

RUTH - Wk 2
"The Hope"
11/07/21
Ruth 2

Introduction + Recap

Tim. Pastor. **Ruth 2. Pray.**

Rothschild - HN. Last month a group of us went up to Louisville for a week. Our church is part of a group of churches called the Harbor Network, where we partner with about 100 or so other churches across the country to help plant more churches. And every October they host a conference for pastors, leaders, and staff in network churches. And so we took a group up there.

And one morning I got to have breakfast with a good friend of mine named Josh. I've known Josh for about 8 years now. He was Lindsay and I's first boss in ministry. He hired us to work with college students, took a chance on us as 22 year olds. And he really came alongside me in my calling and desire to plant a church. I remember being 22 and having conversations with Josh like - "I gotta plant a church man, let's go." And he would graciously say things like - "Alright, man that's great let's take it slow and take some time." But he's known about, prayed for, and supported this thing when it was barely a pipedream.

And I shared this last week, but the last few months haven't been awesome for me. And so I was sharing some of that with him. To be honest, more like venting and whining. "I'm frustrated with this and that and this and etc etc." And he listened for a while and was empathetic.

But near the end of our breakfast he just kind of paused. And he looked at me with that look that someone gives when they're about to say something both incredibly helpful and a little bit hurtful. You know?

And Josh said to me - **"Hey dude. I know things are tough right now. But I think it is incredible to see the way that God has answered your prayers over the last 8 years. If 22-year-old you could see 30-year-old you, I think he'd be overwhelmingly excited. Don't miss what God has done and is doing. Learn to receive God's gifts well."**

Josh was right. I was missing what God was doing. I was missing the kindness of the Lord.

Sometimes it's hard to see God rightly when we suffer. But sometimes it's hard to see God rightly when we prosper. Suffering can be dangerous for our spiritual lives, but so can getting what we want.

We are working our way through the book of Ruth asking one big question during the course of these 4 weeks → **Will we trust God?**

And we asked specifically last week → **Will we trust God when we suffer?**

But tonight I want to flip the question. The question for us tonight is this → **Will we trust God when we prosper?**

It is one thing to learn to throw ourselves onto the mercies of God in times of suffering. To not give in to compromise or bitterness or sin, but to trust God in the midst of pain and suffering and loss.

But it is another temptation all together to learn to trust God when things in our life are going well. When it seems like we have a good grasp on things. When our jobs are good, our relationships are good, our needs and some of our wants are met.

What do we do in those moments?

- Do we forget about God?
- Do we turn inward? Focus more on keeping and enjoying what we have or do we turn outward to bless others?
- Do we grow entitled and bitter at what we still lack?

Will we trust God when we prosper? *NOT JUST MONEY.

Recap Ruth 1

[Ch. 1 Recap] If you remember from last week, there was a famine in Bethlehem. A man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi traveled to Moab. Their two sons married two Moabite women, which was against the law of God, named Orpah and Ruth. All three men died. Naomi decided to head back to Bethlehem, she persuaded Orpah to stay and not go with her, but Ruth - really against all common sense - decides to leave her home with her mother in law to go to a place where she would be an outcast with no future.

But we're left with a glimmer of hope at the end of chapter 1. **1:22 - "And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest."**

And that's where chapter 2 picks up.

Walkthrough - Ruth 2

1 Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

Now, Boaz hasn't even entered the story officially yet, he's going to soon, but right away the author is trying to draw our attention to him. By including him right from the start the author is saying to us, **"keep your eyes on Boaz, watch what he does, he matters to this story."**

And there's some important details about Boaz the author wants us to know.

- First, we are told he is a **"worthy" man**. This has to do with both his godliness and his wealth. In contrast to the rest of the nation at this time where there is no king and everyone is doing right in their own eyes, Boaz is a God-honoring and God-fearing man.
- Second, we're told that he is in the **clan of Elimelech**. He's related in some way to Naomi. This will be important over the next 2 weeks.

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." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

There was a practice, set up by God for His people through the law of Moses (Lev 19) as a sort of "welfare to work" type program. What would happen is that farmers were required to leave the edges of their wheat fields unharvested, so that those who were poor, who didn't own land, who needed the food, could come behind the harvesters, and pick the leftover grain for themselves and their families.

This provision in the Mosaic Law included the sojourner or the foreigner. Non-jewish people living in the land were able to participate and provide for themselves as well.

