

Always and Forever Love

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[0 : 0 0] morning. It's my joy to be with you all again and bring God's Word to you. If you've been with us over the last several weeks, you know that we are in the book of Ruth. And we're in Ruth chapter 2, kind of at the middle point. We're going to be starting at verse 14 this morning.

Now as we start, if you live in Colorado Springs, I'd imagine that like me, you see a lot of cyclists on the road. And they're usually doing one of two things. They're either going up or they're going down. Because that's most of the options. In fact, that's not just cyclists. That's most of us here here in Colorado Springs. We're either going up something or down it. And I'm not saying completely there. There are some flat places. But if you're a hiker, you're probably not hiking flat.

You're going up. You get to see a beautiful view. And then you go down. And I've been telling you for the last several weeks that Ruth is a book about suffering. And I've told you that it's a book about suffering because it's a book about widows and because it's a book about those who live in a country where they weren't born. But that is just one half of the story. I've been holding back on you a little bit. That has just been the uphill climb. It's not just a book about suffering.

It's also a book about redemption. And it's a book about redemption because it's about God caring and sustaining people who are in the midst of suffering. And so for the last several weeks, we've been doing the very hard work of hiking uphill on a steep grade. We've had to talk about very serious suffering week after week after week. And I'm here to tell you that we are now at the glorious view that we've been waiting for. We've made it to the lookout. And if you're a cyclist and you make it to the very top, you know that the steeper the climb is, the more frightening and fast the descent. That sometimes you have to hold on to your handlebars and make sure to see if you can actually make it down without wrecking. At least if you're an inexperienced cyclist like me.

Grant doesn't do that. He takes his hands off the wheels when he's going downhill. And so we've done this uphill climb all the way up of seeing this intense suffering through chapter one and part of chapter two. And now we're going to get to see the payoff. We're going to get to see not just the Ruth and Naomi of chapter one, but the Ruth and Naomi of chapters two and three and four.

[2 : 3 5] And as one of my friends puts it, when we're in chapter one in our lives, we have to remember the rest of the book. We have to remember chapters two and three and four. If you've been with us, then you're familiar with the story. You know that at the beginning we met a woman named Naomi. Naomi lived in the country of Israel, the land of Israel. And there was a problem. There was a famine. So Naomi and her husband, the Limelech, and their two sons moved from the land of Israel to the land of Moab.

Now the land of Moab was not God's promised land. It was not filled with God's people. And so they left God's people for a land where there was worship of other gods, the worship of Baal and Chemosh. But they left there because there was a famine. While they were there, both their sons were married to two women, Ruth and Orpah. And after 10 years without any children, all the men die.

Elimelech dies as well as his two sons. And so Naomi and her two daughters-in-law are left to return from the land of Israel, or excuse me, from the land of Moab to the land of Israel because they hear at that very time God has finally visited his people with food. On the way back, Orpah and Ruth are both going with Naomi, but Naomi urges them as strongly as she can not to stay with her. So Orpah chooses to return, but Ruth, making an incredible vow in chapter 1 verses 16 and 17, says that she will stay with Naomi no matter what. When they return, Naomi is filled with her own grief and bitterness. And despite all the ways that God has been caring for her and sustaining her, she accuses God of making her empty when she had been full. And in all of this, more than suffering and redemption, we have seen God's love. Remember I told you about the Hebrew word *hesed*, which roughly translated by the Jesus Storybook Bible means God's never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

And so what we've seen up to this point could be broken into two things. God's *hesed* towards us, God's unbreaking, unstoping love towards us. We see that love towards Ruth and Naomi as he provides food in their homeland for them. We see it to Naomi specifically as he provides Ruth. We see it as they come to the land of Israel right at the time of harvest, at the exact time when they need to come to be able to eat.

But we don't just see God's steadfast love to his people, we also see his people's steadfast love to each other. We saw Ruth's commitment to Naomi. We saw that faith commits to those who suffer even when there's nothing to gain.

[5 : 23] And we saw Ruth's continued commitment at the beginning of chapter 2. Remember last week, we asked a question, how do we sustain the life of faith? How do we keep up our love towards other people?

And we saw that it just so happened that Ruth came to the right field at the right time. We saw that the way that we sustain our faith is that God sustains us.

That when God's people go on God's mission, he is the one who motivates and sustains. We've been focusing heavily on Ruth, and even with last week's reading, I didn't point out many things about Boaz.

