

Ruth #3

November 26, 2023

**Series Title: Ruth: Painful Providence and Sovereign Grace**

**Today's Message: What's Love Look Like?; Ruth 2:1-23**

This may sound like a strange title. But it is a good question to ask at this juncture in our study of the book of Ruth. Why? Because Ruth chapter 2 provides for us as near a perfect answer. Obviously, the examples of Ruth and Boaz are not perfect, but these two people do well in acting out the intentions of their hearts.. Did you catch that? Ruth and Boaz are not perfect, but they do well in acting out the intentions of their hearts.

What is it that drives the actions of both Ruth and Boaz in this chapter? Is it love? Is it loyalty? Is it commitment to vows? Is it faithfulness? Or, is it mercy, or compassion, or kindness, or grace and favor? Can you choose just one? Or is it each of these woven together becoming something that is like-God? If you chose the last answer you chose wisely.

It may surprise you but we don't see each of these words mentioned in Ruth with just a few exceptions. But in the Hebrew all these words are bundled into one word; that word is the word *hesed*. And *hesed* is only used three times in the book of Ruth. We find it used specifically only three times in Ruth. We see it used in 1:8; 2:20; and 3:10. But we see it on display all through the book, and especially in Ruth 2, our study today.

So, what is *hesed*? *Hesed* is a word that describes some of the attributes of God, which teach us about His nature and character. *Hesed* has to do with the eternal nature of God's love and loyalty and faithfulness, His mercy, kindness, and compassion, grace and favor. One of truths concerning the word is that when the word *hesed* is used about God, it is always being directed toward His people. In the OT you will see that God's *hesed* is primarily directed toward the people of Israel, and on some occasions it is directed toward Gentiles, as in the case of Ruth, for example!

*Hesed* flows from the heart of God. It is never merely a thought. When God has thoughts of *hesed* toward people He always displays it, works it out, and even imposes it upon His people. We can connect the idea of God's *hesed* to the gospel. The gospel displays the *hesed* of God perfectly. Before creation God had chosen a people for Himself— mind you, a people not possessing a righteousness of their own. And in time God acted on His deep desire and demonstrated *hesed* in this: While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. So, when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and long before we ever had a warm thought toward God and His Christ, He moved and acted according to His eternal *hesed* and saved us, even when we were dead in those sins, and definitely undeserving of His mercy and grace!

In chapter 2 Ruth and Boaz, and to some extent Naomi give us a taste of the beauty of God's *hesed*. In this chapter we see *hesed* in OT splendor as each of these characters demonstrate the meaning of *hesed* by going above and beyond what is expected. And though God is the ultimate *hesed* giver in that His love and loyalty and faithfulness, His mercy, kindness, and compassion, grace and favor is unequalled, we not only get to enjoy the beauty of *hesed* on display, but we can learn from it and exercise *hesed* in our relationships, such as with our spouse, our children, our siblings and family, neighbors, co-workers and even people in our community and in the world!

So what does love look like in Ruth 2? We see the *hesed* of Ruth toward Naomi; the *hesed* of Boaz toward Ruth; and the benefit of *hesed* enjoyed by both Ruth and Naomi.

## I. (2:1-3) The *hesed* of Ruth toward Naomi

- A. (2:1) First of all, in 2:1 I think we are given a glimpse of the goodness (*hesed*) of God, which arches over this book!
  1. A tip telling us that God's invisible hand has been at work all along.
  2. A reminder that Naomi's future is looking good and redemption draws near.
  3. Boaz, a rich man, a man of standing, a mighty man in the law<sup>1</sup>, a man of strength, probably a chieftain and a relative of Elimelech lived in Bethlehem.
    - a) We have not yet been told that he is one of the kinsman redeemers in the family, but we are told that Boaz is on Naomi's side, relationally!
- B. (2:2-3) Ruth's desire turns to action
  1. Ruth's desire to come along side and love Naomi is first established in 1:16-18
  2. Ruth's position among Naomi's family is poor, but her desires are rich toward Naomi.
    - a) It is a test of her faith and perseverance because neither she, nor Naomi have any other way to live, except to publicly humble themselves to go glean in the fields with the poorest of the poor.
      - (1) And Ruth is willing and makes her willingness to serve known.
    - b) Gleaning in the fields was God's welfare system. God prescribed this as the means by which the poor could survive.
      - (1) Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22 are the Gleaning Laws in Israel.
  3. Ruth's *hesed* is shown toward Naomi as she, a no-body, goes out into the fields to glean among people that she does not know, and who do not know her.
    - a) She goes above and beyond that which was expected by stepping out of her comfort zone for Naomi's sake!
  4. See the Providence of God?!
    - a) "As it turns out, she found herself working in the field belonging to Boaz.
      - (1) She didn't know whose field it was, but God knew where her steps would take her.
  5. Application:
    - a) Ruth was courageous because her love for Naomi was willing to put herself at risk. That's *hesed*!
      - (1) But she had trusted God and was acting in that trust!
      - (2) George Mueller: "If our circumstances find us in God, we shall find God in our circumstances."
        - (a) God moved her where He wanted her!
          - (i) God will move you where He wants you as you trust in Him.
          - (ii) We can't see God's Providence until later!
      - (3) Though Providence may take us low, trust in Providence will move us forward in love, to the place of God's choosing.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Aramaic Targum Boaz was *mighty in the law*; in other words, a powerful man in Bethlehem.