This practice of gleaning was hard work, it was hot work, it was dangerous work. Especially for Ruth as a single woman from a foreign country, it was extremely dangerous for her to be out in the field doing this. She could be attacked, she could be taken advantage of by some of the working men. This is a courageous step for her to be willing to go out and glean in the field.

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. 4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem.

The text here in verse 3 could literally be translated - "as chance chanced" or as we would say today - "**as luck would have it**" she came to Boaz's field. The author in including that phrasing is giving us this sort of wink wink moment. He said in v 1 - keep your eyes on Boaz and now it's like - "oh look, Ruth just happened to go to this field that belonged to Boaz and behold, Boaz!"

Telling us as readers - this has nothing to do with luck. God is orchestrating this. Ruth in the field, Boaz in the field. There's nothing lucky about it. God is working this out. God is providing. God is caring for them in His kindness and mercy.

4 (cont.) And he said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you!" And they answered, "The Lord bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

He notices Ruth. Boaz is like hold up! *Cue the ballad, lock eyes across the grain field. Here we go! (That's a joke) (Hamilton - "Hey, hey, hey")

6 And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest."

Ruth is working hard, trying to provide and gather grain for her and Naomi.

8 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. 9 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."

Now Boaz would have known the Mosaic Law. He's a God-fearing man. He knows that Ruth is entitled to glean from his field and take some wheat.

But Boaz doesn't just say - "yeah, yeah whatever if you must"....He invites her and welcomes her to his field → stay in my field, take what you need.

But not only that, Boaz takes it two steps farther:

- 1) He goes out of his way to make sure everyone knows - **Ruth has his protection**. You stay in my fields Ruth, I've got you. I'm on your side. I will protect you and care for you.
- 2) But then he also invites her to drink what the young men have drawn. This is actually a **counter-cultural** practice that Boaz is inviting Ruth to. In that time, the common practice would be for foreign women to draw water for the men if they were thirsty. But Boaz flips it. He tells Ruth - you drink what they draw for you.

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Do you notice the specific wording Ruth uses here to describe what she is receiving from Boaz? She says → ***I have found favor in your eyes.***

It's a direct answer to the very thing she was hoping and praying for in 2:2 when she says to Naomi - "I will glean among him in whose sight I shall find favor." She has found favor, she has found grace in and from Boaz.

But she can't believe it → "Why me? I'm just a foreigner. I'm not even a servant. Why have you noticed me? I don't deserve this."

11 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 12 The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

Boaz acknowledges the sacrifice and commitment Ruth made in chapter 1. He acknowledges that Ruth has given up everything to come to Bethlehem with Naomi. He acknowledges that ultimately that commitment to Naomi was a commitment to God. Ruth has entrusted herself to God and His care and His refuge and protection.

While it is certainly Boaz who is caring for Ruth, he wants to make it clear to Ruth → the Lord is caring for you. This is the Lord's kindness extended through Boaz. This is the Lord's mercy and grace extended through Boaz.

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."

And not only has he shown her favor, he's welcomed her in. She says it in v 13 - I am not one of your servants, yet you have treated me like one. This is not a derogatory statement - this is a statement of blessing. Ruth recognizes the welcome she has been offered. Ruth, the outsider, had been made to feel welcome to come in. There might be a place for her here.

This is what she has been desperate for and banking on since she committed herself to Naomi and to Naomi's people and to Naomi's God on the road to Bethlehem → **Grace and belonging.** A blessing that carries with it a recognition → **Ruth, you can be a part of the people of God.**

14 And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. 15 When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

Boaz just keeps lavishing more and more generosity on Ruth. He welcomes her at the table to eat with him. He tells his men - hey be a little bit less careful when you harvest. Leave a little bit extra leftover for Ruth to have. At this point it's like - what!? He just keeps being abundantly generous.

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Ruth leaves Naomi in the morning empty handed, and will return with over 30lbs of grain. God has provided for them through the kindness of Boaz.

Application - Ruth and Boaz

Let's pause here and talk about Boaz and Ruth. Asking the question → **Will we trust God when we prosper?** And here in Ruth 2 we have two examples of how this trust of God in His blessing plays out into our lives.

BOAZ

Boaz is marked by overwhelming generosity.

Time and time again in this passage — He blesses the reapers, he promises protection for Ruth, he invites her to drink the water men will draw for her, he invites her to dine at his table, he gives her way more grain than she could possibly need.

