

The Kindness of God

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Preacher: Oscar Chow

[0 : 0 0] Ruth chapter 2. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimenak, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth, the Moabite, said to Naomi, Let me go to the field and glean among the eaves of grain, after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

And she said to her, Go, my daughter. So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimenak.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and he said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered, The Lord bless you. Then Boaz said to his young man, who was in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this? And the servant, who was in charge of the reapers, answered, She is a young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She said, Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest. Then Boaz said to Ruth, Now listen, my daughter.

Do not go to glean in another field, or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them.

[1 : 2 4] Have I charged the young man not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessel and drink what the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?

But Boaz answered her, All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Then she said, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.

And at mealtime, Boaz said to her, Come here and eat some bread, and dip your morsel in the wine. So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain.

And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young man, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

[2 : 3 9] And also pull out some from the bundles for her, and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her. 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 took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. And she also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, Where did you glean today, and where have you worked?

Beside, oh, sorry, blessed be the man who took notice of you. So she took her mother-in-law, she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. Naomi said to her, The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.

And Ruth the Moabite said, Besides, he said to me, You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, Least in another field you be assaulted.

[3 : 52] So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest. And she lived with her mother-in-law. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks so much, Margot. Good morning. My name is Oscar. If you don't know me, hi, Christine. Good morning. I'm very excited today.

Again, I have the privilege of delivering God's word. Lord, please join me in praying as we consider God's word today. Father, we humbly come before you, all of us here in this room.

And we ask that, Spirit, you speak to us through your word. Your word is incredibly powerful. It's alive and active and cuts through our hearts.

I pray, God, as we dive into your word today, help me to speak clearly, articulate your words and your message, and help all of us here, God, as we listen, not just with our ears, but with our hearts.

[4 : 56] May we be impacted by the words on this page, this chapter 2. May we be impacted, Lord, and see your wonderful kindness that you desire to bestow upon us if we run to you.

So we give this time to you in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Have you ever experienced a random act of kindness from a stranger?

Maybe not here in Hong Kong, this ruthless sometimes and challenging city. From a close friend or a family member? Sure, of course.

They love us, right? But when we do receive a random act of kindness from a stranger, it really does lift your heart, doesn't it? In this world with so much anger and war, it really does almost restore your faith in humanity.

And how often do we actually recognize God's kindness to us? For both the big and the small.

[6 : 02] For both our daily bread and also for the cross. For both our daily bread and also for the cross. I think that if we truly understood the kindness of God to us, in spite of who we are, in spite of our brokenness, in spite of what we've done, I think it would change our lives.

In spite of our daily bread and the Lord with us, in spite of our daily bread and the Lord with us, in spite of our daily bread and the Lord with us.

In spite of being a foreigner and in spite of being a widow, a stranger in that land, Boaz went out of his way to shower kindness on Ruth. Ruth, it's a picture of God's heart for us.

Last week, just a quick recap. If you weren't here, we have started this sermon series on Ruth. And last week we did chapter one. And we learned that Ruth was set in a time of the judges.

Where Israel had no king. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Crime and lawlessness was rampant in Israel. And as a result, God's judgment fell on Israel.

[7 : 23] And God caused a famine in that land. And with that background, we met Elimelech and his wife Naomi, their two sons, Malon and Chilion.

And Elimelech decides to take his family out of Bethlehem, their hometown, to a foreign land, a neighboring land called Moab, to try to find food. But Moab was a place of paganism.

And Moab was an enemy of Israel. It was a hostile place. And there in Moab, tragedy strikes. We don't know why or how, but suddenly Elimelech dies.

And then Naomi's two sons, they marry a foreign Moabite woman, two locals. But after 10 years, Naomi's sons both die as well. So Naomi loses everything.

But God provided a glimmer of hope. God brought food back to Bethlehem. And God brought Ruth to Naomi. And in Ruth chapter 1, verse 16, we read that wonderful statement of commitment, faithfulness, and loyalty.

[8 : 39] As Ruth says to Naomi, don't urge me to leave you. Where you go, I will go. And where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people. And your God, my God.

And where you die, there will I be buried. And so Naomi, along with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, this most unlikely of pairing, this unlikely couple, they journeyed to Bethlehem in search of food.

