

The Generosity of Boaz Ruth 2:17-23

Isaiah 11

Deuteronomy 10:8-22

Psalms 86:1-10

This morning we are going to be in the last half of Ruth chapter 2. Last week in the first half we talked about God's sovereignty and his watch over Naomi and Ruth as they traveled from Moab back to Bethlehem. We see plenty examples in this story of people making their decisions, living their lives and God orchestrating his will and purpose for them. There is no chaos, there is no coincidence, in God. In fact we discussed this last week in Sunday school a bit as well, as to whether God's plan of salvation was established before, or after the fall of Adam. I personally take a rather large view of God's sovereignty, that is as we look in scripture, as we read these stories, just as we live our own lives God's hand is in it all, and he is working through it all. Elimelech's death, the death of Naomi's 2 sons, was not just some sad random thing that happened, it triggered a chain of events bringing about decisions and actions which lead to God blessing both Naomi and Ruth.

We humans can be very short sighted at times, for we only see what is right before us. We can speculate about tomorrow, or next week, or next month, or even the next year but we don't know what is going to happen, how life may change, nor what God has in store for us. As we read last week, Naomi was in mourning, when greeted back at the city gates in Bethlehem after having been gone for around 10 years, she said.. call me Mara, the bitter one, because God has dealt harshly with me. She didn't understand what God was doing in her life, she didn't see the blueprint for his purpose. Now this isn't to take away the pain of loss, for grief is real, it is painful, and in our shortsightedness can be at times all we focus on when we are in the thick of it. But we are not like the unbelievers, for though loss and pain are a part of this life, we also know that nothing is random, and that all things have a purpose in God's working in our lives and those around us.

And though Naomi couldn't know what God had planned in her life, couldn't know what the end outcome of her loss, and return to Bethlehem could be, she remained faithful, and she recognized God's sovereign hand upon her life. That there was nothing she could have done differently to change the outcome, but to trust God for rest knowing there is a purpose, and trusting God for provision knowing that she had lost it all. This is why stories such as this exist in the bible, at it's core it is pointing to God's provision, God's grace and his mercy. After the fall, death and loss has become an inevitable part of this life, it is a part of the corruption and sin of this world and as Jody pointed out last week, it is a grace given to us by God, for in death, we who are his children will find true peace, and true rest from the sin that so heavily weighs upon us, for to be absent from this body, is to be in his very presence.

So now, we find Ruth caring for her aged mother-in-law, in a foreign land living among a people who would likely reject her, yet as we have seen so far in our journey through this story the opposite has been true, as the people of Israel have accepted her, greeted her, and in the case of Boaz has offered her privileges and advantages that are unmerited, and unprecedented. I doubt that she went to the field to glean with the expectation that she would find favor in the eyes of the owner of the field, I doubt that she expected that she would share a meal with him and his laborers, nor that she would be allowed to harvest directly from the field and not just pick up the left overs. Yet that is exactly what

happened, a gentile outsider received a mercy and grace from the owner of the field which was unexpected and unmerited.

Has God done similar in your life? Provided against the odds, given when it seemed hopeless? Everyone of us who claims Christ this morning should be able to answer yes to those questions, for he gave of himself in a true act of grace and mercy to us who were undeserving, so that we may know him, so that we may believe, and that we may be reconciled. This was something else we talked about last week in Sunday School, the expectation of God's redemption, the world has been corrupted in sin, all things have been changed, all things have been touched, the relationship between God and man, the relationship between man and animals, and the relationship between one another, all have been changed and corrupted by sin. As we read this morning in Isaiah, we see a picture of Christ's appearance, this Rod from the stem of Jesse, who will redeem the world, who will reconcile his creation. Who will make the wolf to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard to lie down with the young goat. Peace as was first created shall be reestablished in Christ the redeemer of the world.

God's mercy, his grace, his provision is unmerited and outside of ourselves. We have not done anything to deserve or earn it but he gives it freely of his own will. We like Ruth, are cursed ones, outsiders, worthy of wrath, for sin and rebellion defines us, has corrupted us, has control over us. Ruth had no choice in her lineage, she was born a Moabite, to Moabite parents, enemies of Israel, cursed of God, outsiders, and unwelcome to join in the inheritance. This was, simply who she was, who she was born to be, but God in his mercy, changed her status, from an accursed gentile Moabite, to an Israelite through marriage. Her legal standing changed, her spiritual standing changed, It was no longer about who she was before, but about who she became. Again that is a picture of us in the new birth, outsiders, cursed of God, sinners, unbelievers, not worthy of the promises to heirs, and children of the most high God. Through Ruth was born kings, the king of Israel, and the King of Kings.

Any who would believe that the old testament saints were justified before God by the law, by the traditions and not by faith, have not read the book of Hebrews, nor have they read the book of Ruth for the redemption of this Gentile is by faith and faith alone. She did not make the choices that were the best for her own life, but in faith chose to care for Naomi, laying down her own life, her own possibility for peace and happiness in her own country, surrounded by her own kin, she chose to be a sojourner, a stranger, and a beggar. This is a testament to her love for Naomi, this is a testament of her character, of loyalty, integrity, and trustworthiness. Not shying away from trouble, nor hardship but believing in the provision of Naomi's God, the God of Israel, the God of creation. As she told Naomi in chapter 1, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge, and your people will be my people. And your God my God.

