for him he has been provided for by the Lord now what would most people say if they found someone gleaning on their land how would you react you've got a farm I mean you're doing alright but I mean it's still a subsistence living culture you see somebody out there picking all around the edges following picking up the scraps of the seeds you planted the earth you tilled and the crop that you labored over I think a lot of people are natural reaction I think everyone's natural reaction is like okay you spent the morning here that's nice I fulfilled my duty under Leviticus 19 to allow you to glean here move along next field get going that is the exact opposite of what Boaz does what does he say he says do not go glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my women the women who are gathering after the men who are cutting down the stocks and not only does he tell her hey stay here continue getting your sustenance from me he says I want to provide for you to make it easier for you to do!

[23 : 27] he says when I think this too we can see the Lord shining through Boaz again he provided for Boaz he has also provided for his people today he has provided so many things we can't even begin to enumerate them he has provided a fellowship of believers he provided his word to us he has provided so many things and fundamentally the very core of the Christian message is that he has provided a way to him away from our sin into his glorious love listen Colossians 2 starting in verse 12 we have been buried with him that is Jesus in baptism in which we're also raised with him through faith and the powerful working of

God who raised Jesus from the dead and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands this he set aside nailing it to the cross he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in his cross he has provided for us the thing that is most valuable eternity spent with him so how does the Lord shine through his people specifically Boaz Boaz reached out as God reached out Boaz provides as God provides third Boaz protected Ruth it's actually much the same way that God protected his people he freed them from slavery in Egypt brought them to the promised land and if you look chapter one verse one of Ruth in the days when the judges ruled or the judges judged you look back you flip back into the previous book that's the book of judges and it is all about how God provided protectors for his people when they were oppressed!

and we see that same protective protective spirit in Boaz's heart as well and in his words he also says have I not charged the young men not to touch you and so he says essentially I don't want you leaving my field because I know you will not be harmed here because I have made certain of it and I have established protections for you and that reflects our Lord's heart for us too on his way to the cross Jesus prayed what is often called the high priestly!

prayer in John chapter 17 this is what he asked for us which one of many things they asked for us but in particular it shows his protective heart for us John 17 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one so we see that Boaz like the Lord reached out we see that Boaz like the Lord provided for Ruth we see that Boaz like the Lord protected her and so what can we say in summary of all of that like how John Piper put it so all of Boaz's wealth and godliness begin to turn for Ruth's welfare and that is true for us in the

[27 : 53] Lord when we studied Ephesians last fall we read in Ephesians chapter one in him that is Jesus we have obtained an inheritance!

I've been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory in him you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory and what we'll see next week is that Boaz doesn't stop there he keeps giving he keeps loving and that is our story too the Lord keeps giving he keeps loving he keeps reaching out to us and that makes us ask a question

I hope I hope how can we like Boaz shine the Lord's love love to those that we meet if God acts through his people we want to be conduits of his action I think we can say a few things first if God acts through his people for him to act through you and me we must first be his people I think that's kind of obvious but in order to have Christ shine through you Christ must be in you we won't be

reading it today but verse 12 Boaz says to Ruth the Lord repay you for what you have done and a full reward be given to you by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge and that is a beautiful picture of faith in the

Lord sometimes we have this idea kind of informed by the way our culture uses the word faith that's very different from the way the Bible uses the word faith in our culture today faith is blind faith completely divorced from reason completely separated from facts and logic that is not what faith in the Bible means it's taking refuge in the Lord as Boaz so wonderfully put it it's saying he the Lord he is the sure thing he is the great love in him I will take refuge and so the very first thing that we must say if Christ's love is to shine through you if it is to shine through me we must first be in him so if you do not know the Lord today I invite you