And it just so happened that they arrived in Bethlehem in the early spring, just at the right time. And so today, as we dive into this chapter, chapter 2, we will see how God displayed, we'll see how Ruth's great faith led her into the dangerous field.

And we'll see that God led her right into the hands of this kind and godly man, Boaz, who showered her with great favor and kindness. And so we'll look at chapter 2 in four parts.

Providential kindness, tangible kindness, finding refuge, and a hint of more. Don't tell Kevin. He tells you that every good sermon should have three parts. But, you know, he's not here, so we're going to have four today.

[9 : 52] Okay? Four parts today. All right? Let's try to stick with me. So chapter 2 starts off with an introduction to Boaz. We learn that he is a worthy man, a relative of Naomi's deceased husband, Elimelech.

Naomi, meanwhile, she's returned to Bethlehem with Ruth by her side. And one day, Ruth decides to go glean in the fields because, well, she and Naomi had no food.

They were hungry. They needed to eat. Now, in God's law, God instructed farmers not to farm to the edge of the field. Leave that aside.

And also, if grain fell to the ground during harvesting, not to pick up those grains. Leave them there. Those were for people that could not care for themselves, that did not own land.

Those were for the poor, the foreigners in Israel. Those were for widows and orphans. And in this way, God showed his kindness towards people because God's heart is always to show kindness to people through his people.

[11 : 06] But this was a time in Israel where everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Crime was rampant in Israel. And as a Moabite foreigner and as a woman and a widow, Ruth was a prime target for abuse in those fields.

And so, it was dangerous for her to go into the fields. And in her own words, she needed to find favor from a landowner. Or, in other words, she needed protection from a sponsor in order to safely glean.

And in verse 3, I think it will be up there. Amazingly, we read that she, Ruth, happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. I love this phrase that she happened to come to Boaz's field as if it was just totally random chance.

That of all the fields she could have stumbled upon in Bethlehem or outside Bethlehem, she happened to stumble upon Boaz's fields. And exactly at the time when Boaz returned from the city.

[12 : 16] What are the odds? As we walk through Ruth chapter 2 and throughout this book, we'll see that there isn't even one instance of God speaking or causing things to happen in a very tangible or obvious way.

God didn't speak audibly to Naomi, to Ruth, or to Boaz like he did in other parts of the Old Testament, to Abraham or to Moses. There weren't any obvious miracles or a burning bush.

And yet, God was very much still at work, guiding the steps of Ruth. Of all the bodily fields outside Bethlehem, God led Ruth right to Boaz's field at the exact time that he showed up.

Now, of course, Ruth wasn't passive. As we discussed last week, Ruth is someone with incredible faith. And her faith led her to action, to go into the fields in spite of the risks and danger, to honor the promise that she made to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

But Ruth was never alone. God was there, directing her steps, guiding her way, and leading her right to Boaz. Proverbs 16, 9.

[13 : 35] I love this verse. In many ways, it's a verse that I live by. The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. It is wonderful when God does speak to us in a clear, audible voice, through a word of knowledge or through a dream or a vision.

And he does do that. But oftentimes, God doesn't speak to us that clearly. And yet, his spirit is at work in the ordinary day-to-day parts of life, directing our steps, guiding our words, opening doors, and closing doors.

Our challenge, perhaps, is that maybe we don't really believe that God cares about the small day-to-day things. Big things, yes.

When a family member is very sick or we lose our job, we'll ask for prayer. But in the small things, in the day-to-day, we don't think God really has time for that.

He's too busy doing other things. That is not true at all. In Ruth, we see that God in his kindness cares about even the mundane small things of life.

[14 : 49] And like Ruth, our role is to press on, to be faithful, to trust God, to love like Ruth loved Naomi, which oftentimes means taking action.

Because real faith always leads to action. But the beautiful part is that even when we step out in faith and honor God and love people, we're never alone.

Our God is always there, behind the scenes, intervening on our behalf. If we stop and reflect, we will see his providential kindness to us.

And sometimes God brings people into our lives to show us his kindness. For Naomi, that was Ruth. And for Ruth, that person was Boaz.