Which brings us to you passages today, continuing this story of redemption we find Ruth and Naomi back in Bethlehem, and Ruth has gone out to glean of the barley harvest and found herself in Boaz's field, and she had been given unmerited access to the harvest, and unmerited access to dine with the owner of the field, who provided all she needed and more. Not only in the meal, but in the harvest ordering his workers to allow her to harvest more than what is required by the Mosaic Law. Boaz went above and beyond for this gentile woman, something I am sure would have stood out to his workers. Let us go ahead now and read, our passage starting in verse 14, to the end of the chapter. We see recorded in verse 17 the generosity of Boaz as it says she had harvest about an ephah of barley. That would be about 30 pounds or so, much higher than the standard amount for a day's worth of picking up

scraps. This was not what would have been expected, but what it shows is the unmerited grace of Boaz, as a picture of God's unmerited grace toward us. Ruth was given not only what she needed, but more-so, a meal enough for herself, and extra, and she harvest enough for herself, and extra. God's mercy and grace toward us is overflowing.

He provides an abundance beyond our needs, his grace doesn't just take away some of our sins, he covers it all with even more to spare. We see in Boaz here, an upright, just man who treats those who work for him with respect and honor. He stands as an example of Christian hospitality, giving of himself, and doing so generously, even including Ruth, who was not a paid laborer, but who was there to glean the left overs and what is dropped by the workers. Our hospitality, our generosity is to mirror that of what God has done for us. As Jesus taught, in the book of Matthew, (5:38) "You have heard that it was said, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" But I tell you do not resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." God has changed the economy to exchanges in mankind, we have talked about this before that we as humans operate in an economy of exchanges...we pay, we get, we do something, we receive. But in God's economy we did not pay for our sins, he did, we did not do anything to merit his grace, yet we received.

And this is how he says that his followers should likewise act, knowing, and believing that all things come from God, even in loss, he has provided what we had loss, will he not also provide again? Naomi lost her son's, and as we will see in the upcoming chapters, God gives her a grandson, Ruth lost a husband, and God gives her a husband. Job lost everything, and God gave back 2 fold, Boaz gave generously of his harvest, breaking bread with his workers, and with this gentile woman. Christ gave of himself, and gained salvation for his people. Such generosity opens doors for the gospel, opens doors to the hearts and minds of people. Sure there are those who seek to take advantage, but God says, they want your tunic, give them your cloak. He has destroyed the core structure of mankind's interactions, no longer is it about self preservation, or self appointment and improvement, but it is now in Christ, focused outward. In the context of Jesus teaching here, of going the extra mile, the Jew's who heard this teaching would understand for they were under Roman occupation and under that Roman rule a soldier could legally demand a Jewish person to carry their gear for them, God said, don't just do what is commanded, go beyond that, carry it two miles. Doing this voluntarily turns an act of submission into a voluntary act of grace, showing a proactive generous service rather than a reluctant obedience.

God's economy is different than mankind's, ours has been corrupted in the fall, where his is pure and righteous. As his children, as believers we are to operate in his economy, seeking the benefit of others, seeking to glorify Christ, giving every opportunity for grace, for mercy, and for the gospel as we live as living examples of what we claim to believe. As we have been recipients of God's grace, we are to likewise show grace to others, that is the point that Jesus is teaching in that passage we read a bit of in Matthew. It is a recognition of God's grace and provision toward us, as we seek to reflect that to the world around us. Unmerited, grace and generosity stands out against the selfish ambitions of mankind, and living as such we proclaim the unmerited grace that we have been given. After Ruth returned to Bethlehem, with the 30 pounds of barley, and some of the left over bread she was given for at the meal Boaz offered her, she reports to Naomi about the generosity of Boaz. Naomi in turn blesses Boaz, recognizing God sovereign grace and provision toward them through him, she says, in verse 20 "Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead. " The Lord

had provided for Boaz through the famine, as Elimelech took his family and went to Moab, it would appear that Boaz stayed and now, 10 years since has been quite successful, and is himself generous with what God has given him. And in God's providence, guided Ruth to that specific field.

Ruth did as she was told, she continued to harvest in Boaz field, she stayed close to the young women that worked for him and did so until the end of the barley harvest which is about 2 months. God continued to provide for Ruth and Naomi throughout that time, in fact Boaz' invitation to remain in his field was to remain through all of his harvests. Shortly after the barley harvest was the wheat harvest, so for a pretty decent amount of time they would not have to worry about food as God had provided through Boaz' generosity. Naomi instructed Ruth it would be best to stay near the women who were working the field, due to the possible dangers of working with the men out in the fields. Ruth listened to Naomi, as we see in verse 23, "She stayed close to the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest, and wheat harvest, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

As we have been working our way through this story over the past few weeks, we see this strand of God's protection, and provision as Ruth and Naomi are figuring out life without their husbands. Safely journeying for a week to arrive back at Bethlehem, food provided in abundance through the generosity of Boaz, a close relative who Ruth happened to go to his field to glean, and now protection in those fields as Boaz commanded his young men to leave her alone, and as she worked in the field with the other women. We don't know how God is working in our own lives, through circumstances both good and bad. That is why we have accounts such as these I think, to give us a sense of a larger picture, to broaden our scope of understanding and to find hope and peace as we are to rest in God's provision and protection. But as we know, it doesn't end here, God doesn't just leave Ruth a widow, he doesn't just leave Naomi without an offspring to carry on the family line of her husband. Naomi recognizes that Boaz is a close relative, in the levirate law, the brother of a deceased husband was to marry the widow, to care for and provide.

This was a safe guard put into place for again as I said before, there was not much opportunity for women outside of marriage in those days. Without a husband, without that provision they would find themselves homeless, and begging, or living with other relatives. Now Boaz wasn't Elimelech's brother, but he was a close relation and Naomi saw an opportunity for Ruth judging by the generosity he had shown her. Which is what we are going to be getting into over the next week or so as we get into chapter 3.