

## Hope In Hard Times

### Ruth

Danny Gokey tells the story behind his song, “Tell Your Heart To Beat Again.” A pastor in Ohio had a heart surgeon in his church. The pastor had always wanted to see a heart surgery and got the opportunity through this surgeon. The surgery took place and the woman’s heart was repaired. Finally, they needed to restart her heart, but it wouldn’t start beating. The surgeon got down on his knees and whispered, “Mrs. Johnson, this is your doctor. We have fixed your heart—we have repaired it. There’s nothing wrong with your heart. Mrs. Johnson, if you can hear me, I need you to tell your heart to beat again,” and her heart began to beat.

Sometimes we allow the voice of the enemy to whisper louder than the voice of our Father. God is in the heart business. He mends broken hearts and helps them beat again, but we have to be intentional and want restoration. Ruth is one of the greatest love stories, not just in the Bible, but in history. Movies, novels, and books have been written about this beautiful story, but there would have been no love story had it not been for Ruth's loyalty. The whole story begins with and is built around the loyalty of a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law. The book is filled with the pain of loss, death, second marriages, widow life, loneliness, and hopelessness. I love how the Bible speaks to our lives practically and speaks to our souls deeply.

The story of Ruth begins with a famine. Elimelech takes his family from Bethlehem to Moab. The word Bethlehem means “*the house of bread.*” This was a place of blessing and divine supply. God sent a famine because the people had sinned. The famine stripped them of all means to sustain life. Everybody was running for their lives. Instead of running to God, the people ran from God. Anyone who runs to the world for answers, strength, or for supply will be terribly disappointed. Elimelech ran to Moab. From the days of Lot, Moab had been known as a wicked place. They arrived in Moab thinking they would be there a short time, but they were there for 10 years. Elimelech was strong enough to get his family out of Bethlehem, but he died in Moab. There is nothing in Moab to sustain them. Ten years is a long time to be away from God’s favor.

The book of Ruth has a happy ending, but it didn’t start happily:

- It began with a funeral, but it ends with a wedding.
- It began with a famine, but it ends with feast.
- It began with weeping, but in this fourth and final chapter, joy has come.

The entire account of Ruth is only eighty-five verses, and it is about ordinary people living ordinary lives who, for the most part, face ordinary problems. The story begins with three funerals, and it ends with a marriage and the birth of a baby. That’s a great comeback story. The baby to be born was no ordinary baby. The story takes us from the agony of defeat to the thrill of victory.

Ruth is for people who wonder where God is when one tragedy after another pounds their faith. It is for people who wonder whether a life of integrity in tough times is worth it, and it is a story for people who can't imagine that anything great could ever come of their ordinary lives. The story takes unexpected twists and turns that fire the imagination and soothe the soul. If you've ever felt like your world is falling apart and the pressure is just too much to bear, and you wonder, “God, where are You?” or if you’ve ever felt like your circumstances will never improve or that things will ever change, this story is for you! The story begins with a woman whose world fell apart, and she slipped into bitterness. But we're going to watch as God turns her bitterness and her brokenness into a powerful story of redemption.

This story is for any of you who started out full but came back empty. You find yourself confused and bitter at life, or maybe even bitter at God. This is a story for people for whom God doesn't make sense. She was in the middle of a famine and did not realize how blessed she was. Sometimes you just don’t know that you are blessed. You may be walking in the middle of God’s blessing and covering and not know it. You were going through a famine. You find out later that the thing you were worried about was not as significant as the thing that you have.

Sometimes you can have something and not appreciate it until you lose it. After she lost her husband and children, the famine seemed insignificant. Sometimes you are upset about things that don't matter. We should count our blessings and thank God for all He has done in our lives. It seemed that everything was destroyed in her life. Here was a wealthy family that fled their home like vagrants to Moab. They left their home and heritage. They left their family and friends. Orpah walks away. There are people who can walk away from you.

*“In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.”* Ruth 1:1-5

Moab was about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. It was listed among the forbidden traveling sites for the Israelites. It was a pagan land, whose inhabitants worshipped the false god Chemosh, sacrificing their babies to it. God had levied some of His harshest words against the Moabites. Israel was to have nothing to do with them. Deuteronomy 23:3 offers this blunt warning: *“No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation.”*

It seemed natural and comfortable to go to Moab, but it was wrong. In scripture it is presented as an unpleasant place. Psalm 60:8 says, *“Moab is my washbasin.”* It matters what direction your life is headed. Take a moment and ask yourself, “Is the trajectory of your life pointed toward the things of God or toward the things of this world? Is your heart, does your mind drift toward the things that are eternal and God-honoring?”