Generosity after generosity after generosity.

Put yourself in Boaz's shoes for just a moment. You've been staring at empty, barren fields for 10 years during this famine, and finally God has brought back a harvest.

So you know you have to leave some for reapers, so you're not mad that these people are here to take from your land, but you're kind of hoping they don't take too much or expect too much right? Wouldn't you want to tell your men - leave as little as possible - we need to store up for another famine that may come. We don't know if this grain is going to be here next year.

And now on top of that, here's this Moabite woman. Who's not even a part of your people, even worse she is from the land of your enemies.

And then on top of that you're told her story. You know about Naomi and Elimelech. He was the guy that abandoned your family for Moab. He left. He went to the land he wasn't supposed to and stayed for 10 years. You've heard about their rebellion, their sin, their abandonment, their loss. It's their fault they don't have grain. If they would have just been obedient to God and stayed put they'd have a harvest now too and they wouldn't have to take from me.

So you have right in front of you in Ruth a tangible reminder of your family's sin.

How do you feel if you've been waiting for 10 years for God to provide for you and now the person who needs it is your enemy and it's kind of their own fault why they're in this mess.

And yet Boaz's response is not frustration, anger, stinginess, hoarding - instead he's exceedingly generous to Ruth.

Why?

12 The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!"

Boaz is generous because he knows who it all actually belongs to anyways. This is all God's. God wants to provide for Ruth through Boaz and it's all His.

At the core of Boaz's generosity is his view of God. That's what it all comes down to. Does he and will he trust God?

- Because if he trusts God he doesn't have to hoard out of self-protection.

- If he trusts God, he doesn't have to be the owner.
- If he sees God as the giver of all good things then he knows - this isn't mine anyways. This is the Lord's. I'm a steward. I'm a manager. I can be generous with what God has given me.

Being generous requires you having a right view of God and a right view of yourself.

Harper. Harper and I have a battle going on right now over the TV in our house. (Yes, we let our toddler watch TV, get over it). Her favorite show right now is "boos coos" which is toddler for "Blues Clues". I hate blues clues. So I'll sit down on the couch on Saturday afternoon to watch some college football, in the house that Lindsay and I pay the mortgage on, with the TV that we bought, that runs off the electricity that we pay the bill for, on the couch that we purchased. And Harper will run into the room, overwhelmed with excitement thinking it's time for "boos coos", until she sees me go to the ESPN app. CUE THE WATER WORKS. It's like in her mind she can't comprehend why I would not let her watch the TV show that she wants to watch. Not realizing that everything that enables her to watch the TV is all a gift from me.

So she thinks I'm taking the TV away from her. Without realizing it's a gift from dad!

Being generous requires you having a right view of God and a right view of yourself.

When we suffer poorly, it's because we don't view God correctly - He's not good. He doesn't care, He's not for me.

But the same is true on the other side. When we prosper poorly, it's because we don't view God or ourselves correctly.

- Are you the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, or is God?
- Are you the one who clothes the lilies of the field or is God?
- Are you the owner or is God?
- Is it God's or yours?

And so the question of will we trust God when we prosper is absolutely crucial, because if we don't trust God and view Him rightly as the giver of all good things, we can't release and be generous with what He has graciously put in our hands.

And this works its way out into all areas of our lives.

- So if you think you're the owner of your **home or apartment**, not a manager for God, then that home becomes a place that exists to serve you. For your rest, for your comfort, for your ease. BUT if it's a gift from God to be stewarded then it's a tool for kingdom hospitality.
- If you think your **job** is a means to an end or something you went out and got all on your own, then you work the minimum hours, do just enough to get by, keep your head down and avoid your coworkers, and clock out the very second you can. BUT if it's a gift from the Lord, you receive it with thankfulness and joy, and you start seeing it as a chance to glorify God and bless others.
- If you are the proverbial owner of your **kids**, that they belong primarily to you, you will squeeze them to prove your worth as a parent, live out your dreams for them, and revolve your entire existence around them and their wants. But if your kids are arrows given to you by God to send into the world for His glory, you start parenting a little differently. The Church starts taking priority over their schedule. Teaching them about Jesus and following Him through good discipline and love takes the place of their temporary happiness.
- If your **bank account** belongs solely to you and your finances are yours and yours alone, you start spending it or saving it or investing it like it is simply a tool to serve you - your power, your success, your comfort. Everything revolves around getting more of it and keeping more of it. But if your finances and money, whether you have a lot of it or a little bit of it, (you don't need a lot to be greedy) then you're freed up to use your money as a tool to glorify God and bless those around you in need.