But now we're going to be turning from Ruth to Boaz. And we're going to ask the question, what does it mean to go on God's mission? If God supports his people when they go on his mission, then what is that mission?

We've seen part of it with Ruth, we've seen her commitment to Naomi who was suffering. And now we're going to continue with this character called Boaz. Now, I'm confident that some of you are disappointed at this point in the series on Ruth.

[6 : 33] Because I have not addressed an incredibly important topic. And it's this. What are the 12 ways to find your Boaz? You can laugh. It's a joke.

We are unfortunately not going to be discovering 12 ways to find your Boaz. But we are going to look at Boaz as part of our answer for this question. What does it mean to go on God's mission?

If it's true that what we learned last week, if it's true that God's people have God's support when they go on God's mission, what is that mission? So we are in Ruth chapter 2.

We're picking up at verse 14. Remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold. Even the finest gold.

And that it is sweeter than honey. Even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so we're going to turn to it now. We're in Ruth chapter 2, starting at verse 14.

[7 : 36] Verse 16.

Verse 16.

Verse 17.

Verse 22. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.

So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law. And she would behold. Please pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

[9 : 37] Dear Father in heaven, we thank you that you have given us the gift of your word and that it is for our good and your glory. We ask that you would help us because when we open your word, we are trying to do something that is impossible without you, which is to hear you speak.

And so we ask that you would speak to us today, that you would open up our ears so that we can hear. You'd open our eyes so that we can see, that you would soften our hearts, that we would be willing to hear and believe everything that is written in your word.

We ask this in the name of your son. Amen. Remember, we're asking the question of what does it mean to go on God's mission?

And we're focusing on the character of Boaz. We saw a little bit from Boaz last week. If you remember in verses 8 and 9, he showed this incredible generosity to Ruth as she was gleaning.

He says to her in verse 8, Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. He gives her special status as a gleaner and has her keep close to his personal staff so that she can have the first pick of the gleanings.

[10 : 55] And then in verse 9, Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.

And so he doesn't just give her special access to the gleanings, but he gives her special protection as well. And he gives her a special water source. That instead of being a woman who draws water for men, men are going to draw water for her.

This same generosity continues even more. If that were not enough, it grows in this section that we just read. In verse 14, he invites her to the company lunch table. And so she's not left for what she may have brought on her own.

And not just that, she gets to take a doggy bag home with her. Did you notice that? They pass her the roasted grain in verse 14, and she ate until she was satisfied and since she had some left over.

And then you'll notice later on, she gives that to her mother-in-law. So verse 18, she also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. And so Ruth is not just gleaning an excessive amount.

[12 : 05] She also gets a free lunch for her and Naomi, who isn't even there. So Boaz's generosity here is overflowing. In fact, he gives her even greater access in verse 16 and 15.

It says, let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her. Remember that the practice of gleaning was one where someone would follow after the reapers during the harvest, and what was dropped, they would be able to pick up.

They were essentially the cleaning crew. But here he's saying, she doesn't have to just be the cleanup crew behind the reapers. She can come after the sheaves have been stacked. She can have a second go through, something that none of the other gleaners would be given access to.

And they're even going to pull out extra for her. So it's not just going to be what's been accidentally dropped, it's going to be what's purposefully dropped. And so if Boaz's generosity seemed large last week, it's even more this week.

It's even greater. It's almost too much to believe. And so that's why Naomi has the response that she does. So what does it mean to go on God's mission?

[13 : 20] We saw several weeks ago with Ruth that she had nothing to give but her commitment. And so that's what she gave. She committed to Naomi no matter what, even though she had nothing to gain from it.

But now Boaz models to us incredible generosity. Boaz models incredible generosity, and it's not just generosity to anyone.

Remember I pointed out last week that Ruth had a new name. In chapter one, she was just Ruth, but all throughout chapter two, she is Ruth the Moabite.

Because now that she's in a new land, she is a foreigner. And she's a foreigner with all the liabilities that come along with it. And so Boaz, he's not showing generosity to his daughter.

He's not showing generosity to his neighbor. Boaz is showing generosity to one of the most vulnerable women in all of Israel. She's vulnerable because she has a widow.

[14 : 30] She doesn't have a husband to care for her. Her father-in-law has died. Her brother-in-law has died. There is no man to stand up for her. And on top of that, she is a foreigner.