God couldn't have been clearer. His people were to have nothing to do with the Moabites. Don't live among them, don't marry them, don't follow their gods, and don't invite them to worship with you. At this moment in the story, it appears Boaz has decided to ignore these plain warnings. It's amazing that he would allow Ruth to drink water alongside his male workers. That's shocking in itself, but now he welcomes Ruth to his table. This story teaches us something important about God's heart. He welcomes anyone who comes to Him with sincere faith.

### **1. God Will Bring You Back from Brokenness And Bitterness.**

Maybe you can relate to this in your life. You dreamed of a life full of relational blessings, and instead, you find yourself with relational brokenness and you're wondering, “Where are You, God? How did we end up here?”

You prayed for a life full of meaning and impact, yet you find yourself with a life full of pain and loss. You wonder, “Where are you, God? I put my trust in You. I did what You were calling me to do.”

You think, “I tried really hard. I did my Bible reading plan. I went to church, I was baptized, I gave offerings. I tried to be a good person, and this is what I got?”

God removed bitterness, confusion, and anger from Naomi, and He will do the same for us. God will take our brokenness, unanswered questions, and our pain and redeem them by the power of Jesus.

*“Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.’ Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, ‘We will go back with you to your people.’”* Ruth 1:8-10

There is no way three widows with no children and no relatives, in a time of famine, could hope to survive for very long. In that culture, that was a completely impossible situation. There were no assistance programs. Naomi, this precious mother-in-law proves to be as much a mother as a mother-in-law in what she tells them.

Orpah takes her up on the offer and returns back home, but Ruth digs in her heels. She says to her mother-in-law words that have become so famous they are used in weddings and put on necklaces and rings. They are one of the greatest statements and definitions of loyalty ever written.

- Be Loyal In Spite Of Your Losses.

The entire rest of this story hinges on what Ruth said next, *“But Ruth replied, ‘Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.’ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.”* Ruth 1:16-18

A lot of the loneliness in our world is due to a lack of loyalty. People don’t know who they can trust. It surfaces in our conversations as we gossip about other people. Other people’s reputations are held so cheaply. Loyalty has become the latest victim of the “me generation.” Breakups, divorces, conflicts, and divisions are all the results of our loss of loyalty in the church and in our culture. Disloyalty is the original act of Satan. He wanted to be like God, and he took a third of the angels with him in his rebellion. Orpah decided to stay and, in tears, said her goodbyes. But Ruth felt such devotion to her mother-in-law she refused to leave, one of the most endearing parts of this story.

Ruth’s love was developed and demonstrated by her loyalty. She stayed with her mother-in-law when she didn’t have to. She did not waver in her faith in the one true God, even through her losses. She didn’t walk away when she had a reason to. She was reliable, and she was dependable. Loyalty is the missing ingredient in greatness today.

Ruth was a gift to Naomi, but she was too depressed to let herself feel any comfort. She had no hope of anything good in her future. Everything from Naomi in Chapter 1 reveals just how sunken was her heart. As she enters Bethlehem, the women in town see this haggard woman.

*“So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, can this be Naomi?”* Ruth 1:19

This wasn’t said in a positive way. She looked horrible. She looks like her life has fallen apart.

*“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”* Ruth 1:20-21

Naomi says, *“Don’t call me Naomi.”* The name Naomi means “sweet, pleasant, and beautiful.” But such a name mocked her now. The way you view God matters, and how you address Him matters. The Hebrew name for God that’s translated as Almighty is El Shaddai. El Shaddai in the Hebrew means, “God is always ample.” No matter what I’m going through, God is always adequate. God is always enough. God is exactly what you need when you need Him.

What you call Him reflects how well you know Him. Once you know Him and have experienced Him and His goodness, and have seen His sovereignty working, and have been forgiven by His grace and transformed by His power, you will suddenly call Him things like Savior and Redeemer, my Rock and my Shield, my God, my Comforter, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, my Righteousness, my Friend. He’s always with me. He never leaves me. He never forsakes me.

Chapter 1 ends in despair and gloom. Convinced that God is against her, Naomi exaggerated her hopelessness so much that she couldn’t even see the rays of hope peeking through the clouds. It was God who broke the famine (Ruth 1:6) and God who bound Ruth to her (Ruth 1:16-18). And as we shall soon see, a new day of rejoicing was about to come! There is a second chapter to the story. The first chapter of her life might have been painful and bitter, but the second chapter is about to be light and blessed. *“Weeping may endure for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning!”* Psalm 30:5

“So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law.” Ruth 1:22

## 2. Nothing Ever Just Happens.

“Arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.” Ruth 1:22

God was orchestrating the events of Naomi and Ruth’s lives. They were not the victims of random chance, luck or fate. God was in charge, and He had a plan!