Going back to verse 1 of this chapter. Now, Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

[15 : 53] So he's a relative of Naomi's deceased husband from the same clan. In Israel, there were 12 tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob.

And then below that, there were the clans. And below that were the families. So Elimelech and Boaz were from the same clan. And verse 1 tells us that he is a worthy man or a man of standing.

He was a landowner, so Boaz was a wealthy man. But if you look at the Hebrew translation of a worthy man, it's not just that he was wealthy. He also was a man who had character and integrity.

He was a man that loved and feared God. And it was through Boaz that God showed remarkable kindness to Ruth. In verse 5, Boaz notices her in the barley fields.

And when he realizes who she is, this Moabite widow and the daughter-in-law of Naomi, he showers her with kindness. And we see that in three main ways.

[17 : 01] First, as we discussed, Ruth needed protection. He protects Ruth. As we discussed, Ruth needed someone to protect her as she gathered food for herself and Naomi.

And Boaz offered that protection, not just for one day, but for the entire harvest season. And second, Boaz accepted Ruth.

Boaz didn't just tell Ruth, hey, come and glean in my fields. My people will take care of you. And I'm going to take a hike and go play golf. You're on your own. No.

He takes one step further. He invites Ruth to the midday meal. Maybe you invite people into your home. When you invite someone to dine with you at your table, you project a sense of belonging and acceptance and inclusion.

I would imagine Boaz would often dine with other landowners, people perhaps of the same class as him. Or maybe with customers he would want to sell his grain to.

[18 : 06] But he invites Ruth, a Moabite foreign widow, into his home, into his table to dine with him. And third, abundant sustenance, which is just a fancy way of saying he gave her a lot more food.

As we just saw at the midday meal, Ruth ate at the boss's table. Verse 14 tells us that she ate all she wanted and had some left over.

But then, on top of that, after the meal in verses 15 and 16, Boaz tells his men to pull some stalks of barley from the bundles and leave them on the ground for Ruth to pick up.

It doesn't just allow Ruth to glean in the sort of traditional sense according to the letter of the law. Boaz works behind the scenes to give her abundantly more than she expected.

And at the end of that first day, in verse 17, we read that Ruth gleaned about an ephah of barley, which is roughly 10 to 15 times more than one person's portion for one day.

[19 : 18] And God didn't just bless Ruth for one day. Through Boaz's favor and protection, she was able to safely glean for an entire season. For both the barley and the wheat harvest, which was about seven weeks.

And therefore, at the end of that time, she had about eight months worth of food. What favor and blessing. What undeserved favor and blessing.

And this is a picture of God's heart for us. God's desire is to protect us. His desire is to welcome and accept us into his family.

And his desire is to abundantly sustain us. To give us more than we deserve or even desire. God does provide for our material needs.

He gives us our daily bread. He knows what we need even before we ask him. Matthew 6, 8. The challenge, I think, for us, perhaps, is that in our consumption-driven culture, we want more.

[20 : 28] Or we only think of God's blessing as something material, like money or a job or even a relationship. Or maybe we think we're entitled to something material because of all the hard work or effort we've put in.

But God has given us so much more than just material things. He's given us his Bible, his word, which speaks to the very inner workings of our heart.

God has given us his Holy Spirit, which even in times of tragedy and loss, we can still experience joy and peace. He's given us this wonderful, beautiful church community, a picture of heaven, you guys all are.

And most beautifully, above all, of course, God the Father has given us his only son, Jesus, where one day we can experience his eternal kindness in heaven.

And as followers of Jesus, as we receive his kindness for us, God calls us to also be agents of his kindness to our circles of influence.

[21 : 40] Just like God showed kindness to people through the landowners, just how God showed kindness to Naomi through Ruth, how he showed kindness to Ruth through Boaz.

God calls us as well to show kindness as we've received it to our neighbors, our colleagues, our friends, our family members, and to strangers, to all people.

Now going back to Ruth, let's now look at verse 10. I love this response of Ruth here. Ruth, in response to the favor she receives, asks Boaz, Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I'm a foreigner?

Was it because Boaz was attracted to Ruth? He had some ulterior motive. He wanted to win her over, so to speak. Well, I don't think so.

