



Study 7: *Please let me glean* **Ruth 2:1-7**

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye. John Flavel

The truth is, there are no insignificant actions, no throwaway moments. And that is the great adventure of the Christian life. David Strain

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 2:1-7

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." ³ 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 Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you." ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab." ⁷ 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."

Prepare

Our story left off with Naomi and Ruth returning to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Seemingly out of nowhere the name of Boaz is mentioned - before anything else actually occurs!

The narrator uses the word "happened" which literally means "as happenstance that happened." This literal translation grabs our attention, inviting us to take notice. Naomi "happened" to hear of God's provision while in the fields of Moab, Ruth "happened" to glean in Boaz's fields, Boaz "happened" to stop by while Ruth is gleaning. Is this simply coincidence or the careful orchestration of a sovereign, loving and faithful God? Where is God's hand in this? David Atkinson states "one of the most important features of faith in God's providence is that it teaches us that even our accidents are within his care."

The daring decision of a foreign woman to glean in unfamiliar fields and the faithful query of a watchful landowner are seemingly innocuous. Yet they provide meaningful clues about the character and motivations of our two protagonists. Our narrator invites us to recognize the significance of the mundane actions of Ruth and Boaz. How might this inform our understanding of God's place in the mundane parts of our own lives?

Study

1. *Warm-up: What is a chore or task you do every day?*
2. Naomi and Ruth have just returned to Bethlehem and before our narrator continues with the plotline, he introduces a teaser - the mention of a man, seemingly out of nowhere.
 - a. What do we learn about Boaz in verse 1?
 - b. The word *worthy* has several possible translations including: a wealthy, influential person, a man of substance or a man of valor. As for clans, the hearers of this story would understand the importance of clans to the organization of Israelite society. Why might the narrator introduce Boaz here?
3. Ruth proposes a plan to Naomi - what is her plan and what is she hoping to find, according to verse 2?
 - a. How do you think Ruth knows that gleaning is something she can do to provide for Naomi and herself?
 - b. Hubbard helps us understand Ruth's plan to follow after the reapers: *"Ears of grain were ones already cut but accidentally dropped to the ground by reapers. In Bible times, the reaper grasped the stalk with his left hand and cut off the grain with a sickle in his right. When the armload of accumulated ears became unmanageable, he laid them in rows beside the standing stalks for women to tie in bundles. Since prudent reapers worked carefully, the gleaning of fallen grain was mere subsistence living, much like trying to eke out survival today by recycling aluminum cans."*

Levitical law allowed for gleaning to care for the poor. While it was not an uncommon provision among other cultures, in Israel - the command was (and is) intended to reflect the character of the covenant Lord who *"executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing"* (Deuteronomy 10:9). Gleaning was intended to care for the helpless, poor and sojourner among God's people and reflects the Lord's care of his people.
 - c. Consider the fact that God established gleaning as a part of His law. What is your response to that?
 - ★ d. How could this practice impact the way you view your own resources, the Lord, the sojourner, and the poor? What might it look like in your daily life to set a portion of your "field" aside for others to harvest (time, finances, resources)?

4. After receiving Naomi's permission, Ruth sets out. She "happened" to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, and "behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem." Consider the chain of circumstances that had to align for this moment to "happen." What might the narrator be implying with this phrasing?
 - a. Do you ever attribute similar occurrences to happenstance? How might they be opportunities to consider God's divine hand at work in your life?

5. In verse 4, what do you notice about the interaction between Boaz and his workers? What might that tell us about Boaz? How does it set the tone for the scene?

6. Boaz asks "Whose young woman is this?" of Ruth in verse 5. Paul Miller states that Boaz is in effect saying, "What clan is this woman part of? Who is the man who protects and provides for her?"
 - a. Repetition emphasizes what is important to the storyline. How does the field hand's answer identify Ruth in ways we have heard before? What is being emphasized by him?
 - b. It is important to note that there was a ranking of social status according to the customs of the Israelites. Miller clarifies the ranking of "most to least" powerful:

1. King or judge of Israel	8. Son
2. Tribal leader (Clan of Judah)	9. Wife (Naomi)
3. Clan leader (From town of Bethlehem)	10. Daughter
4. Clan-subgroup leader (Boaz's status)	11. Male Servant
5. Older father	12. Female Servant
6. Father (Elimelech)	13. Female Servant lower class
7. Eldest son	14. Resident Alien
	15. Male Foreigner
	16. Female Foreigner (Ruth)
 - c. Ruth was the lowest ranking member of society! Imagine for a moment that you are Ruth - a young, widowed, foreign woman completely void of status, going to glean in unfamiliar fields with unfamiliar people. How would you characterize her choice? (Is it daring? Is it foolish? Is it necessary? Is it something else?) What might have been going through Ruth's mind as she approached the fields to glean?