- Realize God Has A Plan.

“Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, ‘Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.’ Naomi said to her, ‘Go ahead, my daughter.’ So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.” Ruth 2:1-3

The great lesson of Ruth is that God is at work in every circumstance. His invisible hand steers us according to His good purposes, whether we see it or not. Ruth and Naomi had gone through some terrible times, but every difficulty, every question, uncertainty and brokenness, became God's way of doing something better than could have happened otherwise.

- Rest In The Mighty Hand Of God.

“Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, ‘The LORD be with you!’ ‘The LORD bless you!’ they answered. Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, ‘Who does that young woman belong to?’” Ruth 2:4-5

When Boaz asks, “Who does that young woman belong to?” he wants to know who she is and what family she comes from. Every picture of Ruth ever painted portrays her as an attractive young woman. When J. Vernon McGee wrote about Ruth, he pointed out that nowhere in the story do we get a physical description of her. No emphasis is put on outward appearance. We don’t know her height or her hair color or anything about her eyes or any other part of her body. The Bible emphasizes her character qualities, not her looks. Boaz was attracted by the kind of woman she was, not by her physical appearance.

- Rest In God’s Protection.

Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.” Ruth 2:11-12

Boaz had heard of her kindness to Naomi. No doubt the whole village knew about her. Notice how he puts it: “You left your parents. You left your native land. You came to a people you didn’t know.” He uses a beautiful image to describe the deeper implication of her decision: She has committed herself to “the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

Having left Moabite idolatry, Ruth now trusts in the God of Israel. She is “under His wings,” which is the safest place she could be. Knowing her desperate need, God arranges things so that under His wings she will find both food and family. Ruth was an outsider. The text twice mentions Ruth’s Moabite background. She is a stranger, an immigrant, and in a sense, a kind of refugee. Why should Boaz pay attention to her?

- Rely On God’s Provision.

*Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Don't go and gather grain in another field, and don't leave this one. Stay here with the women who work for me. See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."* Ruth 2:8-9

He instructs her to drink from the jars the young men have filled. That's amazing. As a woman, her job might be to fill those jars for the men. Instead, Boaz says, "Go ahead and have a drink from the same jar the men are using." Bethlehem was a tiny village where everyone knew everyone, which meant they knew she was from a different nation. The Moabite language was different enough that every time she opened her mouth, people asked, "Where are you from?" Those who have been transplanted from one culture to another can understand her difficulty.

*"At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, 'Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?'"* Ruth 2:10

Ruth twice mentions the word "favor" in this passage. It means "to be gracious" or "to show unexpected kindness." The fact that Boaz even noticed her was a gift of grace she didn't deserve. After all, she is a foreigner. Every day, in a thousand ways, she was reminded that she didn't come from Bethlehem. She was an outsider and an outcast who deserved nothing at all. Why should a man like Boaz pay attention to her? Not only does he find Ruth. Not only does he welcome her. Not only does he protect her. He goes a step further:

*Boaz said to her, "Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar." When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over."* Ruth 2:15

The point of this story is that God welcomes anyone who comes to Him with sincere faith. In that culture, a woman would prepare and serve the meal to the men. If she was not related to them, she would wait to eat until they were finished. But here we have a foreigner—a widow!—who, instead of serving, is being served and is eating with the men at their table.

She wanted to be a part of the family of God, but she understands that in order to be a part of the family of God, someone is going to have to extend grace to her. The law excludes Ruth.

- **Respond To God's Goodness.**

*"She said, 'Oh sir, such grace, such kindness - I don't deserve it. You've touched my heart, treated me like one of your own. And I don't even belong here!'"* Ruth 2:13

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty, you might be rich."* 2 Corinthians 8:9

*"At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.' When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, 'Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her.'"* Ruth 2:14-16

This is what grace looks like up close and personal. Boaz does something Ruth never asked for and never even imagined. He tells his workers to throw down "*handfuls on purpose*." That phrase from the King James Version offers a perfect picture of grace. Boaz intends to do more than meet the need. He wants to make sure Ruth has all the food she can carry home.

*"So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah (30-40 pounds). She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough."* Ruth 2:17-18

Ruth had come to dwell under the wings of God, but she experienced protection by gleaning in the field of Boaz. God's kindness to her came through the heart of a Godly man who respected who she was and what she had done. In ancient Israel, most men would never show such kindness to a Moabite widow. But Boaz had a heart that saw beyond racial differences and reached out in grace to one who did not expect anything and had no claim on him. Boaz is an admirable man, and we ought to imitate his kindness in the way we treat others.