Nowhere in the entire book of Ruth does it say explicitly that Ruth was outwardly beautiful or attractive. It's true. But make no mistake, the Bible is quite liberal with its compliments of a person's attractiveness.

[22 : 55] Right? Esther, Sarah, Rebecca. They're pretty, they're pretty, let's not go there. Oh, men as well. Daniel, he was a stud, right?

David was ruggedly handsome. Many other men as well. But not Ruth. In fact, if you're Boaz, a God-fearing man who followed the Jewish law, you were told from a young age to marry an Israelite woman, not a Moabite widow.

So why did Ruth find favor in the eyes of Boaz? It was because Ruth sought refuge in the God of Israel.

Because Ruth sought refuge in the God of Israel. Boaz tells her in verses 11 and 12, As Ruth was, as she gleaned in Boaz's field, full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

As Ruth was, as she gleaned in Boaz's field, she thought that she was coming under the protection of Boaz. She was actually coming under the protection of God, under the wings of God.

[24 : 27] The image of taking shelter under wings is sort of like picture a hen in the midst of a storm or in danger. A hen opens up her wings and grabs her chicks and puts them under her wings to protect them.

For Ruth, after losing her husband and with no son, she had no one to protect her. She could have stayed in Moab and perhaps had a comfortable life, but by faith she believed that Naomi's God, the God of Israel, the true God, would be her protector.

She believed God would be her refuge in her storm. But there were conditions to this protection. She had to stay in Boaz's field.

She had to remain close to Boaz's harvesters in order to stay safe for an entire season. It was a lawless time in Israel. In another landowner's field, Ruth would be in grave danger.

And look at Ruth's response to Boaz's favor. She bows low to the ground in verse 10, showing such deep humility and also great appreciation for this unmerited and undeserved favor.

[25 : 45] She knows she hasn't earned it. She doesn't feel entitled to it. Ruth, she says in verse 13, Ruth knows her place.

I'm just a foreigner. I'm a nobody. I actually bring nothing to this table. I'm a widow. Someone unworthy of even being called a servant girl.

Someone who's broken and in desperate need of unmerited favor and grace. And like Ruth, in front of the sovereign God, we're just like that.

There is nothing that we can offer God that he needs. And yet, God invites us to eat with him at his table, to come into his family.

He desires that in the midst of our brokenness and pain, in the midst of all that we've done in our life that we are not proud of. God beckons us to take refuge under his wings.

[26 : 56] So let's be like Ruth. In difficult times, in tragic times, run to God and take refuge under his wings. He desires to protect you and shower you with his favor. Stay close to God.

Stay close to God's people. Stay close to God's heart. How? Now, of course, stay in community, but get in God's word. Pray unceasingly.

Repent. Give up that which you are prioritizing more than God. And if you are not a follower yet of Jesus this morning, know this.

God invites you to take refuge in him today. To do that, you don't have to fix yourself. You simply need to admit that, like Ruth, you're broken, and you need Jesus.

For it is through Jesus and him alone that we experience this kindness and favor of God. We experience it through looking at his life, looking at his words, and, of course, most importantly, through his death and resurrection on the cross.

[28 : 06] For when we take refuge in the God of the Bible, he showers us with his kindness. And finally, a hint of more.

And for Ruth, there was more to God's kindness than just barley and wheat. In verse 18, Ruth returns to Naomi. You can imagine Naomi sitting there all day, restless, wondering how did Ruth make out in those fields.

Did she find any success? She then sees Ruth coming to the door with this massive bounty of barley, and her jaw just drops. Wow, what happened?

That's an amazing amount of grain. Naomi immediately asks Ruth, where she's been, and in whose field did she find favor and find work? And Ruth tells her, I worked in Boaz's field today.

Naomi was shocked. Look at her response. The combination of a blessing on Boaz and praise to the Lord God for his kindness. See, think back.

[29 : 16] In chapter 1, Naomi, in her darkest moments, after the death of her beloved husband and her sons, she's full of despair.

She says, don't call me Naomi anymore. Don't call me Naomi, which means pleasant. Call me Mara, which means bitter. For the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.

