

Ruth – Part I: A Fateful Decision

I) Introduction

- A.) The events in Ruth brilliantly showcases and summarizes the central theme of the entire Bible: God's work to rescue humanity from death and sin.
- B.) In the interactions between Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth, Orpah, and Boaz, readers will see how individuals are affected by our Lord's four-tier outreach to his fallen creation.
 - 1) **God reaches** – God is the shepherd who looks for the lost sheep over mountains, in river valleys, through fog and storms
 - a) He reaches across ethnic, class, gender, economic and cultural barriers to gather in all who will hear his call to eternal life
 - b) Charlie Kirk was an example of God's reaching at work – **SLIDE 5.VIDEO**
 - 2) **God redeems** – A good way to understand redemption is to consider the institution of indentured servitude
 - a) In colonial America, a man or woman could purchase transportation to America by going into debt to a sponsor; they paid the debt through years of servitude to that sponsor
 - b) Someone could come along say, hey I want to set that person free; so he or she buys out the remaining debt...an act of redemption
 - c) All of humanity is locked into an eternal debt, enslaved not to a contract but to sin and death (Romans 6:23). No human payment or effort can cancel this debt, because payment is beyond our means
 - d) Only the death of a perfect sacrifice – a human who was completely sinless – was sufficiently precious to meet the required price

e) Jesus' death secured our redemption and **reconciled** believers to God – he repaired the broken relationship between man and his Maker and secured us the privilege of becoming God's reborn children

3) **God restores** – When a person is reached, redeemed, and reconciled, God restores all he intended for his people when he created them:

a) Wisdom, true contentment, joy, peace, a deep sense of meaning and purpose, and a share in God's everlasting Creation

C.) These four "Rs" are powerfully illustrated in the Ruth narrative

1) We see God **reaching** out to Ruth, a Moabite, an outsider, by drawing her into His covenant people

2) Boaz, the kinsman-**redeemer**, buys back Naomi's land and marries Ruth, saving the family from poverty and preserving Elimelech's lineage

3) Through Boaz's act, Ruth and Naomi are **reconciled** to the people of God, gaining a place in Israel and in the lineage of the Messiah

4) The story ends with **restoration**, as the once desolate Naomi, holds Ruth's son Obed in her arms. Through this child, her family line and place of honor among her people is restored

II) Discuss background of Ruth and evaluate a major decision made in Ch. 1

A.) The events of Ruth occur during the time of the judges about 150 years before King David's reign

1) Judges covers the period of time from Joshua's death (1200s or 1400s) up to the coronation of Saul as King of Israel in about 1050 B.C.

2) The time of the judges is marked by the tribes of Israel repeatedly abandoning their commitment to Jehovah to chase after foreign gods

a) They'd look over at the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and other nations and say: *"They look like their having a good*

time; plenty of food, lots of parties, no stringent moral laws, cute women...their gods seem a lot more fun than ours.”

- 3) Of course, with idolatry comes evil behavior – practices that defile and harm humanity – so Israel frequently falls out God’s favor
 - a) In response, the Lord would send nearby pagan hordes into Hebrew lands to get their attention
 - b) After long periods of suffering, they would plead help, and God would select one from among the people to push out the oppressors and restore Israel’s well-being
 - c) That person would continue as judge over the people as long as he was able

Judges 21:25 sums up the era quite well: *In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

- B.) It’s a shame because they had everything they needed to prosper in righteousness
- 1) Moses and Joshua provided godly leadership and kept the nation on the straight path
 - 2) God kept his promise to drive out the Canaanites and give his people their lands
 - 3) They still had the ark of the covenant and the family of Levitical priests at Shiloh
 - 4) They had copies of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament
 - 5) They had the oral and written testimonies of God’s miraculous works
 - 6) They were told of the oaths their fathers made to honor Jehovah
 - 7) God guaranteed their health, safety, and unity if they kept the Law

C.) And yet, we see an impoverished people isolated from one another, under constant threat from their neighbors, and constantly turning from the Lord

1) Here's why:

Judges 1:28-33 - *But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so, the Canaanites persisted in living in this land. And it came about, when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor; but they did not drive them out completely.*

And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so, the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so, the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or of Rehob.

Judges 2:1-3, 11 - *Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.'*

But you have not obeyed Me; what is this thing that you have done? Therefore, I also said, 'I will not drive them out from you; but they will become like thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you.'"

D.) And so, we come to the time of Ruth; we see once again Israel is under judgment... **SLIDE 6 - Read Ruth 1:1-2**

- 1) Some speculate it was result of the Midianite raids referred to in Judges 6 - **SLIDE 7** – essentially nomadic land pirates
- 2) These people were brutal...not only did they rob the Hebrews of their livestock and other goods, but also destroyed their crops, leaving them destitute

- 3) All because Israel preferred evil over good despite everything God had done for them

III) Analysis of Elimelech's decision

A.) So Elimelech has a decision...the people of Judah are being disciplined for their evil and are going hungry...what should he do?

- 1) The practical course of action is to leave and find a place where his family can thrive, or at least eat regularly

B.) However, as a child of Abraham residing in the Promised Land, what would be a faith-based decision?

- 1) Let's see, God called your people to possess the land in his name forever
- 2) Further, Jehovah has proven faithful to carry his people through most difficult times

Solomon tells us in [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) – *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.*

3) We see this proverb in action in 1 Kings 17

4) Elijah visits a widow in Zarephath, a Phoenician town north of Israel, suffering through a severe drought

5) The widow and her son are on the verge of starvation, and Elijah casually walks up to her and says, "give me some bread"

6) Wow! The widow must have been in awe at this stranger's audacity; "You want me to feed you when I'm literally on death's doorstep?"

[In 1 Kings 17:12-16](#), the woman proclaims, *"As the Lord your God lives, I have no food, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks so that I may go in and prepare it for me and my son, so that we may eat it and die."*

However, Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go, do as you have said. Just make me a little bread loaf from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: ‘The bowl of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil become empty, until the day that the LORD provides rain on the face of the earth.’”

So, she went and did everything in accordance with the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil become empty, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

- 7) This woman could have done the practical thing and told Elijah to take a hike...but she recognizes him as God’s prophet
 - a) If she refused the prophet, her unwillingness to share likely would have cost her life
 - b) But, she believes God’s promise...she does the impractical thing and shares, and God rewards her for this act of faith

C.) Modern Examples of faith in difficult times

- a) **SLIDE 8 - George Müller’s Orphanages (1830s–1890s, England)**
Müller cared for thousands of orphans in Bristol, England, entirely by faith. He never asked for money directly but prayed. Many times, food ran out, and just as the children sat at the tables to eat, a baker or milkman would knock on the door with provisions
- b) **Hudson Taylor & China Inland Mission (1865 onward, China)**
Taylor founded the mission depending solely on God to provide. Records show many instances where funds for rent, food, or medical care arrived at the exact moment of need, often through unexpected letters or donors
- c) **Brother Andrew (1950s–1980s, Eastern Europe)**
While smuggling Bibles into communist countries, he prayed that

border guards would not see the Scriptures in his car. Time and again, guards searched but overlooked boxes of Bibles in plain sight

d) David Wilkerson & Teen Challenge (1958 onward, New York City)

When Wilkerson began working with gang members, he had no money or a building. Miraculously, resources for housing, food, and rehab centers came through unsolicited donations, sustaining a ministry that grew worldwide

D.) Our God has a perfect track record of promises made, promises kept; therefore, again, what should Elimelech do?

a) Stay put! Call upon the Lord and wait on him for guidance and provision...

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint - [Isaiah 40:31](#)

E.) What does Elimelech do? He seems to neither pray nor wait as many of his fellow Hebrews did. He packs his family up and moves

- 1) This is ironic given Elimelech's name means "God is king;" rather than rely on God to forgive and heal, the man runs away from his problems
- 2) When confronted with tribulation, a common temptation is to run and find safety, security, and stability wherever we can
- 3) Sometimes, we turn to places we shouldn't...I'm sure we all can testify of the wrong places, people, and things we've turned to ease our burdens
- 4) Fear drives us away from God; faith roots us where God has planted us and causes us to bloom and bear fruit no matter how dry the soil or how hard the winds that buffet us

F.) But Elimelech leaves, and where does he go? To Moab of all places! **SLIDE 9**

- 1) You know, the place that God said was under his wrath - **SLIDE 10**

- 2) Not only did Moab not give Israel aid as it approached Canaan, but the king of Moab Balaam tried to pay off a prophet, Balak, to curse God's chosen people
 - a) When that didn't work, the Moabites sent Midianite women into the Hebrews' camp to corrupt them
 - 3) Further, the Bible tells us the Moabites worshipped the God Chemosh, a god of war and fertility.
 - a) He probably wasn't much different than other pagan deities in the region, featuring debauched sexual practices and at times human sacrifice
 - 4) So then, why does this Hebrew family go there? Because Moab is fertile and prosperous
 - 5) Like Lot, who chose the well-watered plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, Elimelech chooses to expose himself and his family to Moab's idolatrous influence – seemingly without Jehovah's approval
- G.) Some might say, well, didn't Joseph bring his family to Egypt during a famine? Didn't Elijah tell a wealthy widow to go into pagan lands during a famine? Didn't Jesus' family go to Egypt when being chased by Herod?
- 1) What was different about Elimelech's case? In the other three, God gave them clear callings to go. They moved at the instigation of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) There's no evidence Elimelech was called to go, proven perhaps by the tragedies that followed