There are certain things she probably doesn't understand, certain things she doesn't get. This is all what we talked about last week. And Boaz, of all the people he could show generosity to, he shows generosity to her.

So my question for us this morning is this. Who is gleaning from us? Who is gleaning from you?

What type of person is gleaning? Who, because of your, whether it's your power or your wealth or your ability or your status, how are those things helping those who are the most vulnerable and the most marginalized?

Because what Boaz is showing us is that God's mission, it's so big that it's not just the commitment that Ruth models, but it's the generosity that he models.

[15 : 47] And it's not just any generosity, but generosity to remember our New Testament reading this morning from James. True religion is what? To care for orphans and widows in their distress.

And so we get to continue to turn the diamond of Ruth and see all the different aspects of God and his love towards us and our love for others. Now I'll give some caveats here.

She's gleaning, right? This is not a handout. But Boaz has provided her with work in his fields. You know, I found out a few weeks ago I continue to find out things about you all, things about our congregation, and it brings me joy when I do.

I found out a few weeks ago that people in this congregation have made jobs for each other when they needed it. People who own businesses and establishments created opportunities for work for people who are like Ruth, who are vulnerable, who are on the margins.

It's the reason why we have a diaconate here as a church. Because we want there to be gleaning from us. We're not just here for our own sake, for our own edification.

[17 : 02] We're here as part of God's mission. And that's not all of God's mission, but it's a large part of it, that God wants us to care for the widow and the orphan, for the foreigner, in generous, in shocking ways.

And so God wants us to ask, not how much do I have to give, how much am I able to give? Not what's the lowest amount that I can give, but what's the greatest?

What's the greatest amount that I can give to help those in need? Because the gospel, it's for us to use our resources to lift other people up, rather than to push them down.

And we live in a world where we're told that as we are given resources and ability and power, we're able to use it to push ourselves up. We've had a lot of scandals in our society this last year from people who took their power, and they used it to push other people down, rather than to lift them up, in all kinds of ways.

You see what Naomi says in verse 20? Naomi has her first positive word in the whole book of Ruth. And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

[18 : 27] Remember, it's that word kindness that we translate as God's never stopping, his never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love. And so Naomi, for the first time, through Boaz's generosity, is able to praise God.

And for the first time, she's able to finally see a glimmer of hope. That what we've been seeing all along, Naomi finally sees that God has been at work in the dark, and God has been at work behind the scenes for her.

And so would our generosity have the same result that people would be able to say like Naomi, may he be blessed by the Lord. What kind of Lord? The Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living and the dead.

And his kindness that forsakes not the living nor the dead in practical ways through God's people. We'll see this more next week, but God ministers through his people to his people.

He ministers through his people to his people. And so Boaz here is the instrument of God's redemption. Then we find out in verse 20, the man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.

[19 : 40] What does it mean to be a redeemer? Well, if you remember the Old Testament story, you know that God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.

And he tells them in Leviticus chapter 25 that because he delivered them from slavery, he never wanted them to be slaves again. And so if there was ever an Israelite who was in trouble, if they had to sell their property, if they had to sell themselves into slavery because they were destitute, that there should be a relative, a redeemer, who would come and pay the price.

That redeemer would buy back the land. They would buy back their relative from slavery. And so that God, because of his great redemption of his people by bringing them out of Egypt, wanted his people to act as lesser redeemers, redeeming each other out of slavery, that he had redeemed them out of slavery and he wanted them to stay that way.

And so a redeemer was simply someone who paid the price for another person's freedom. Someone who paid the price for another person's freedom. You might think of some examples today just to help us understand redemption might be if your car is impounded, you are going to have to redeem that car from slavery.

You have to pay the price. If someone gives a piece of property to a pawn shop because they need the money, that has to be redeemed.

[21 : 11] Someone has to pay the price to bring it out of the slavery of the pawn shop. And so we see here that Boaz doesn't just fulfill the office of a redeemer, he overflows it.

We find out in verse 20 that he's a redeemer, but in a sense we already knew that. We already knew that just by his actions. He was willing to sacrifice his own resources to buy people out of slavery to help Ruth and Naomi.

Now we could end the sermon here. I could say, Boaz models generosity for us, so go and be generous.

And some of you would be able to do that for a little bit, and you might become incredibly proud in all the ways you've been able to be generous.