## II. (2:4-16) The *hesed* of Boaz toward Ruth

### A. (4-7) Boaz learns of Ruth

1. We learn what kind of man Boaz by the kindly attitude toward others
  - a) Toward his own harvesters who work his fields
    - (1) A hearty greeting, "The Lord be with you!"
    - (a) Their response is telling: "The Lord bless you!"
2. He learns about Ruth
  - a) The Foreman describes her determination and diligence
    - (1) Though it was lawful without permission, she asked permission
      - (a) To glean and to gather.
    - (2) She had been working all day, with only a short rest.

### B. (8-9) Boaz speaks kindly to Ruth

1. Though she was a very poor foreigner and a Moabite woman Boaz went above what was expected (showed *hesed*), and spoke kindly to her.
  - a) He protected her:
    - (1) "Stay in my field, don't go away, and stay with my girls."
    - (2) And, Boaz assured her that his men would not touch her.
  - b) He provided for her
    - (1) He permitted her to drink water whenever she needed.
2. Like Ruth to Boaz, so it is with us to the Lord Jesus as we obey his word!
  - a) John 17:15: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."

### C. (2:10) Ruth expresses her gratitude to Boaz for his kindness

1. Humble gratitude for the unmerited favor exercised by Boaz.
  - a) A key in this is her recognition that he went above and beyond caring for her because she was a foreigner.
    - (1) He owed her nothing, but as we learned, *hesed* goes above and beyond what is expected. Just like God's grace toward us!
      - (a) Who are we? Sinners with no rightful claim upon the love of God, yet God demonstrates His love for us! (Rom. 5:8)

### D. (2:11-13) Boaz recognized her love for Naomi, her repentance in turning from her former way of life in Moab, and her turning to God.

1. Boaz blessed her as well
  - a) May the Lord repay and reward her expression of *hesed* toward Naomi and to the Lord, under whose wings she had come to take refuge!
2. Ruth's greatest desire was to continue to find favor in this great man's eyes!
  - a) And, just as we should be pleased to be the lowliest among the Lord's people, so was Ruth pleased to be lower than the servant girls of Boaz.
    - (1) "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (see 1 Peter 5:5-6)

### E. (2:14-16) Boaz lavished his grace and goodness (*hesed*) upon Ruth.

1. More than just talk about how pleased he was with her, he acted on his pleasure.
  - a) Come! He called her to come near to him.
    - (1) To a seat of honor (see Luke 14:7-11)
  - b) Dip your bread in the wine vinegar (share fully in the meal).
  - c) Boaz “offered/ served her some roasted grain.”
    - (1) This word “tsabat” means he fed her abundantly
      - (a) And she ate and was satisfied and had left overs
        - (i) (Matt. 15:37: feeding of 5,000)
2. Boaz went beyond the letter of the law and practiced the spirit of the law by allowing her to
  - a) Gather among the sheaves! The law only required the dropped grain.
  - b) And, he provided that stalks be purposefully left for her to pick up.
3. The Lord Himself is continually gracious to us. As Paul describes it, “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine...” (Eph.3:22)
  - a) He is always expressing His *hesed* toward us because He wants too!
    - (1) Do you see that? Do you thank Him for it?

### III. (2:17-23) The benefits of *hesed* enjoyed by both Ruth and Naomi

- A. (17-18) The end of the day
  1. She was blessed by God (Providence) and by Boaz and the workers
    - a) Yet, she still worked hard.
      - (1) God’s *hesed* doesn’t diminish the need for diligence and determination. Hard work is often the response to *hesed*.
    - b) Ruth brought home an abundance
      - (1) She had threshed all she had gleaned
        - (a) An *ephah* (about 30 pounds!)
        - (b) And, what was left over from the Boaz meal!
  2. Naomi discovers that all along Ruth had gleaned in the field of Boaz!
    - a) Ruth reported the abundant *hesed* shown by Boaz
      - (1) And that he invited her to return through the harvest!
    - b) Naomi expressed her gratitude to God the man who blessed Ruth.
      - (1) Even before she knew who he was (see 2:19)
      - (2) Then she thanked God for the above-and-beyond-abundance, which Boaz lavished on Ruth.
    - c) Hope arises as the Providence of God, the invisible hand at work:
      - (1) God led Ruth to the field of Boaz, a close relative
      - (2) God blessed them abundantly by the hand of Boaz, one of the kinsman-redeemers!
      - (3) Remain in the field of Boaz and commit to no other.
  3. Application: Just as the Lord dealt abundantly with Ruth in the field of Boaz, so has He dealt abundantly and graciously with you in His field. Stay in His field.

- a) It was God who led you to His abundant grace. No matter how hard the way may be, stay with Him. Don't stray to other fields. (See 2:22)