Ruth 1:3-5 - *Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other, Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.*

- 3) So Elimelech has met his end. And, to worsen matters, his sons marry Moabite women, a violation of clear biblical prohibitions against marrying foreigners who often seduced Hebrews into idolatry
- 4) And, the two sons meet their end, leaving Naomi in a really bad state...in ancient societies, a widow with no sons or local family was left destitute
 - a) They would often have to take difficult, low-paying jobs as servants or laborers to survive...if they could work at all
 - b) With no sons or local family to care for them and unable to work, they would have to beg in the streets
- 5) Elimelech took his family to Moab to save it, and instead, his family is nearly wiped out there

H.) Let's look at a modern illustration of this fateful decision

- 1) A family of professing Christians lives in a town known for its traditional values; they are faithful to the local church, and enjoy a reasonable level of health and financial stability
- 2) However, an economic downturn causes the husband to lose his job, and a sudden illness takes hold of his young daughter, causing medical bills to pile up
- 3) Rather than praying for God's provision, he quickly sells his home and takes a job in a large city, known for its hostility to Christianity
- 4) The job gives dad pay and benefits needed to care of his family, but it requires him to regularly bend the truth and operate under questionable ethics to succeed
- 5) Worse yet, their new life takes a heavy toll on the family
 - a) Lack of fellowship and Bible study causes the family to dry up spiritually
 - b) Their joy is drained by the constant drumbeat of anti-Christian voices

- c) Job demands keep the father away from home
 - d) His wife is sick with loneliness
 - e) His children begin adopting the values of the world around them
- I.) These are all Gods' ways to get the man's attention; "Hey you, you've gone the wrong way!"
- 1) Turn around and come back! God reaches out to those who've gone astray, so he can redeem, reconcile and/or restore them
 - 2) As we continue next week in Ruth, we'll see God doing this in the lives of two desperate woman clinging to slimmest of hopes of survival as they travel the dusty, rocky road back to the Promised Land
- J.) **Conclusion – SLIDE 10**
- a) Don't act in fear or self-preservation, but trust God's promises.
 - b) **SLIDE 11.Video - Decisions**
 - c) Where are you tonight Have you made poor decisions? Do you feel you've traveled far from God? Do you feel weighed down by your sin?
 - d) He's reaching out to you...he wants to redeem you and reconcile you to himself!
 - e) He wants to restore you to his goodness in Christ. Just confess and cast all your anxiety, regret and fear upon him for he cares for you!

Ruth – Part III: God Provides

I) Introduction (*outlines, move forward/back, tedious detailed*)

A.) Before we pick up our study of Ruth in chapter 2, I want to revisit two key lessons from last week's study

- 1) The first is that God's people are his emissaries, his representatives to a lost and dying world
- 2) During her time in Moab, Naomi must have exhibited great warmth, affection, and moral righteousness in her relationship with her daughters-in-law; attributes likely lacking in the women's own culture
- 3) Orpah and Ruth saw God's light in Naomi, and it caused them to cling to her even when Naomi's sons, their husbands, died
- 4) Ultimately, it led Ruth to abandon everything she had known to follow Naomi into an uncertain future in the Promised Land
- 5) Cement Naomi's example in your hearts: The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:20 – **SLIDE 2**
- 6) Like a lighthouse whose beams keep ships safe in the night, let God's light shine through you in a dark world by displaying:
 - a) Compassion
 - b) Patience
 - c) Lack of grumbling
 - d) Being in the moment by listening to God and others
 - e) Being willing to help bear the burdens of those in need

B.) This last attitude is the core of our second lesson...being there for your brothers and sisters in Christ; sharing their joys and sorrows so they know they're not alone in their faith journey

C.) The Oct. 5 *Daily Bread* devotional takes a creative approach to the subject:

The author writes, *When I injured my ring finger, I expected months of pain before gaining its full function. As I practice the prescribed exercises, the finger next to it began to throb, so I consulted my doctor. "Sympathy pain," he said. A connection between the nerves of the ring and pinky fingers causes dependence on one another. If one finger hurts, the other aches in sympathy.*

- 1) I want to take this sharing concept a bit further
- 2) Not only do connected parts share pain, but when one part of the human body is in distress, whether through disease or injury, the body takes resources, such as blood and minerals, from other body parts to "rescue" that which is sick
- 3) Healthy organs sacrifice on behalf of the unhealthy, creating a sharing effect that aids recovery

Back to the devotion: *The apostle Paul uses the human body to illustrate the uniqueness and unity of God's people. In 1 Corinthians 12:21–26, he reinforces how valuable each individual member is to the healthy functioning of the whole. Then he turns his attention to the unity achieved when we connect with one another. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. His *description of the church's interconnectedness is echoed in these verses, as we ought to mourn with those who mourn and carry each other's burdens.* The various parts of our physical bodies work together to express pain and to strengthen each other toward health. I thank God that he reveals our need for connection to each other in his spiritual body, the church, through sympathy pain.*

- a) **SLIDE 3.VIDEO** – Listening
- b) Listen to God and listen to others – in keeping our ears and eyes open, we can sense God pointing us to people in need; we can also pick up when people may subtly be asking for help...be willing and available!

II) Ruth the burden-bearer

A.) Ruth is the epitome of a burden-bearer; she stays with Naomi, despite no obligation to do so, and helps the elderly woman to return to her home in Bethlehem

- 1) In Chapter 2, we see Ruth enter the grain fields of Bethlehem and there meets her future benefactor Boaz
- 2) As we watch the pair interact in the remainder of our study, I want you to focus on three things:
 - a) **First**, Ruth and Boaz are a picture – an illustration – of the relationship between fallen man and the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ
 - b) Ruth is the soul once lost in darkness, but has come to faith; Boaz is the Christ figure who brings light and hope into the woman's life
 - c) Secondly, take note of the character of these two individuals and how we can learn from their example
 - d) Finally, what it means to be adopted into the family of God

[Ruth 2:1-7](#) - *Now Naomi had a relative of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain following one in whose eyes I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So, she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" And the servant in charge of the reapers replied,

"She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.'"

B.) Let's first look at Ruth's character on display here:

- 1) In ancient Israel, gleaning was a tradition rooted in the Mosaic Law
- 2) In both Deuteronomy and Leviticus, Jehovah commanded landowners to not harvest the edges of their fields or return and gather what was left behind
- 3) Instead, what remained was to be left for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner
- 4) It was an important way for the poor to work for food rather than begging for it
- 5) It was, however, physically exhausting work; women had to endure long, hot days following male reapers, and breaking off and/or gathering remaining barley stalks, and thresh it
- 6) They were also vulnerable to abuse by male workers; and being a Moabite, Ruth was even more vulnerable

C.) The fact Ruth was willing to face these challenges showed the strength of her character: her humility, courage, and devotion

- 1) Her great love for Naomi drove her into the fields despite the risks
- 2) Ruth's strength reminds me of the many LEGAL immigrants, particularly from the 1600s to early 1900s, who made the long, difficult trip to America from faraway lands – fleeing oppression
- 3) They came to a country where they were unfamiliar with the laws, culture, and language, and many came with only the clothes on their backs
- 4) These foreigners were willing to take on low-paying, back-breaking labor, such as factory work, coal mining, and construction
- 5) They also absorbed the insults and sometimes violence of native citizens

- a) Asians, Italians, the Irish, Eastern Europeans all felt the cold welcome of people who resented the influx of “outsiders”
- 6) Of course, not all migrants came with virtuous intent, but most were willing to make major personal sacrifices out of devotion to their families and the desire to give them a better life
- 7) They remind us of Christ’s willingness to suffer borderline poverty, the verbal abuse of wretched men, and the physical torment of Roman crucifixion to secure our eternity...
- 8) The examples of Jesus, Ruth, and others before us should inspire Christians to exercise the same selflessness needed to serve those in need
 - a) Are you willing to go the extra mile, to get out of your comfort zone, to listen to people who need an ear to hear, to pop the bubble of your daily routines?

III) A look at Boaz

A.) In verse 2:1, the NKJV identifies Boaz as a man of great wealth, a description that doesn’t quite capture his persona - **analyze SLIDE 4**

- 1) Boaz owned **agricultural land** and employed **servants, harvesters, and overseers**...his expectation of them was that they conduct the planting, tending and reaping tasks necessary to secure a bountiful harvest that would benefit the community
- 2) Does that sound familiar?

[Matthew 9:37-38](#) - “Then he (Jesus) said to his disciples, *‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’*”

- a) Jesus calls His followers to be **workers** — active participants in God’s mission; what’s the mission?