- If you think **church** is all about you and not God's people gathered for His glory, then you're gonna bail when it stops meeting your wants, preferences, or desires. But if it's about the Lord and making much of Jesus you'll use your time, talents, and treasures to contribute to the kingdom mission.

Boaz views God rightly and views himself rightly and so he can trust Him and that leads to generosity.

Will we trust God when we prosper by being generous?

RUTH

But there's another invitation and example for us here in Ruth. If Boaz's trusting of the Lord in prosperity is generosity, Ruth's trust is displayed in her **humility**. **Ruth is marked by humility and gratitude.**

Boaz comes to her, welcomes her, blesses her, cares for her - all as a physical outpouring of the grace and goodness of God. All of this is just God caring for Ruth through Boaz, and Ruth's response is humility.

Vs 10 + 13:

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."

She says essentially → **Why me? Why am I receiving this grace? Why are you caring for me this way? She's humble and grateful** → **I can't believe this is happening.**

Notice what Ruth doesn't say:

- About time Lord! I committed myself to you, glad you could finally show up and hold up your end of the bargain!
- Of course I've found favor with God through this guy. Do you know everything I sacrificed to come to Bethlehem? Thanks for noticing Boaz, I am awesome. Gave up my family to care for this widow, definitely deserve some stuff in return.

I am tempted to pull this type of card all of the time with God. God, I sacrificed for you. I moved cities for you, I helped plant a church for you. I read my Bible, I pray, I try to forgive and love and serve. Hold up your end of the deal Lord! Surely I can't suffer right? Surely I deserve better. I followed you!

Don't we all do this? Don't we all barter with God? In the back of our minds we keep score and weigh out sacrifices we've made on this side and blessings we've received on this side.

Again, it comes from a **wrong view of God**, that thinks God's kingdom economy is like ours. I put in my quarter, I get the blessing in return.

We do this with all types of quarters...(theology, spiritual disciples, material goods, comfort, relationships) (you want to attract your Boaz, be a good Ruth)

So when we suffer, all we can do is think - "What did I do to deserve this?"
But also when we prosper, we think - "Of course I deserve this, I earned it."

This is what leads to so much of our **dissatisfaction and discontentment.**

Where we say - "Yes God has provided for me (maybe even abundantly), but not as much as...or not in exactly like.... or if only I had...'

It'd be a little bit like if Ruth said, **'This is great, but I still don't have as much as Boaz, so this kinda sucks.'**

That's what my friend Josh was trying to get me to see during our breakfast. Tim - God has done and is doing an incredible work in your life and in your church. Don't miss it because it doesn't look exactly how you want. Don't miss it because He said "no" a couple of times. Don't miss it because of what He's doing in another pastor's life or another church's life. **Receive it with humility and gratitude as a gift from Him!**

Ruth knows, this is all God. There's no posture in Ruth as if God is someone to bartered or bargained with. There's no "I scratch God's back, He scratches mine" with Ruth. It's humility. Receiving as a gift → This? For me? I am so undeserving.

The first step we must take in receiving from the Lord is to view him rightly as the giver of all good things and ourselves rightly as deserving of nothing.

There's an old country hymn that Lindsay likes, and the title is "Why me, Lord?" And at first glance you think the song is going to be about suffering - why did I walk through this, why have I experienced this, why would God let this happen.

But in reality here's the first verse:

***Why me Lord, what have I ever done to deserve even one, of the pleasures I've known
Tell me Lord, what did I ever do that was worth love from you, or the kindness you've shown.***

And the answer in the gospel we know is nothing. Everything we have is a gift from God. Undeserving of His kindness, His mercy, His grace....and yet He cares for us. And so we respond not with griping, complaining, focusing on what we don't have → we look at what we do.

Will we trust God when we prosper by being humble and grateful?

Naomi

Well Ruth goes back home at the end of this incredible day she's had. You can just see her dragging 30 lbs of grain. And she heads back to the city and to Naomi, shows what he has, tells her about Boaz. And here is Naomi's response. Bitter, returned to Bethlehem with nothing but this baggage of a daughter-in-law, God has treated me like His enemy, Naomi.