All of us are just like Ruth. We're homeless and hopeless, desperate and hungry, and we have nowhere to turn. We're an outsider to God's grace. We have no claim on the Lord. If God does what is just, He will condemn us because we have sinned.

Just as Boaz provided what Ruth needed but did not deserve, even so the Lord Jesus comes to us and opens the door of heaven. He came for sinners who had no hope of forgiveness. He came for the ungodly who hated Him. He died for His enemies so He could make them His friends. We are all sinners. We are condemned. Just as Ruth could do nothing but accept the kindness of Boaz, the only thing we can do with grace is receive it. We can't pay for it, which means either we come to God with empty hands or we don't come at all.

*"Ruth ate all she wanted and had plenty left over to take home to Naomi."* That's how grace works. We never run out of grace, because God never runs out of grace. Grace comes to us like the barley came to Ruth. She had all she could eat, with plenty to share, and more on the way.

Iain Campbell puts it this way: "The fields of Boaz are full to overflowing, while the fields of Moab offered nothing but loneliness and heartache and grief. Jesus is the greater Boaz. Whatever we need, we find in Christ who is the greater Boaz. Like Ruth, we had no claim on Him, no reason to hope, but in the cross of Christ we find the favor of God poured out on sinners like us. Jesus is a Savior who died for you. Come to Him. He is the water of life and the bread of heaven. Come, eat and drink, and be made full. Jesus' blood is more than enough for every needy person. Come to Christ, and you will find rest and peace and hope and forgiveness and all the things you want but can't find on your own."

*"The LORD bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers."* Ruth 2:20

### **3. God Will Redeem Your Story.**

The word "redemption" is the key word in Ruth chapter 4. It is used 23 times in the book and 15 times in chapter 4 alone.

*"Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat down there just as the guardian-redeemer he had mentioned came along. Boaz said, 'Come over here, my friend, and sit down.' So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, 'Sit here,' and they did so. Then he said to the guardian-redeemer, 'Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our relative Elimelek. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people.'" Ruth 4:1-3*

- The Beauty Of Redeeming Love

Boaz wants to marry her, but there is one small complication. They discover there is a closer relative. So, Boaz finds out who this person is and goes to the city gate to wait for him.

*"If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line." "I will redeem it," he said. Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."* Ruth 4:4-5

- The Blessing Of A Renewed Life

*“(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.) So the guardian-redeemer said to Boaz, “Buy it yourself.” And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!” Then the elders and all the people at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”* Ruth 4:7-12

In the Old Testament, shoes and feet symbolized power, possession, and domination. Verse 7 explains the sandal ceremony and how this was a way of symbolizing the transfer of property from one party to another. When Moses removed his shoes at the burning bush, he was acknowledging God’s lordship (Exodus 3:5). When David walked barefoot before the Lord when the Ark of the Covenant had been lost to others, he showed his powerlessness and humiliation (2 Samuel 15:30). So when the kinsman redeemer took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz in Ruth 4, he was symbolizing the transfer of privilege to redeem the land from one relative to another.

In Ruth 4:9, Boaz announces to the elders and witnesses that he is willing to redeem Naomi’s land and all the property of Mahlon and Kilion. In doing so, he says that he will also redeem Mahlon’s widow Ruth and he explains why – *“to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from the town records.”*

We see the contrast between Boaz and the other kinsman. The other kinsman redeemer didn’t want to redeem the land because it wasn’t favorable for him, whereas Boaz is willing to not only pay the cost of the land, the cost of obtaining a wife and a mother-in-law, and then likely give up the land to a future heir, but he also has the right motives. Boaz’s focus is not on himself, but others. He wants to help restore the family line of Naomi and Elimelech so that their family doesn’t disappear from the records. This is an incredible and exemplary display of lovingkindness.

Ruth had three major problems, and without Christ, we share these same problems:

- Her Past Was Cursed.

She was born a Moabite. She was an alien from the people of Israel. She lived under a curse. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, who had a child through an incestuous relationship with his daughter, and the curse was upon them. According to the law, the law could not admit Ruth.

*“No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation.”* Deuteronomy 23:3

*“Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* Ephesians 2:12-13

- Her Present Was Crushed.

Ruth was a stranger to the things of God. Her life was marked by tragedy and sorrow.

- Her future was condemned.

Her future, without God, was hopeless.

*“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household.”* Ephesians 2:19

*“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21

When she was redeemed by Boaz:

Ruth received a family. When we are saved, we become a part of the family of God.