- b) To plant the Gospel seeds, to water them through ministry, to help reap the harvest of souls in whom the word takes root
 - c) Both Christ and Boaz are “the lords of the harvest” — one in a physical sense and the other in a spiritual sense
- 3) Further, in Ruth 4:1-11, Boaz appears **at the city gate** as a respected elder who helped solve problems and build unity and peace in the community
- a) Christ is the head of the church, who through the Spirit, works for the peace and unity of his people across the globe
- 4) Boaz’s behavior throughout the narrative — his protection of Ruth, his respect for her reputation, and his adherence to legal custom — all reveal a man of **spiritual depth and moral authority**
- a) **Like our Lord, he is faithful, generous, and just**
- 5) Finally, Boaz was a central figure in the tribe of Judah, a lineage that includes King David and...Jesus Christ
- B.) So when this Christ-like figure meets Ruth, rather than despise her as a Moabite, he expresses concern for this young woman laboring in his field
- 1) In **verse 2:8**, he confers upon her a title conveying deep fatherly affection; he says, “*Listen carefully, my daughter*” (no terms of condescension)
 - 2) Ruth’s reputation as a loyal and loving companion to Naomi had preceded her; the stories of her kindness informed Naomi’s kin that she had attached herself to the family of Elimelech
 - 3) She left everything behind; she is no longer a Moabite, but a child of God and part of Israel’s destiny
 - 4) By calling her *my daughter*, Boaz acknowledges her status; he also prevents any suspicion he may have had a physical desire for her

- a) His interest is entirely familial...he's essentially saying to her, *"Welcome to your new family; as an elder, I will ensure you are welcomed and safe...you are one of us!"*
- b) Like Ruth, we were all once "outsiders," "children of the flesh," but Paul tells us in [Romans 8:14-15](#) that who we are now...

being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

- c) The phrase "Abba Father" is simply father twice, but in Aramaic (Abba) and Greek (Pater)...the phrase was used by Jesus, Paul, and the early church to denote a child-like respect and affection for God
- d) Ancient Jews spoke of God as their national Father, but this term *Abba Father* denotes a more personal and relational tone: we are spiritually adopted and lovingly cared for by our Creator

C.) Let's look closer at this concept of spiritual adoption - [Read John 1:12-13](#) -
SLIDE 5

- 1) **Click** - The Greek term for "right" is *exousia*, which can mean "authority," "power," and "privilege," words often associated with civil law
 - a) This helps us understand the concept of "adoption" in a legal sense
 - b) Humans aren't born into the family of God, but according to Paul, we are by nature vessels of wrath - we are spiritual orphans morally parentless and adrift
 - c) However, God extends an invitation - through Jesus - to be grafted into the family of the faithful through by being born again
 - d) He adopts us and grants us all the rights and privileges of natural heirs; along with Jesus, we are joint heirs to all things...in other words, God treats us as full sons and daughters, withholding nothing from us

2) **Point of Emphasis here:** in Christianity, there are no elites, middle class, or low-class believers...we are all joint heirs with Christ

- a) The person who faithfully cleans bathrooms, teaches an Awanas class, or works a homeless ministry is as much a blessed child of God as an Apostle Paul, a Billy Graham, or a Chuck Smith
- b) Beware of any church or ministry that elevates its pastors and leaders above the body and affords them special privileges...and beware of any thought that you personally are “less” in God’s Kingdom

D.) Now, in verses 2:8-9, Boaz further cements Ruth’s adopted status by guarding her moral and physical safety:

Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but join my young women here. Keep your eyes on the field which they reap and go after them. Indeed, I have ordered the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.”

- 1) Boaz tells her, “keep your eyes on my fields only...watch where MY servants are going, and you follow them because they reap the fields that I, and not another, have prepared for harvest”
- 2) My fields will be sufficient for you; in them, you will work and be fruitful; you will be provided food and water; and you will work in harmony with my servants
- 3) Jesus tells us the same thing: “You’re home now...stay here, work the fields of harvest I have prepared
 - a) Follow me and my servants where we take you, and you will bear much fruit
 - b) Don’t look over at the other fields; there is nothing over there for you; oh, they may appear greener, and easier, but don’t be deceived

c) No matter how hot the day, no matter how hard the work may be, no matter how dirty you may get, stay put in this field; it may be tough and sometimes discouraging, but stay put...as you do...

d) I adopted you, and I guarantee you abundant life now and forever

4) In verses **2:14-16**, we see Boaz, like Jesus, keeps his promise to provide:

And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So, she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. When she got up to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also, you are to purposely slip out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it so that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

a) Boaz instructs his workers twice to not insult Ruth; apparently, it was fairly normal for workers to heap abuse upon gleaners who were poor women

b) However, she was now under the care of the owner of the fields; he will guard her against wayward workers and ensure she has sufficient food and water

c) Something else he does - God makes the work lighter...we no longer must strive in desperation to make things work in life

IV) Ruth's response – a lesson in Christian humility

A.) So how does Ruth respond to this divine mercy working through Boaz

Ruth 2:10 - *Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"*

1) Ruth is awestruck and astounded that this great man would pay her any attention at all...what a lesson in humility

- 2) She recognizes her poverty, her outsider status, and confesses her lack of worth to be treated so kindly
- 3) Such humility is first step in coming home to Christ – we recognize that we are impoverished spiritually and have no worth in ourselves to be accepted by God – **SLIDE 6**
- 4) It is in this spirit the prodigal son returned home to his father, and it is in the spirit that Ruth entered Boaz' fields

2:11 - *Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and came to a people that you did not previously know.*

- a) Ruth's works commended her to Boaz and brought his blessing upon her; keep in mind her works were a product of a changed heart
- b) She didn't do them to earn anyone's favor, but God's love in her heart moved her at the cost of everything she knew
- c) Did you get that? We don't work to earn God's favor, but we already have God's favor in Christ, so our works flow from that favor given us upon repentance

In 2:12-13, Boaz tells Ruth - *May the Lord reward your work, and may your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."*

B.) No longer the spiritual orphan, Ruth has found a home not only among the people of Judah, but in the presence of Jehovah. The one-time pagan is afforded a place in the covering of God's wings...**SLIDE 7**

- 1) In this Psalm, the writer likens our Lord to a great bird folding his wings around His people to shelter them in his presence

- 2) His wings are mighty like that of the eagle's, and impenetrable...no force in Creation can break through his strong covering and steal away those who take refuge in them
 - 3) His wings are soft and warm, providing intimate comfort and safety to his adopted children; his covering make them confident in his affectionate love
 - a) Ruth experienced it, so have many others.
 - 4) I have a video for you that I think weaves together these concepts of adoption and God's covering
 - 5) The video was made by the Mills family...a couple that experienced 4 miscarriages and could not bring a baby to term; God covered and healed through adoption of a little Chinese girl - SLIDE 8.VIDEO
 - 6) (Time permitting – Steven Curtis Chapman, loss of 5-year Maria)
 - 7) Heads bowed and eyes closed!
- Matthew 23:37 - "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."
- 8) How about you? Are you willing? Do you know you're outside the family of God and feel Him calling you to adoption? Do you want to be covered by God as one of his children? Lift your hands and pray.
 - 9) Become a disciple.

Ruth – Part IV: Examples of Ruth and Boaz

I) Introduction (*Pray for Joe and Russ, David's family, receive Jesus, outline #2*)

D.) In Session 2 of our study in Ruth, we saw a young Moabite woman enter the barley fields of a powerful Hebrew farmer and community leader

- 1) I wonder how nervous Ruth must have felt as she stepped off that dusty country road and slipped in quietly behind the reapers
- 2) Given her pagan background, perhaps she had visions of being harassed or even evicted out of the fields,
- 3) Imagine what she must have thought when the field's owner, Boaz arrived; he dismounted his horse, scanned his field, laid eyes right on Ruth, and headed straight in her direction
- 4) Expecting rebuke or even worse, Ruth must have trembled with fear as Boaz began to speak...
- 5) However, Ruth's pounding heart was quickly soothed by Boaz' gentle, welcoming voice:

"Listen, my daughter," he said warmly. "Don't glean in another field. Stay here with my people, and I will keep you safe."

E.) Brothers and sisters, Boaz's gracious acceptance of Ruth is a picture of how Jesus welcomes the lost into God's family

- 1) No matter their condition, our Lord greets the worst of sinners with open arms, calling them sons and daughters; if they put their trust and faith in His Son, they stand with Jesus to inherit all God has made

F.) Before we move on to chapter 3, I want to spend more time on Boaz's first encounter with Ruth; I believe it offers great insight into our walk with the Lord

G.) Let's read the passage:

Ruth 2:8-14 - Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well."

Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "What have I done to deserve such kindness?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner."

"Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers."

May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done. I hope I continue to please you, sir," she replied. "You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not one of your workers."

At mealtime Boaz called to her, "Come over here, and help yourself to some food. You can dip your bread in the sour wine." So, she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her some roasted grain to eat. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over.

H.) **READ SLIDE 2** - There are three lessons we can take from this passage:

II) Let's first look at the Power of a Gentle Voice

A.) **READ SLIDE 3** – Emphasize comfort

B.) What comforts Ruth? Boaz speaking in a way that communicates acceptance and compassion; a reflection of how God talks to his beloved children in Christ

1) Boaz's tone illustrates what Scripture calls "God's still small voice"

a) In a world where people often plead for, or even demand obvious and dramatic messages from the Lord, what should his people expect as the norm?

2) Let's start by reading the account of the prophet Elijah in hiding

C.) In 1 Kings 19, the pagan queen of Israel, Jezebel, was after Elijah's head because God used him to embarrass and kill her precious prophets of Baal in a test of power

D.) Elijah runs from Israel southward to Mount Horeb, far from Jezebel's reach

E.) We read in [1 Kings 19:9-16](#), *he came to a cave and spent the night there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they have sought to take my life."

So, He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire, a sound of a gentle blowing (or gentle whisper).

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they have sought to take my life."

The LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus...and there, Elijah resumes his role as God’s voice to the nations

- 1) The story of Elijah’s encounter with God and Ruth’s meeting with Boaz reveal a divine pattern:
 - a) God’s voice rarely comes to us in dramatic visions and dreams, or in spectacular miracles
 - EMPH** b) Rather, he often speaks and acts in quiet revelations that arrive through words and acts that are subtle, gentle, and inspirational
 - c) Elijah, full of despair and hiding in a cave, needed divine guidance; one could naturally expect that God would give him a sharp rebuke, given he slinked away despite the awesome miracle he witnessed
 - 1) That rebuke could have come in the powerful wind, the earthquake, or the roaring fire sent by God—but God’s voice is in none of them
 - d) Instead, the Lord instructs him gently in a whisper that restores Elijah’s soul and renews his mission; God’s desire is to not reveal himself through force, but through tenderness
- 2) Ruth’s experience parallels Elijah’s; as a Moabite widow in Bethlehem, she enters the fields of Boaz to glean leftover grain. She expects, at best, indifference—and at worst, hostility
- 3) Yet Boaz greets her with warmth, protection, and blessing...like Elijah, Ruth receives grace in the gentlest form...Boaz’s words, soft and sincere, are the human expression of God’s compassion
 - a) Both Elijah and Ruth were physically weary, socially isolated and emotionally fragile. In both cases, God reveals himself to them in a way that infuses hope and confidence
 - b) When we are fearful, confused or doubting, look for the voice that comforts, then encourages *to action*; the objective is to get you on your feet so you can press on with faith and confidence

c) That voice comes in many ways...it can come through a dream, or a vision, but most often from a pastor, friend, family member, a song, a Christian brother or sister, or a word God plants in your mind

d) Listen...keep your ears, minds, and heart open for divine answers to your pressing questions and needs...*confirms in different ways*

4) Does God sometimes speak loudly and firmly to us...yes...when we are in intentional sin and rebellion, and we need a drastic course correction...just ask Jonah (*should be the exception for God's people*)

F.) Further, we should follow our Lord's and Boaz's examples in our own speech. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:29 – **SLIDE 4**

1) *Click and explain Greek word and the image of construction, we are temples under construction*

2) Say things to your brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that contributes to their spiritual growth; your words and the way you speak them can either hinder that construction or contribute to it

3) I've seen Christians speak in ways that are harsh, poorly timed and delivered in arrogance...(*example of person*)

4) The question I would ask them is this:

a) Say you spend a bunch of money on construction of a new home. How would you feel if a family member comes along and smashes its newly built frame with a sledgehammer?

5) Imagine how our Lord must feel when we take a verbal hammer to the person he purchased with his shed blood. Think on that! When you speak, do you edify – do you build up? Or do you tear down and discourage?

6) Are you acting as the human expression of God's compassion?

III) Second lesson: Power of Humility and Gratitude

A.) God's gentle voice not only comforts, but it inspires humility; we see this in Ruth's response to Boaz: She falls at his feet and proclaims: *"What have I done to deserve such kindness?...I am only a foreigner."*

- 1) She believes her nationality and poverty leave her with nothing to commend her to the Hebrew people or Boaz; she has nothing to offer them and is reliant solely on their mercy
- 2) This reflects the humility required of all who come to Christ for salvation...utterly dependent on his mercy, not our own achievements; *always keep that in mind! (Gold and stubble at judgment)*

B.) In verse 2:13, Ruth further proclaims:

- 1) *May I continue to find favor with you. (Some translations have: "I'm glad I've pleased you," but this isn't the full rendering...it is ongoing)*
- 2) So Ruth has been welcomed warmly and promised safety, food and drink; a person lacking in humility would have offered this response:
- 3) *"I'm in...I made it! I'm part of the family! I can ease up on the hard work of gleaning. I'll make nice with Boaz, so everything will come easy to me now."*
- 4) When I was young, people called this the fire insurance mentality; we add Jesus to our lives as an attachment so we can escape hell and enjoy the benefits, but without real discipleship
- 5) That's the attitude of one who lacks true humility; they don't feel the weight of their spiritual poverty nor are they genuinely grateful to Christ, their benefactor
- 6) Ruth felt the weight of her unworthiness and the gap between her and Boaz; when that weight was lifted and gap filled, the magnitude of Boaz's mercy made her deeply grateful

C.) When we truly realize how lost and broken we are, and we feel the Savior's hand lifting us from darkness into eternal light, we can't help but live a life of thankfulness

Psalm 103:2-4 - *"Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion."*

1) Like Ruth to Boaz, we should say to Jesus: *Sir, may I continue to please you*. Gratitude is the spirit that sparks loving service. Lord, thank you for coming out of heaven to save a wretch like me (*so I can live in comfort and ease – no!*)... so I can be like you and love generously

2) A great illustration of this concept comes from Luke 7 – **SLIDE 5.VIDEO**

Luke 7:47 - *For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven—for she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little, loves little (contrast w/Pharisees & one who is forgiven much, loves much)*

3) In Luke 8, we're introduced to another woman; one whom Jesus delivered from seven demons; imagine the torment this woman suffered – it gives life to the phrase "hell on earth"

4) But after meeting Jesus, Mary Magdalene is set free...a 10-ton weight of darkness is lifted off her soul as divine hope and joy fills her mind and heart

5) And where do we find Mary after that? Living the good life in Jerusalem? No, she's walking with Jesus everywhere he goes, providing whatever support she can; she is laboring on his behalf out of love.

a) And by the way, when Jesus was crucified, and the apostles, save John, were hiding, who do you think was brave enough to stand with Jesus even as he hung on the cross surrounded by enemies?

b) She realized where she had come from; she realized the depths from which Jesus had lifted her and the heights he would take her; she was grateful to her savior and that gratitude drove her devotion

- c) May we meditate on where we came from and where God is taking us. May we let the spirit of humility and gratitude lead us to continual loving service

IV) The Importance of Staying Put

Ruth 2:8-10 - *Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but join my young women here. Keep your eyes on the field which they reap and go after them. Indeed, I have ordered the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."*

A.) Explain SLIDE 6

B.) Click 6a - Safety in God's presence

- 1) I have three daughters – when they were young, my wife and I were a bit strict with their comings and goings
 - a) We wanted to know where they were going, with whom, and why?
 - b) We warned them not to go to certain places, and not to hang out with certain groups of people
 - c) Why? They thought we were being wet blankets, trying to stifle their freedom; the real reason is we wanted them to be safe mentally, physically, and spiritually
 - d) We wanted them to stay close to us so they would learn our values, so we could guide them in the right things to do, and keep them from doing things that would carry lifelong consequences
 - e) We tried to hold them close because we loved them and wanted the best for them
- 2) This is why God carefully guards our comings and goings; **his Word acts as guardrails** that keep us on the narrow path to eternal life

- a) **Story of Indiana ice...** but in the Lord, the protective rails are always up...though we may suffer trial in body, our minds and souls remain secure in his promises

Psalm 4:8 – *In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety*

Psalm 27:1 – *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”*

C.) **Click 6b** – **Strength among God’s people**

- 1) There is security in numbers – if Ruth remained among Boaz’s gleaners, they would provide support, encouragement and guidance based on their experience with and direction from Boaz
- 2) Christians find the same strength in fellowship with God’s people
- 3) The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to *not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near* (Hebrews 10:25).
- 4) Why? Because God builds his kingdom by working through the unified collection of the saints...what we call the church, the body of Christ
- 5) In church, we carry out Christ’s command to love one another, and this love extends outward to bring the lost into our spiritual family
- 6) If we avoid fellowship, the church is weakened, individual Christians are weakened, and God’s work is hindered by his people’s disobedience

D.) **Click 6c** – **Freedom from God’s judgement**

- 1) This one is simple – if you’re outside God’s field – his family – you’re lost and subject to his holy, righteous and just wrath...
- 2) Don’t go where God says not to go because disobedience makes you more vulnerable to attacks from the devil, flesh and world

E.) **Click 6d** – Access to living water

John 7:37-39 - *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. But this He said in reference to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive...*

- 1) Jesus said we are to abide in Him, for without Him we can do nothing; if we remain in Christ's presence – in his fields – we have access to the power to accomplish all that He asks of us
- 2) We are continually nourished, encouraged and equipped as we remain close to our Lord through a strong devotional life and obedience to his leading
- 3) We will never thirst for purpose or meaning so long as we drink from the master's provision of living water

V) Conclusion

A.) **SLIDE 7** – Lessons Learned

- 1) God's voice is often subtle and gentle...he does his works in us and through us most profoundly when we actively listen for His still small voice, store it in our hearts, and act on it
- 2) Ruth exhibited godly humility, which made her grateful for Boaz's kindness...her gratitude motivated further service; may we have the same humility and gratitude in our hearts toward God
- 3) Stay put - Don't wander away from God's people during times of trial, confusion, or spiritual lukewarmness...stay engaged with brothers and sisters who can strengthen and support you
 - a) It is in God's presence where are equipped, nourished and guarded against evil

Ruth – Part V: Rest and Work

I) Review (*Pray for Joe and Russ, receive Jesus, new believers' class*)

I.) Tonight, as we move from Ruth chapter 2 to chapter 3, I want to look at the intersection between two interesting words in the Christian vocabulary: “rest” and “work.”

1) In the interplay between Ruth and Boaz, we see how a person of faith can be both resting and working simultaneously; what?

a) How's that possible?...When you're at rest, how can you be working, and when you're working how can you be at rest?