But now, after seeing how Boaz has blessed Ruth, she acknowledges this gracious, providential hand of God upon both of them.

And she says, in verse 20, may he, Boaz, be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

It's a beautiful turnaround for Naomi from bitterness and despair to blessing and praise. But there's more.

[30 : 13] It's not just that Boaz is a good guy who will protect Ruth and provide food for a season. there was a hint of something more in Boaz.

Reading on in verse 20, Naomi says, this man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers. The glimmer of hope has turned into a hint of something more.

Quick background on this redeemer concept. It comes from the Jewish law in Leviticus 25. There are some verses up on the screen. Let me summarize it if I can.

Under the law, certain close relatives could help their family members in their time of need, but at great personal cost to the redeemer.

Two examples of this would be, number one, if a relative fell into extreme poverty such that they would have to sell their land to repay a debt, a close relative, a redeemer, could buy back or redeem that land and hand it back to that relative.

[31 : 26] Or, if a relative fell into extreme poverty and had to sell themselves as a slave to perhaps repay a debt, that close, the redeemer could buy back their relative and restore them.

And so, the heart behind this kinsman redeemer was twofold. Number one, within God's people, if you fell on hard times, you could get back on your feet.

No financial loss, no personal shame was too ugly or too great to overcome. Anyone could be restored because God cares about the restoration of a person's name and honor.

And second, the redeemer had to be someone in your family, but it would come at great cost. This is a shadow of Jesus and the gospel.

Jesus said, it doesn't matter what you've done. You may be living with great personal shame at your past. Maybe you're still mired in some behavior that you really hate, some sin, but you just can't stop doing it.

[32 : 44] But no sin is too ugly or too great. All can be restored. All can be redeemed. But only because Jesus paid this price at great cost to himself.

And so if you put your love and trust in him and run to him daily as your refuge, he welcomes you into his family. Naomi recognized that Boaz was a relative of her dead husband, Elimelech, and therefore was one of her family's redeemers.

You can sense the excitement and anticipation from Naomi. Could it be? Could God be calling this kind and good man Boaz, our close relative, to restore our dignity, to give us back our honor, to somehow save us?

you see, God wasn't finished showing his favor and showering his favor on Ruth and Naomi. His kindness would extend past just food.

It would be past not just for food, it would be past that. And God isn't finished showering his favor on us either. Today, he calls us to find refuge in him, to submit more of our lives to him, to experience more of the deep peace and joy in knowing him, and for more of our hearts to understand the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of his great love.

[34 : 21] love. So in closing, at the beginning of chapter one, Naomi was totally empty. Everything she held dear, she lost.

But God brought her a glimmer of hope. He brought food back to Bethlehem and he brought Naomi to her. In chapter two, God continued showing his kindness to Naomi through Boaz's kindness to Ruth.

But it was only because Ruth stayed close to Boaz. And it was only because Ruth sought refuge under the wings of the God of Israel that she received such favor and kindness.

And so this week, as we head back out into the fields of Hong Kong, whatever comes your way, good or bad, stay close to Jesus. Find your refuge in him.

Get into his word. Be in community. Be praying always. Acknowledge that you don't deserve his grace and kindness.

[35 : 29] Yet, if you seek refuge in him, God desires to shower so much more kindness than you and I could ever imagine. And as we receive the kindness of God in our lives, let us be agents of that kindness to people around us.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this chapter of Ruth. Thank you for showing us this great picture, this beautiful illustration, the story of your kindness.

In spite of our brokenness, in spite of our many imperfections, in spite of the darkness which still resides in our hearts, you beckon us to come to you.

You accept us into your family and you love us so dearly. Help us, God, as we continue on in this service today and throughout this week, Lord, to remember, recognize your kindness, to be like Ruth who is not entitled, doesn't feel entitled to anything.

Help us to be like Ruth in humility, appreciating even the little things that you give us, God, our closest friends, our daily bread, a home above our heads, the air we breathe.

[36 : 57] Help us to be thankful always to you, Lord. And I pray, God, finally, that as we go out, help us to have the eyes to see people around us, to be your agents of kindness in the city that we live in, Lord.

Lord, thank you for your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.