Ruth received a fortune. No longer is Ruth gleaning the fields. She owns the field. She shares in the wealth of Boaz. As Christians, we are joint heirs with Jesus.

*“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”* Romans 8:17

Joint heir means to “share and share alike.” Everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to us.

*“But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.”* Psalm 37:11

Ruth received fame. The name of Ruth is spoken with reverence. If we know Jesus, we are part of royalty, married into the family of God.

Ruth received fruitfulness. The word “Ephrathah” means “fruitful.”

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”* John 15:16

After Boaz’s declaration of his willingness to redeem Naomi’s family, the elders pronounced three blessings on Boaz:

Ruth 4:11 They ask God to make Ruth like Rachel and Leah, whose children made up the twelve tribes of Israel.

Ruth 4:11 They ask God to give Boaz standing in Ephrathah and fame in Bethlehem.

Ruth 4:12 They ask God to give Boaz a family through his offspring like that of Perez whose descendants made up the prominent tribe of Judah.

All of these are answers to previous prayers in the book of Ruth:

Ruth 1:19 – (Naomi prayed) May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband.

Ruth 2:12 – (Boaz prayed) May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by The Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Ruth 2:20 – (Naomi regarding Boaz) “The Lord bless him!.....He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.”

Ruth 3:10 – (Boaz to Naomi) “The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.”

Ruth 4:11-12 – The elders’ blessings

Ruth 4:14 – The blessing of the women

- The Breakthrough To A Royal Legacy

*“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son... Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’”* Ruth 4:13-17

They named him Obed. We get this really sweet picture of Naomi holding Obed and saying, “God is alive! He’s let me hold my grandson! God has redeemed me and my family and given us back our inheritance. He turned my bitterness back into sweetness.”

*“Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.” Ruth 4:17*

Jesse has 8 sons, and one day God speaks to the prophet Samuel and says, “I am about to begin a brand new era that is going to have ramifications for thousands of years. Go find me a king.” God instructs Samuel to go to the house of Jesse, the son of Obed, grandson of Naomi, mother-in-law of Ruth the Moabite. God says to Jesse through Samuel, “I have chosen one of your sons to be king.” Jesse brings 7 out. Samuel says, “Do you have any more sons? I know I am at the right house.” And Jesse says, “The youngest. He is out in the fields, but he’s no king.” Samuel says, “I will not sit down until you bring him in.” And onto the pages of history walks David.

Years go by and another prophet, Nathan, comes to King David and says, 2 Samuel 7:16, *“Your house and kingdom will endure forever. And your throne will be established forever.”*

For generations the Israelites waited. They knew if there was going to be a Messiah, it would be from David. And so David has a son who has a son who has a son and about 28 pregnancies later—or to use the Biblical term, “28 begots later”—we have Jesus. Jesus, the son of David, the son of Ruth, who was born in Bethlehem, the city of Naomi.

The book of Ruth starts with death—Naomi losing her husband and sons—and ends with a genealogy recounting a list of births.

For the world, life starts with birth and ends in death. For the Christian, we realize we are born in death, but God ends our story in life. Naomi goes from barrenness to blessedness. She starts the book as a forsaken, son-less, husband-less beggar, and she ends as grandmother of the Son of God. This is the theme of Ruth, and the theme of the Bible. It is the heart of the gospel and God’s message to you.

The gospel is not, “God rewards the successful” or “God grants heaven to the righteous and the victorious!” The gospel is, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, without money and without price.”

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.” Isaiah 55:1–2*

We were created to be children of God, to be constantly in His presence and to have a blessed eternity in heaven that was joy upon joy and blessing upon blessing, but we sold it away through sin.

God sees us like Boaz saw Ruth. He loved us just as we were. It wasn’t even that God loved some future version of us that He could see in the future. He loves us now, even in our sin and defilement. Those who have been redeemed become redeemers of others.

Our God is faithful. He is gracious. His love is a covenant love that will never end. God cares about the less fortunate. He cares for the sparrows and the lilies of the field, and you are much more valuable in His eyes. He cares for you, and He is always at work behind the scenes working things together for the greatest good.

Through the story of Ruth, we see that God uses the faithfulness of ordinary people to do great things. We learn the power that one life can have. The genealogy at the end of the story shows the greater significance of the characters’ decisions and actions and ties them together with God’s sovereign, providential care. The lovingkindness shown by Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz has repercussions, not just for themselves in their lifetime, but for the nation of Israel and the world as a whole. Ruth’s decision to commit her life to Naomi, and to God, bears results that she could not have possibly imagined!