2) I want to start by reading Boaz's first statements to Ruth in chapter 2; I strung them together so we can read them without interruption; *and see if you can hear God speaking to you*

Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but join my young women here. Keep your eyes on the field which they reap and go after them. Indeed, I have ordered the servants not to touch you [\(Ruth 2:8-9\)](#).

May the LORD reward your work, and may your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.” [\(2:12\)](#).

*And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and **was satisfied** and had some left [\(2:14\)](#).*

J.) When I read these, I thought this sounds a lot like what Jesus said to his disciples and still says to us today: And what is that?

1) **SLIDE 2** – Work in the place to which I have called you:

- a) First place: Be in Christ – love his Word, learn His Word, share His Word
- b) Second place: Be in His church, in fellowship with other believers

c) Third place: Be in the harvest among the lost; support efforts to build my kingdom

2) **Click 2a** – **Secondly**, Keep your eyes on me and my people, and I will embrace you in my protection

Psalm 18:2a - *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my savior, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge...*

Romans 8:31 - *If God be for us, who can be against us? (Examples)*

a) The world can threaten us; it can pass laws to restrict us; it can mock us on Social Media and cast aspersions on us in universities, on the streets and in the halls of government

b) It can even persecute us, oppress us, and kill us

c) No matter what is done to us, we will accomplish God's work because we are covered in his wings; our souls, our love, our peace is secure in the solid rock that is Christ

3) **Click 2b** – **Also**: I will reward your labor

a) Our reward in this life is not riches or all the world's niceties

b) Our reward is the joy and faith maturity that comes from seeing the results of our investment in the lives of others

1) Seeing God work through us to deliver people from mental strongholds, physical illness, loneliness, and deception

2) Our reward is the contentment that flows from knowing that God is faithful to his promises and is molding us in the image of His Son

c) The fullest wages, however, come when we come into God's presence

1) It's there we see the full impact of the works God did in and through us - we who were willing to his call to reap the harvest

2) **SLIDE 3.VIDEO** – Thank You

d) I'm not sure what this great reward will entail, but I think we'll all be content to embrace the risen Jesus in all his glory – the Bible says we will see him as he is because we will be like him

1) We get to hear millions of angels and saints praising our Lord

2) We'll soak in the unimaginable power, light and love of God

3) And we'll reign with Christ over a newly built universe

4) **SLIDE 4 Click c** – Jesus also calls us to intimacy with himself and with his people

a) Boaz invited Ruth to dip bread in vinegar along with he and his servants; this was a sign of acceptance into union with his people

b) We see the same custom at work when Jesus dined with his apostles; they all dipped the bread they shared in the same bowl of wine

c) It was their way of saying we are in “intimate fellowship;” In fact, in Luke 22:15, Jesus used a Jewish phrase during the dinner that reflected his deep longing to fellowship with his apostles; we see this intimacy in its ultimate form at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Revelation 19:6-9** - Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made herself ready...it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — **for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

1) After the horrors of the Tribulation and defeat of the Antichrist, there is a great celebration in Heaven

- 2) It is the final consecration of the mystical union between Christ and his bride – the church, the entire community of Jesus' followers – we are bonded to Him for eternity
- 3) Our marriage clothes are “the fine linen of our righteous deeds;” those deeds not rooted in ourselves, but in the power we derived from our Lord
- 5) **Click 4d** - Finally, Jesus tells us to eat of Him to fullness
 - a) One of the oddest things Jesus ever said is found in [John 6:51](#) - *I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats from this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I will give for the life of the world also is My flesh*
 - b) What's he saying? He's saying that He, the bread from Heaven, is God's Word...consume the Word revealed in Scripture...read the Word, believe the Word, pray the Word, fellowship in the Word, live the Word...do so and you will be spiritual nourished and empowered
 - c) God doesn't just give us enough for ourselves, but gives more, so we can take what He's given us and invest it in the kingdom
 - d) He provides everything we need - physically, spiritually and mentally – to bear the fruit of God's will

II) Nature of the work

A.) I noted last week that Ruth didn't view her adoption as the path to the easy life; she saw herself as resourced by a loving benefactor, so she could continue to care for Naomi

1) Boaz sees this, and in [Ruth 2:15-16](#), *commanded his servants, saying,*

“Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also you are to purposely slip out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it so that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

2) This speaks to the nature of the work to which God calls us: He makes our work lighter, but doesn't make it easy...for Ruth, the work still required her to kneel and gather among prickly strands of cut barley in the hot sun

B.) Listen, the calling of God to the gathering of the harvest is often difficult work

Jesus declares in [Luke 9:23](#) - *"...If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me*

a) Here's an example of cross-bearing:

[Revelation 2:9-10](#) – To the church in Smyrna, Jesus declared, *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich...Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*

a) Self-sacrifice, loss, persecution, fatigue, and temptation are all marks of Christian service and if you aren't in communion with God, you will physically and spiritually burn out

2) However, the ministry of Jesus to us– encouragement and provision, ensures we can push through human limitations and reap our divine reward of joy, peace and eternity with Christ

[Galatians 6:9](#) - *Let's not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary.*

[Psalm 126:5-6](#) – *Those who sow in tears shall harvest with joyful shouting. One who goes here and there weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him*

3) **SLIDE 5** – Here's a great example of this: The story of the families of five missionaries who gave their lives to bring the Gospel to an unreached Huaorani tribe in the Ecuadorian jungle

- a) In 1956, five American men - Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming and Roger Youderian - flew into Ecuador and made contact with the natives
- b) At first, there were signs the tribe may be open to friendly contact; but a series of misunderstandings and fear of outsiders caused the tribe to spear and kill all five men just a few days after their arrival
- c) The families could have sunk into despair and bitterness, but they were eating at the table of the Lord's provision
- d) Filled with God's love, two of the widows, Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint, dedicated years to learning the Huaorani language and eventually lived among the violent and primitive people
- e) The result: Several of the very men who killed their husbands became disciples of Christ; revenge killings – common to their culture - ceased, and new spirit of forgiveness and peace elevated the tribe out of darkness
- f) The Lord provided generously for these missionary widows...He gave them what they needed to push through the sorrow and pain to bear much fruit in the people who caused that pain
- g) Just as the widows in Ecuador found grace to continue, Ruth too was strengthened by Boaz's generosity

III) Finish Chapter 2

Ruth 2:17-19a - *So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.*

And she picked it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also took some out and gave Naomi what she had left after she was satisfied. Her mother-in-law then said to her, "Where did you

glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed."

A.) Boaz's benevolence is worked through his servants; they obeyed their good master and ensured Ruth was well-provisioned...**parallel?**

- 1) The passage tells us she took home one ephah of barley, or 10 omers
- 2) This is equivalent to roughly 50 pounds...that's a big haul...she has so much grain that when Naomi sees it, she immediately knows Ruth wandered into the field of a generous man

SLIDE 6 - Ruth 2:19-23 - *So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn His kindness from the living and from the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative; he is one of our redeemers."*

- 3) We begin to see a turn here in Naomi's outlook
 - a) Keep in mind that in her earlier distress, she wanted people to call her "Mara," because she felt the Lord had made her "empty"
- 4) She now senses, however, the hand of God is moving...the fog of despair is lifting as the Lord's still, small voice whispers hope into her heart...God has not abandoned this daughter of Israel
- 5) It is he who led Ruth directly into the field of a kinsmen-redeemer, who, like his god, would generously give life to the living and the dead
- 6) Boaz would provide sustenance for Naomi and Ruth, but also step up for her lost husband and sons to provide a home and grandchildren to carry on Elimelech's lineage
- 7) This was the responsibility of the kinsman-redeemer in Jewish law
– **READ SLIDE 7**

- 8) In verses 21-23, Naomi tells Ruth “stay put,” continue to stay close to Boaz’s servants – it is there where you will ultimately find the rest all humans desire

IV) Chapter 3

We read in Ruth 3:1-5 - *Then her mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may go well for you? Now then, is Boaz not our relative, with whose young women you were? Behold, he is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not reveal yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall take notice of the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you should do.” And she said to her, “All that you say I will do.”*

A.) SLIDE 8 - READ

- 1) Not striving, not anxious about the future...contented in your condition
- 2) Naomi continues looking out for her daughter-in-law...if you remember, in Chapter 1, she wanted Orpah and Ruth to find rest by returning to Moab and finding new husbands
- 3) Naomi’s guidance was tainted by her distress and bitterness...she pointed the women in the wrong direction! Toward Moab and its gods.
- 4) Thankfully, God moves in Ruth’s heart and steers her away from Moab and toward the only source of true rest
- 5) SLIDE 8 click – In the physical sense, this rest is found in Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer...only he has the resources, the legal authority, the godly character, and the will to bring Ruth and Naomi to physical and emotional rest

- a) But only Jesus Christ can provide, the ultimate, eternal spiritual rest
- b) Jesus alone has the limitless resources, perfection of character, absolute divine authority, and the will to bring humanity to spiritual rest...a rest that gives peace in this life and abundant joy in the next
- c) If Naomi or Ruth had looked anywhere else for redemption, they may have found some temporary or partial refuge
 - 1) But it would not have offered the fullness – the completeness of rest Boaz could provide because of his character and authority
- d) Like these women, without Jesus, the one legitimate redeemer of humanity, none of us will ever find rest...no matter what we try, we will find no sense of eternal security and hope
- e) North Carolina Pastor Matt Morgan puts it this way:

Others are constantly searching for that which will satisfy their souls. They spend massive amounts of time, energy, and money hoping that some relationship, or some sport, or some beverage, or some video game will be able to really provide the soul satisfaction that they are looking for....And while at first those things might seem to produce a temporary satisfaction, the satisfaction eventually fades away and they are left searching again...