20 And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!"

Naomi begins to see the kindness of the Lord. That "whose" there is about God - just a few days earlier the Lord's hand was against her and now Naomi can say confidently - "The Lord's kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!"

Her sorrow is real, but joy is coming in the morning. There's hope on her lips. Maybe God has not forgotten them after all. His kindness has not forsaken them. He is still working, He is still moving. It's not by chance Ruth goes to the field of Boaz, it's not by chance they meet, it's not luck that Boaz takes care of them. God is working.

20 (cont.) Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."

There's a glimmer of more to come. Maybe Boaz can be more than just a benefactor, maybe he can be a redeemer. We'll talk about that the next two weeks. Verse 21:

21 And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’” 22 And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.” 23 So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

We are left again with a glimmer of hope of what God is doing behind the scenes in the midst of this whole story. There is still more to come in this story about the *faithfulness of God*.

Gospel Conclusion

Here’s where I want to close us tonight → **Do you see the gospel in Ruth chapter 2?**

Remember, this story is meant to pull us forward to the gospel of Jesus.

Do you see it?

Do you see someone who has everything, give and be generous out of their abundance and overflow?

Do you see someone who has nothing, receive everything they need in humility and gratitude?

Do you see someone who is outside of the people of God, a foreigner, a stranger, welcomed in by grace?

This is a beautiful chapter of God’s provision, His kindness, His mercy and His care for Ruth and Naomi.

But it would be a complete loss to try and substitute ourselves one for one into the story. To walk away from tonight going - alright, next time God blesses me with \$100 I’m going to receive that with humility and gratitude as a gift from him and go be generous. Is that one application? Sure.

- In one sense we’re called to be like Boaz - to receive God’s provision for us and be generous towards others.
- In another sense, we’re called to be like Ruth - receiving God’s care with humility and gratitude.

But there’s a deeper beauty in this story for us.

This story points forward to an even more beautiful story of God’s provision, kindness, mercy, and care for us.

Because in the grand story of the gospel, we’re all Naomi.

What does Naomi do in this chapter? Absolutely nothing. Ruth goes to the field. Ruth seeks out a provision. Boaz steps up and provides. Ruth gleans 30 lbs of seed. Ruth carries it home. It’s all Boaz and Ruth.

Naomi sits at home, and sulks. And yet God provides for her too. God looks at Naomi and says - I see you in your brokenness, I see you in your suffering, I see you in your sin, I see you in your bitterness, I see you when you’re beaten up and beaten down. I see you.

And I’m going to use the work of another to provide for your need.

Isn’t that the gospel?

Don’t just one for one the story. “God provided tangible blessing for Ruth and Naomi, He’s going to provide some tangible blessing for me! Bring on the 30lbs of grain. I’m ready to be generous and grateful!”

Don’t do that, that’s a silly way of reading Scripture. Because all of the Bible points to Jesus.

We're meant on this side of the cross to read Ruth 2 and not say - "Alright, Lord where's my provision and blessing in time of need?" But to say → Look at how the Lord provides for His people, and how much greater did He provide for us and prosper us through the person and work of Christ!

In Christ we have already prospered.

In Christ we have already been blessed.

In Christ, God has met our deepest need - **forgiveness of sins and grace and welcome and righteousness.**

All of us who are in Christ Jesus have already truly prospered! We are granted life forever with God - not based on our actions and faithfulness but based on the work and faithfulness of Jesus!

When we were stuck in our bitterness, stuck in our brokenness, stuck in our suffering and our sin, when we were beaten up and beaten down God saw us. We did and do nothing - God does all of it.

Jesus takes our sin. Jesus dies in our place. Jesus is perfectly righteous because we are not. Jesus obeys God's law perfectly. And yet He takes our sin, dies in our place, rises again to give us His righteousness, to give us His welcome, to give us what is His - an inheritance, a place in the family of God, a welcome in from God Himself.

And when we get this - when we get what has been done for us in and through Christ - then we can view God rightly - He's on the throne. He's in control of all things. He is the giver of all good gifts.

And we can view ourselves rightly - everything I have is a gift from Him from my salvation to anything else He gives me. And that leads us **to generosity, to humility, and to gratitude.**

We learn to say with Naomi - **The Lord's kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!**

Communion.

Pray.