I plead with you to take refuge in him the second thing that we must ask of ourselves is do our hearts need to look more like his if our hearts aren't being shaped and conformed and molded into the likeness of his we aren't going to act like Boaz acts as a reflection of God's love and his glory in the world so first Christ must be in us and secondly our hearts must be ever more conforming to the likeness of Christ well how do we get there the first thing obviously is we need to learn to know him as we've been seeing today he reveals himself in the words of his scripture he shows us his heart so we must be people of the word learning to know him more and more secondly we must pray as we must seek after him another practical thing is to look at the parts of scripture that instruct us very clearly about how our hearts change that's why the very first sermon series we did here at [32 : 53] Shoreline was in the book of Ephesians where Paul outlines very clearly what it looks like for God to come into us and renovate our hearts and so if you need a refresher on that I invite you to go back go to the Shoreline website go back look at Ephesians especially Ephesians 4 and Ephesians 6 where he gets right to the heart of those things go to the word first then listen to the sermons that we preached on those passages how can our hearts look more like Christ well first we can pray first we can be in the word secondly we can be in specifically those passages that encourage us towards heart change third we can be in the community that God has established for us this is another invitation to dive into the community groups that the Lord has wrought here at Shoreline the Christian life is not meant to be lived alone your heart is not to be meant to be growing by itself independently we are a body we are a family those are the metaphors that the scripture gives us so the Christian life is to be lived in community one more thing that's really really helpful in molding our hearts to look like

God and it's actually almost counterintuitive it sounds like putting the cart before the horse it's acting out in love now wouldn't you say hey we need to have the hearts of love and then we'll act in love yes that's true it is also true that acting in love acting in obedience to Christ's word does something in our hearts I was just visiting with my parents yesterday actually and we were talking and I had my little almost three year old daughter with us and I I couldn't help but think and to discuss with my parents I did not appreciate them half as much as I do now now that I am a parent now that I am making sacrifices that I didn't know they made but now I do now I appreciate them so much more in my heart is so much more inclined towards them

I think it's the exact same way with scripture now we cannot obey our way into clean hearts but it is one of the things that the Lord has established for us to shape and mold us and so when we serve the king who served us we got to know him better to love him more and that shapes who we are acting in love grows our hearts in love so if Christ is to shine through us first we must be his people secondly our hearts need to look more like his and third we need to ask do we even know where our love needs to shine love is an activity between two people it cannot be done independently and on your own and so it must be done in relationships and so we must like Boaz take the initiative and seek other people out and here's where that question we just talked about just the simple how you doing how you really doing just something simple as that gets us started down that path of recognizing where love is needed in the world sometimes we know sometimes we have to ask and sometimes we can look at a bigger picture too looking for opportunities in our society there are a number of people in this church who have in the past or are presently or are planning to be involved in foster care or adoption and that's doing this that is actively seeking out the good of others children many of whom are in truly disadvantaged situations much like Ruth and Naomi were if you're interested in that come talk to me I'll get you connected to people who are involved in that particular avenue but there are so many ways that we can look at our world and see things where Christ's love is needed we can direct our attention there one last question we

can ask to help ourselves express God's love and it is simply this do we need help doing it if that's the case you're having trouble doing it ask for help if you need help ask for help that's why we want to be in community that's why the community of faith is called a body is called a family is called Christ's bride one of the things that God has provided like Boaz provided to us is his church for expressly that purpose

God connects his character he said I am the Lord to all of those things including gleaning he connects his character to his people's actions and that's why we can say that the kindness the goodness the loyalty and faithfulness that are characteristic of God are true of his people the Lord expresses his love through his people that's us we are the instruments through which he blesses the world because he shapes his people's hearts to look like his he shines through us Christ shines through Christians let's pray father in heaven you have reached out to us you have provided for us and you have protected us

[40 : 17] Lord we want hearts that do the same because we are grateful to you and because your love has and is and will continue to reshape our hearts we want to love like you do we want Christ to shine through us father make us people who reach out and love like you do be glorified in us today and every day we pray that in the wonderful name of Jesus who reached out to us amen