B.) How true this is...

- 1) God has woven into the human heart the need for communion with our Creator; as we connect with Him and with others in Him, we experience the love, meaning and fulfillment we instinctively desire
- 2) However, when individuals and societies seek meaning in things other than God, they may be fine for a time, but they will always and ever slowly descend into an emotional and spiritual abyss
- 3) Here's proof: Since 2000, America's suicide rate has nearly doubled

- a) The latest statistics tell us that suicide is the **second** leading cause of death among people aged **20 to 34**; there are 132 suicides daily in America, one every 11 minutes
- 4) The chief causes? Mental illness, substance abuse, psychological distress, social isolation, and disconnect from community and relationships
- 5) Symptoms of people disconnected from their Maker! Their searching for love in all the wrong places; soul rest seems out of reach, so they end their lives
- 6) Sadly, they didn't accept our Lord's invitation in Matthew 11:28-30 –
READ SLIDE 9
- 7) The writer of Hebrews tells us in verses **4:9-11a** - *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...*
- 8) It's simple folks...if we become a disciple of Jesus, He has already done the heavy lifting for us:
 - a) He lived the perfect life and fulfilled the Law on our behalf
 - b) He paid the price for our sins
 - c) He secured our eternal life with his resurrection
 - d) And He empowers us to do his will by the power of His Spirit
- 9) This is how we rest and work at the same time; our work is a function of our rest in God's grace and provision
 - a) We don't have to scrape and claw for God's acceptance; He's already taken care of that in Christ; as Christians, we're free from dead religious works and are at peace with our Creator...this is soul rest
 - b) In that state of soul rest, God fuels us with a passion and love for people, opens doors of ministry, places us in the harvest fields to labor, and helps us push through hardship – all in the name of love

V) Conclusion

A.) There are two things I want to encourage you in tonight:

- 1) Enter God's rest...be assured of his care and provision...rest from your striving for acceptance

- 2) When you're settled in God's rest, there, you will find the strength, guidance and the resources to answer our Lord's call to love one another, to serve one another, and to go into all the world and make disciples

Ruth – Part VI: A Marriage Proposal

I) Introduction/Communion

A.) In session five in our study of Ruth, we discussed the Lord's desire for intimate fellowship with his children

1) He isn't interested in people simply aligning themselves with his name or respecting his teachings; he longs for them to walk with him in true relationship...in closeness

2) This is reflected in the interaction between Boaz and Ruth – **SLIDE 2**

Ruth 2:14 - *And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate...*

3) In the Hebrew culture, being invited to share bread and the same bowl of vinegar or wine was a sign of friendship and fellowship: it communicated a closeness of ties in family, clan or group

4) We see this custom at work in Luke 22, which records our Jesus' last meal with his apostles...**Click 2A READ and DISCUSS**

a) This phrase *eagerly desired* denotes the Lord's deep love for his disciples and a yearning to, for one last time, fellowship with them

b) Sharing of the wine cup...all drink from one cup...this is only done among those who are closely knit together

B.) This shared meal culminates in what we call the Lord's Supper. The moment when Jesus asks his apostles to be ever mindful of:

1) **Who He is and what He has done** - He is the Bread of Life, the real Manna from Heaven, the giver of life who willingly gave up his body and shed his blood as a sacrifice for our sins

2) **What He will do** – He will rise from the dead and return as King of Kings

- 3) **What he asks of us** - He asks that we commemorate these things together as a body, united in fellowship...this is why we call it *communion* – we share in unity with Christ and in unity with our brothers and sisters
- 4) **The solemnness of the act**...we are called to repeatedly take communion with our eyes centered on Jesus with hearts of gratitude and worship; don't take it casually or simply go through the motions...be immersed in it
- 5) [In 1 Corinthians 11](#), the Apostle Paul exhorts us to examine ourselves, to confess, to repent and to thank our Lord for his forgiveness secured in His sacrifice
- 6) Let's take a moment to meditate upon these things

[Luke 22:19-20](#) - *And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant in My blood.*

II) **Worship resumes**, then Chapter 3 continued

- A.) Last week, we discussed Naomi's desire to free Ruth from concerns about the future...to give her spiritual and psychological rest in the care of Boaz
- B.) The question is, how will Naomi make it work...how will she get this powerful, wealthy and godly man to embrace Ruth's future as his own?

[Ruth 3:2-5](#) - *Now then, is Boaz not our relative, with whose young women you were? Behold, he is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself, and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but don't reveal yourself to the man until he finishes eating and drinking. And it shall be when he lies down, that you shall note the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down...*

...then he will tell you what you should do." And she said to her, "All that you say I will do."

- C.) Notice Naomi isn't passively waiting for rest or Boaz to come to Ruth; she tells the young woman to clean up and you go visit him at the threshing floor where he and his male laborers finalizing the harvest work
- 1) The intent is for Ruth to propose marriage to Boaz... a bold move!
Ruth will appeal directly to his legal obligation to fulfill his role as kinsman-redeemer
 - 2) I like Naomi; she's a woman of action; she reaches out in faith to take what God has made available to redeem and restore her
 - a) She's seen Boaz's kindness to Ruth and discerned Ruth's respect for Boaz; Knowing the time is right, she launches her daughter-in-law on a nighttime adventure to the local threshing floor
- D.) The threshing floor was either elevated bedrock or hardpacked earth where the harvested barley would be beaten or trodden by oxen to separate the grain from the barley stalk
- 1) Once this was done, the winnowing would take place, throwing the grain into the air and the wind would blow away the chaff and the heavier kernels of grain would fall back to the threshing floor where it would then be piled in preparation to transport it back into the city for storage
- E.) On this particular evening, Boaz and his men would spend the night at the threshing floor, guarding their grain from thieves and animals
- 1) Naomi knows this and explains to Ruth she needs to approach Boaz at this time; it won't be easy, because there is significant risk involved
 - a) Ruth must travel at night from the town to the fields, making her vulnerable to immoral men wandering in the darkness
 - b) Secondly, she may be scandalized by being mistaken for a prostitute or being overly aggressive in coming to Boaz
 - c) This is why Naomi tells her to be as stealthy as possible and wait for the right time to limit her exposure to scandal

- 2) I think Naomi senses God is at work, which is why she and Ruth push forward despite the risks...in fact, Ruth says, *I will do all that you say.*
- 3) People like Naomi and Ruth are quite effective in God's service; they sense what God is doing; they sense the direction he's going, and they act on it...they don't let fear of failure keep them from moving on what they believe is the godly course of action

F.) One question we may ask: why not simply confront him during the day in front of many witnesses...she had the legal right to kind of guilt him into accepting his role as the family's redeemer

- 1) She could walk right up and cry out: "Marry me Boaz. God's word commands you to fulfill your responsibility to Elimelech's family."
 - a) As onlookers stood with in shock with their jaws dropped to their feet, Boaz would probably think, "Boy, this young woman had me fooled. What a boisterous, rude little strumpet!"
- 2) She would've appeared crude and disrespectful of their customs; perhaps Boaz could work a deal for Ruth and Naomi to be shuffled off to another family.
- 3) Keep in mind it was Ruth's humility and dignity that attracted Boaz to her; she could not violate that and expect the man to embrace her as his own
- 4) Naomi is what we called in the military, situationally aware; she is sensitive to customs, perceptions, law, and good common sense...she isn't rash or careless
- 5) She tells Ruth to wait until the men have finished eating and drinking, and fallen asleep before she approaches; this will ensure she engages with Boaz in a manner that isn't embarrassing or disrespectful
- 6) As Christians, we should be equally aware and gracious - we should avoid appeared entitled, rude or demanding; the Apostle Paul tells us in [Colossians 4:6](#) – **SLIDE 3 READ AND DISCUSS**

7) Godly humility causes us to seek our own good and the good of others patiently with grace, even when you feel justified to be harsh and demanding...God does not desire his children to be seen as angry brats

a) Iowa Pastor Rick Melick describes a situation needing a lot of grace and salt – [SLIDE 4.VIDEO](#) (Costco testimony)

G.) Back to the threshing floor – [Ruth 3:6-9](#)

So (Ruth) went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down. And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward; and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. So he said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth your slave. Now spread your garment over your slave, for you are a redeemer."