And some of you would go out here and you wouldn't be able to do it, and you'd be crushed because you wouldn't be able to meet this great expectation, this thing that God is telling us about generosity to people who are on the margins.

[22 : 20] So what do we do with that? Why was Boaz, of all the men in Israel, why was Boaz the one that showed generosity to Ruth and Naomi?

Do you think he just happened to be a worthy man, as we found out in chapter 2, verse 1? Why was it Boaz and not someone else? Do you know who Boaz's mom was?

Boaz's mom was Rahab. Rahab, if you remember from the story of Israel, was a prostitute, and she was a pagan.

And she lived in the city of Jericho. She was someone who was vulnerable and destitute. She was a foreigner.

And when the spies came in to look into the promised land, they met Rahab in the city of Jericho. They made a deal with her. They said, if you'll betray the city of Jericho and leave it behind, you can come and be a foreigner who joins God's people.

[23 : 41] And so Rahab is a scandalous prostitute in a pagan city who comes and joins God's people.

Who does that sound like? Ruth's not a scandalous woman, but she is a foreigner. She has come to join God's people.

So Boaz is not just some rich man, but he's a rich man. If there's any man in all of Israel who's going to know anything, something about what it's like to be a foreign and helpless woman among God's people, it's probably Boaz.

I don't know for sure, but I would imagine as Boaz grew up, his mother must have told him something about her past and her history. Hopefully she shared some of her struggles joining God's people with her past in a different nation, a foreigner.

And Boaz himself carries her blood. And so this isn't just a rich man showing generosity. This is a foreigner helping a foreigner.

[25 : 02] And this is a man who knows from his mother that God is a God with a heart for the foreigner who welcomes foreigners into his people.

He knows that this is a God of never stopping, never giving up, unending, unbreaking, always and forever love. And so because Boaz knows he's a foreigner who's been brought in, I would imagine this is why he of all the men in Israel is the one who shows this incredible generosity.

And so how do we avoid being proud because we can show generosity or broken because we can't?

what motivates us to show God's never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love? we have to understand when we understand that we are foreigners that have been brought in to God's family.

And we are foreigners that have been brought with a price. Imagine that not many of us here today are Jews, we're not part of some of us perhaps, but most of us not.

[26 : 33] we're not part of God's original people, we're not part of the nation of Israel. And yet part of God's plan was to bring us in as well. Not only that, but we're people who have been redeemed and bought with a price.

It cost God something. It's not just that we're foreigners who've been brought into a family. We got to see a beautiful picture of that today with Doug. But what's true of Doug is true of all of us who have joined this church.

That we were not originally part of God's family, but that he's brought us in. And so when we understand that we are foreigners that God has redeemed, then we can show the kind of generosity that Boaz shows here, not with pride, not with being crushed, but because we know what it's like.

And out of thankfulness joy and joy and gratitude for what God has done for us. There's one man who describes the gospel this way, that it's one beggar asking another beggar for bread.

We can think of our generosity in this way, it's one foreigner giving another foreigner what they need. Because we've all been brought in to God's family.

[27 : 56] We all have, in a sense, Rahab as our mother. father. And so we can show mercy to Ruth. I'll close with this, we sang about this just a little bit ago, and we sang grant, O Lord.

Grant, O Lord, that we may hear your people be a witness to your faithfulness, faithfulness that we've known and seen. Skip down to the third verse. Grant, O Lord, that we may ever faithful be to you whose gift to us is life, and in whose service we are free.

It's when we understand that we are free in the service of God, and that his gift to us is life, that we can be faithful to him. It's when we understand that we are foreigners, that Jesus, in Hebrews 2, we find out he calls us his brothers.

In Romans 6, we find out that we're free from the slavery of sin. And so we can go on God's mission of generosity, because he has brought us in as foreigners and his family.

Please pray with me. Dear Father in heaven, we thank you for your great provision in Christ, that he as your first born son was willing to bring us in, that you adopted us, even though we were foreigners from you.

[29 : 27] You tell us in Romans that it's while we were still sinners that Christ died for us, not when we were part of the family, but that because he died, he brought us in. We ask that you would move in our hearts that we would not become proud or crushed, but we would be confident in your love for us, humble in your grace, and motivated by that towards generosity towards each other, because you have been generous towards us.

We ask all these things in the name of your son. Amen. Amen. Please pray with you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.