- 1) Most of the servants may have gone home already, and only Boaz, and perhaps a few others remained to guard the grain
- 2) Ruth doesn't shake Boaz awake and say wake up, wake up! Marry me, okay! She is utterly respectful and dignified in her approach...She gently uncovers his feet so the cold air will eventually wake him, and lies at his feet rather than at his side
- 3) This position at the man's feet is an act of willful, loving submission; not slavish submission (*as the world sees it*), but an act that honors the good character and godly authority of a good master
- 4) We see this in the example of two women in the New Testament: one who anoints Jesus' feet with perfume, and another who washes them with her tears and dries them with her hair
- 5) Mary, sister of Martha, was commended by Jesus for sitting at his feet to learn of his Word; sitting at the feet of a teacher generally communicates respect and a willingness to follow

6) Jesus himself sets the ultimate example by washing the feet of the apostles as recorded in John 13.

a) Peter tells our Lord, no you won't wash my feet, I'm not worthy

b) In the Middle East, even today, feet were considered dirty and lowly, and to point one's foot at someone or to show the bottoms of feet was and is considered an offense

c) In Jesus' day, only the lowest of slaves would wash their master's feet

d) So, of course, it was natural for Peter to deny Jesus in this ministry, but Jesus made a powerful statement in return; if you don't let me wash your feet, you will have no part in me

Remember,
when dealing
with difficult
people

e) It was the Lord's way of saying, "I am setting the example of godly humility – to be a servant even to the lowest of people; if you're not willing to imitate me in this, then you cannot be my disciple...you are still too immersed in worldly pride

f) Ruth approaches Boaz quietly in the spirit of a submissive servant

H.) Boaz, nevertheless, was quite startled; his feet are cold, he's been wakened suddenly, and then he feels something moving at his feet; is it a fox? A hare? No, he finds a young woman at his feet

1) As he gets his wits about him, Ruth confidently requests he cast his garment over her as her kinsman-redeemer

2) The garment here is likely a rectangular piece of fabric worn as an overcoat during the day and used as a blanket at night

3) The Hebrew word for garment is *kanaph*, which also means "wings"

a) in Hebrew culture, to cast one's garment over someone was saying "I will cover you and protect you," just as God covers his people in the wings of his care (*example of men & coats*)

- 4) Again, Ruth is boldly requesting Boaz marry her and bring her to rest
 - a) She and Naomi are confident in this proposal's success because Boaz has already adopted her into the family; she is no longer a foreigner; as a child of Israel, she can lay claim to the nation's legal rights
- 5) There is a lesson here for us: There is no such thing as a second-class citizen in God's kingdom
 - a) Whether you've been a believer for one day or 50 years, or whether you're from a godly family or come from a terrible background, you have all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters
 - b) You have access to God's limitless treasures of wisdom, love and fruits of the Spirit
- I.) Too many Christians live their lives like they're second-class citizens; "Those gifts, those blessings aren't for me...I'll just sort of get along and settle for mediocrity and leave the big fruit to the select few"
 - 1) Not a good attitude folks! In [1 Corinthians 1:7](#), the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians: **SLIDE 5 READ – yes you!!!**
 - 2) Paul celebrates that these Corinthians are equipped by the Spirit – God has visited this young church and given them spiritual gifts needed to grow and bear fruit in the kingdom
 - 3) Now, were these Corinthians especially righteous? Were they the cream of the crop of in terms of faithfulness and obedience?
 - 4) No way! There was a bunch of misfits and goofballs among them; much of the content in 1 Corinthians is Paul rebuking them for any number of violations of the law of love and use of spiritual gifts
 - 5) God gifted them not because they earned it, but because they were His children in Christ...though some abused the gifts, He patiently disciplined his sons and daughters so they could use his gifts for his glory
 - a) Despite their flaws, He still desired communion with them

- 6) Just as Ruth went boldly to Boaz, we also are called to *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” – Hebrews 4:16
- 7) How often do we hesitate when God calls us forward – He wants us to come expecting for Him to answer the good desires of our hearts (*examples*)
- 8) Ruth comes to Boaz with such expectation; let’s see how he responds:

III) Ruth 3:10-11

Then he said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first, by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. So now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you say, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

A.) Seeing Ruth at his feet proposing marriage was certainly unexpected

- 1) Why, because Boaz is an older man - probably in his late 30s or early 40s - while Ruth is still quite young
- 2) He’s impressed to see that she values family ties and Jewish customs over the natural inclination to seek a younger man; one who may be a bit more handsome, *virile*, or at least has more years ahead of him
- 3) Ruth is the epitome of a virtuous woman who knows where true contentment and peace is found...not with a young stallion of a man, but with an older man of godly character (*ladies...you hear that?*)
- 4) We see Boaz’ good character shine through in verses 12-15

But now, although it is true that I am a redeemer, yet there is also a redeemer more closely related than I. Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning.” So she lay at his feet until morning, and got up before one person could recognize another; and he said, “Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.”¹⁵ Again he said, “Give me

the shawl that is on you and hold it.” So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

- B.) **SLIDE 6 - Boaz shows his respect for the law and custom** – he would do well to quickly snatch up this young, attractive, hard-working woman, who is loyal beyond measure
- 1) But he resists the temptation to do so, because he must, by law, give precedence to another man who is closer relation...the other guy is entitled to the first shot at acting as her redeemer
 - 2) His character contrasts with that of much of the world; people commit so much evil seeking self-satisfaction at the expense of others and at expense of our nation’s and God’s laws; this is the religion of “Meism” that dominates our culture
- C.) **Click 6a - Further, Boaz keeps Ruth at the threshing floor under his protection**
- 1) If he sent her away to protect his own reputation, she could have been accosted on the way home or suffer damage to her name if seen wandering home at night
 - 2) Though not yet committed to marriage, Boaz is already covering her as God covers us
- D.) **Click 6b** - Lastly, even though he had already been generous with Ruth, **he proves his generosity is virtually limitless**; he loads Ruth with another generous heaping of barley to add to what she already has
- 1) At the close of chapter 3, Naomi sees this generosity and immediately knows things have gone well...his character bears out that he can be trusted; Naomi knows Boaz will keep his promise to secure Ruth’s future
 - 2) Trust is such a big deal for Christians; we really should live with such genuine godliness that people know they can trust us in times of need
 - 3) How? We should follow Boaz’s example

IV) Conclusion

A.) **Respect appropriate laws and customs**...avoid being a grumbler or schemer

- 1) Try not to complain or look for ways to cheat or skirt the law, or purposely violate harmless customs because you've a bit of rebel in you
- 2) As the Lord helps you, strive to present yourself peaceful, patient and contented no matter the circumstances

B.) When God calls you, **be a covering to those who need your help**...pray, protect, defend, and provide in the short and long term

C.) **Be gracious and generous with your time and resources**, again when God calls you to do so...don't place limits on yourself or God

D.) As Ruth sought rest through communion with Boaz, **let us seek rest through communion with God and His people**...immerse yourself in your godly relationships upward to horizontally

Ruth – Part 7: The God Who Heals

I) Introduction

D.) In the Book of Ruth, we've learned we have an awesome God; one who is the great cleaner of messes

- 1) A God whose lovingkindness moves Him to intercede on our behalf to rescue us from our own foolishness
- 2) Over the last several weeks, we've seen God reach down into Moab to rescue Naomi, Ruth and Elimelech's legacy
- 3) Elimelech made the poor decision to abandon his people and land during a famine and moved to Moab, an idol-worshipping nation; he and his sons died there, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law impoverished widows
- 4) But God reaches down into Moab to rescue this family by igniting a flicker of faith in a mourning and depressed Naomi
- 5) The Lord nudges her back toward Israel with Ruth, whom he will use to restore Naomi to fullness and joy

E.) Let's linger for a moment on this idea of God reaching.

- 1) I believe this idea is most beautifully illustrated in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15, where Jesus shares three parables

[Luke 15:1-10](#) - *Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Jesus to listen to Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to complain, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."*

- 2) This statement sets up the parables to follow nicely...the Pharisees thought they were righteous and looked down on the common people

- a) So much so, they grumbled that this Jesus, supposedly a man of God, was mixing with sinners; our Lord was going to teach these hypocrites a lesson about how God really views the “unclean masses”

And so He told them this parable, saying, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the other ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!’ I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found the coin which I had lost!’ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

- 3) In Luke 15:22-24, the father of the prodigal son, who wasted his father’s money on partying, sees his child returning tattered and broken
- 4) The father has been yearning for the son, hoping day after day he would return from darkness; and when he does return look at the reception:

a) READ SLIDE 2

- F.) We see such reconciliation when Naomi arrives in Bethlehem; there’s no hint the townspeople rebuked her for her departure or exclude her from fellowship
- 1) It appears she’s received unconditionally back into the community
- 2) In fact, the town appears excited at her return and the renewal of fellowship, friendship, and family ties

- 3) Why all the joy...because God himself so intensely values right relationships because they reflect the love that binds Father, Son, Spirit

Romans 5:11 - ...we also celebrate in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation...(the repair of broken relationship with God)

G.) The whole world is out of fellowship with God...we are not his children by birth...but, he reaches across all barriers of time, space, and human resistance to embrace anyone – regardless of their circumstances – who will take His hand

H.) Here are real-life, modern examples of God’s reaching into the darkest corners of the world to pluck the lost out of darkness:

1) **SLIDE 3** - **Brian Welch**, co-founder and guitarist of *Korn* (late 90s) was living what many would call the dream — fame, fortune, and fans worldwide

a) Despite his success, he was empty inside and depressed; and, he was a drug addict, frequently snorting meth as an escape

b) In 2005, desperate for help, Brian reached out to a friend who sent him Matthew 11:28 - “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

c) God reached him and put a spark of hope in Brian’s heart...soon, he attended church with a friend and prayed for deliverance and salvation; Jesus answered both prayers

d) He left *Korn* and began a new life of faith. In 2009, he published *Washed in the Blood: Lessons from My Time with Korn and My Journey to Christ*, sharing his story of redemption

2) **3a** - **Craig Smith** is a member of the Ojibwe and Sioux tribes who grew up on a reservation; as many of you may know, reservations can be

dark places; they are marked by generational sense of lost culture and hopelessness

- a) Like many in his situation, Craig's life fell into a destructive cycle of alcoholism, drug addiction, multiple arrests and despair
 - b) One night, overwhelmed by shame and fear, he cried out to God; as peace flooded his heart, he gave his life to Jesus Christ
 - c) Not only did Jesus deliver him from addictions, but He's now a pastor who runs Tribal Rescue Ministries; an organization dedicated to bringing the Gospel to Native Americans
- I.) Likewise, Ruth was a former child of darkness; like her native people, she was walking the wide path that Jesus tells us leads to eternal destruction
- 1) In Ruth chapter 2, however, God reached Ruth; the Moabite becomes an Israelite by faith; and in chapter 3, Ruth asserts her rights as an adopted Hebrew by asking Boaz act as her kinsman-redeemer
 - 2) At the local threshing floor, she asks Boaz to cover her – to marry her and have children with her to ensure Elimelech's line continues, and Naomi is restored to a place of blessing among her family and tribe

II) Exegete Ruth 4

Ruth 4:1-2 - *Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spoke was passing by, so he said, "Come over here, friend, sit down here." And he came over and sat down. Then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.*

- A.) It was common in ancient Israel for people to conduct civic business at the town gate; official or legal matters would be settled by discussion and agreement witnessed by and 10 males
- 1) Imagine what this other kinsman must've been thinking; he was coming into this cold and probably had no idea what was happening

4:3-4 - And so Boaz says to the redeemer, *“Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, has to sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. So I thought that I would inform you, saying, ‘Buy it before those who are sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, tell me so that I may know; for there is no one except you to redeem it, and I am after you.’”* And he said, *“I will redeem it.”*

A.) Boaz explains Naomi wants to sell her family’s land to a kinsmen-redeemer so Naomi so she can derive a living from that redeemer

- 1) When the Hebrews conquered Canaan, by law the land was distributed, first to tribes, then further down to family clans
- 2) Plots of land were ancestral; they were meant to stay with their original families in perpetuity and not to be permanently sold away
- 3) If the family was desperate and needed money or could not farm the land, they could sell usage rights to it...not the land itself, but the right to derive an income from farming it
- 4) The purchase price was based on the anticipated harvests and years of use

B.) We see in Leviticus, God established processes to ensure the land stayed with its original owners

Leviticus 25:23-28 - *The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, because **the land is Mine; for you are only strangers and residents with Me** (the concept of emissaries occupying state-owned consulates/embassies).*

So for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor that he sells part of his property, then his closest redeemer is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. Or in case someone has no redeemer, but recovers to find sufficient means for its redemption, then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to

*whom he sold it, and so return to his property. But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; **but at the jubilee it shall revert**, so that he may return to his property.*

Leviticus 25:10 - *So you shall consecrate the fiftieth year (after entering the Promised Land) and proclaim a release throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a **jubilee** for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family – **SLIDE 4 Summary***

C.) In Naomi's case, one of two things may be at work:

- 1) Perhaps Elimelech sold the land prior to departing, and Naomi wants a redeemer to buy it back into the family, use it, and take care of her
- 2) Or, Naomi still possesses it, but simply wants to give it to a kinsman-redeemer who can farm it for income, and provide Naomi a living

D.) In either case, Boaz is giving this other kinsman first shot; and when offered, the guy jumps all over it; without hesitation, he says: "I will redeem it"

- 1) Land is everything in the ancient world; the man would love to attach more land to his own holdings and increase his profit; all he has to do is ensure Naomi is justly compensated

E.) I wonder if Boaz had some sort of strategy in mind, by not mentioning Ruth up front...I wonder if he added Ruth after the initial offer for shock effect...

- 1) "You want that land do you...by the way, there's this little catch to the deal

4:5-8 - *Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance. Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself,*

otherwise I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, since I cannot redeem it.” Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; another; and this was the way of confirmation in Israel. So the redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” And he removed his sandal.

2) This fellow’s tone changed dramatically when Boaz adds Ruth to the mix; he goes from “oh yeah, bring it on” to “I’m out dude, can’t do it, won’t do it.”

F.) Commentators have various opinions on this man's response; a common one is he was selfish and greedy

1) He would take the land to add wealth, but he didn’t want to take on responsibility for Ruth and any children she bore; he didn’t want to share what was his with a child who wouldn’t even bear his name

2) He denied his legal and moral responsibility as an Israelite; he would redeem only if it were convenient and beneficial to him

3) A problematic mindset among humans (and, unfortunately, in the church) is “I’ll do what’s good and right only so long as it doesn’t take too much time, effort, or stretch me financially

4) Listen folks, Jesus could’ve avoided the cross, the torture, the separation from God, the hostility of opponents...but he gave it all, even his very life to reconcile us to God... To secure our eternity in him.

5) Christians throughout history have poured out their lives in service as an offering to God without regard for the consequences

6) Let us not ever say “I’ll give to God, his people, and the lost” so long as it isn’t costly

7) When God asked David to turn a threshing floor into an altar, the owner Araunah offered it up free. But David proclaimed in **2 Samuel 24:24** – **READ SLIDE 4.**

8) Romans 12:1 tell us to offer ourselves a living sacrifice – to put our trust in a God who gives us what we need to do his will, and who helps us persevere and give even when we feel we have nothing left to give

G.) Another view is that the man had a legitimate concern about a wife and children he already had; by taking on another wife and future children, it would complicate distribution of his assets

1) Perhaps he wanted to protect the inheritance of his existing children, or he simply didn't feel capable of caring for an expanded family

2) In either case, the consensus among commentators seems to be that in comparison, with Boaz, this other Redeemer was not a model of godly virtue, he wasn't willing to step up and fulfill his responsibility

H.) Boaz steps up in **verses 9-10** - *Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon.*

Furthermore, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be eliminated from his brothers or from the court of his birthplace; you are witnesses today."

I.) What we see here is a redeemer who is able and very willing; Boaz did not hesitate to embrace Ruth and Naomi as his own...for the land and the wealth it would bring? Of course not. Because he loved them

J.) Boaz proclaims publicly – I have bought all that Ruth and Naomi have, and they belong to me to provide for and to even raise up children for Elimelech

- 1) In Boaz's announcement, we see Christ on the cross; in crushing pain and fighting for each breath as he approaches death, he gives his all to purchase us – **SLIDE 5.VIDEO**
- 2) "It is finished...I have purchased you with my body and blood...I have redeemed your sin debt, and all that you are belongs to me
- 3) I will cover you in my spirit and **present you blameless** before the Father... this is a very important point here folks
- 4) Boaz delivered Naomi from the consequences of Elimelech's decision-making that led her into poverty...she was too weak to stand on her own
- 5) One day, each of us is going to have to stand before the judgment seat of God...our works will be weighed...we're too weak and spiritually impoverished to stand our own...we can't meet the perfect standard of God's justice
- 6) At that point, we need a redeemer...one whose works meet God's perfect standard...one who has purchased us and covers us
 - a) One who allows us to stand in God's holy presence because he has rescued us from spiritual poverty and made us rich in his own righteousness
- 7) Only Christ does this for us...only Christ can redeem and reconcile us with the Father
 - a) Not ourselves, no other religious system, philosophy of self-help program...try standing before our Holy Creator in any covering other than Jesus, and you are lost eternally

III) Conclusion

- A.) We see in the remaining verses 11–22, the Lord completes his work for Naomi; through Ruth and Boaz, she is reached, reconciled, redeemed, and now restored to peace and security

B.) Notice the astounding blessings the people speak over Naomi and Ruth

4:11-17 - *And all the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the descendants whom the LORD will give you by this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he had relations with her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you ^[l]and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Then Naomi took the child and ^[m]laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

- 1) Remember, Ruth is a former pagan Moabite... yet, look how warmly and completely Boaz, the people of Israel, and most importantly the Lord have embraced her...there is no memory of her past
- 2) In fact, their affection for her is so high, the people pay her a huge compliment...they say she is better than seven sons
 - a) That is giant! In ancient farming societies, sons were highly valued because they were workers and heirs to the father's name and property
 - b) The depth of her loyalty to Naomi, her hard work, and her humble obedience have elevated her from poor widow to high favor among God's people
 - c) Further, the people pray that Ruth will be like Rachel and Leah...they gave birth to the 12 heads of the 12 Tribes of Israel

d) And, they ask they be given a son who will have a celebrated place in the future of Judah...when we look in the genealogy presented in verses 18-22, we see Boaz's and Ruth's first child becomes a forefather of King David and the King of Kings Jesus Christ

C.) Naomi, fuller than ever before... God has shown his amazing power to heal; to bring people back from the depths of despair and put them in a place of hope and joy...

1) we need only cling to God's hand as Ruth clung to Naomi's hand and followed her to blessing and peace

D.) SLIDE 6 – Lessons Learned

E.) SLIDE 7.VIDEO – James Drane, a chemist who was stricken with MS and chemical poisoning, was blind and confined to a wheel chair

F.) He can do the same for you

1) Are you sick, the Lord can lift you up

2) Are you depressed, the Lord can lift you up

3) Are you struggling with sin, the Lord can lift you up

4) Are you outside the family of God, the Lord will embrace you and lift you up