- ★ 7. Consider Ruth's probable goal at the beginning of her outing - to provide food for herself and Naomi. Do you think she was aware of God's orchestration or care in this small moment of her life? Are there ways we could look for His hands in our days?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

- ★ Has there been a time in your life when you have felt insignificant, vulnerable or some aspect of your identity made you feel out of place because of your status? (For example, you were new to a town, had a change in marital status, career, or parental status.) Do you recall anyone who "happened" to notice you in that place? How did it feel? What was it like?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 8: *Favor*

Ruth 2:8-13

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

The world moves for love. It kneels before it in awe. M. Night Shyamalan

We draw people to Christ... by showing them a Light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the Source of it. Madeline L'Engle

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 2:8-13

⁸ 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. 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." ¹⁰ 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?" ¹¹ 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. ¹² The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" ¹³ 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."

Prepare

Today we witness Boaz and Ruth in their first interaction. And even in this small exchange, we also witness *hesed* influencing what they see, what they offer, and what they receive from one another. Each week, we pray the words of Psalm 36, which say:

⁷ *How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
⁸ They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.*

When we line up these words with Boaz's invitation and blessing to Ruth in our text today, we might hear an echo! God's promises in His word are not a wish— they describe reality. They describes what God is doing, all the time, and the way He graciously grants us the opportunity to participate in lovingkindness, in offering and taking refuge, in offering and drinking from His abundance.

Study

1. *Warm-Up: Tell us about someone who has had authority with you at one point in your life (even long ago!), that you respected (an example could be a teacher, a coach, a parent, a pastor....)*
2. We begin our study as Boaz addresses Ruth. How does he refer to Ruth in this passage? Why might that be significant?
3. Notice all the instructions/ commands Boaz issues in verses 8-10. List them.
 - a. What sense do you get from them?
4. The word for "follow closely" to the young women is "cling" or "cleave." It is the same word in chapter 1, when Ruth "clings" to Naomi. It is also the same word used to describe marriage in Genesis 2, "*Therefore a man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife,*" and Deuteronomy 13:4, "*Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him.*"
 - a. Recall that in chapter 1, Ruth has said to Naomi, "Your people will be my people." Does this seem to be coming true here? How so?
5. Notice Ruth's reply in verse 10. What impact are Boaz's words and actions having on her?
6. In verses 11-12, what impact do we see *she* has had on *Boaz*? What words would you use to describe how he regards her?
 - a. What has he heard about her?

- ★ b. What impact does it have when someone is interested in our story? When someone sees something of our heart?

7. In verse 12, Boaz offers a blessing to Ruth. What does he desire for God to do for her?

- a. David Atkinson notes that the word “repay” in the ESV is better rendered “restore.” What does Boaz’s blessing reveal about what He knows God of Israel to be like?

8. Boaz also gives a very vivid picture of what he sees spiritually happening in Ruth’s life. How does he describe what she is doing, and where she is?

- a. Think back to all Boaz has done to care for Ruth so far. Do you see any connection between what he believes *God* is doing for Ruth, and what *he* is doing for Ruth?
- b. What might that tell us about how our beliefs and our actions are related?

★ 9. The word for “take refuge” is the same word for “Trust”! Reflect on that for a moment.

- a. How might trusting and taking refuge be similar?
- b. Do you think of trusting God as taking refuge under His care?

10. What effect has all this had on Ruth in verse 13?

- a. What might her use of the word “comfort” tell us about what all of this has been like for her?

11. Reflect also on Naomi’s blessing to Ruth in chapter 1: “May the Lord deal kindly with you...” How is that already coming true here?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Have you ever felt like someone really took notice of your story or your situation, and offered you kindness? What impact did that have?

Have you ever felt the refuge, protection, or provision of God in a way that felt tangible?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 9: *Come here*

Ruth 2:14-16

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

“He will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.” -Luke 12:37

It is that there is more grace than you can manage, more grace than you can exhaust, more grace in Christ—an extravagance of grace in Him—for you. There is super-abounding provision for you in the God of mercy and grace in Jesus Christ...There is more grace in Him than need in you, and you will never exhaust the provision of God. David Strain

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 2:14-17a

¹⁴And 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. ¹⁵When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. ¹⁶And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her." ¹⁷So she gleaned in the field until evening.

Prepare

Last week's passage concluded with Ruth's exclamation to Boaz—*"I have found favor in your eyes..."* This week's passage provides us with a deeper look at just how far that favor extends as Ruth takes a seat at Boaz's table.

A person's table revealed much about the wealth and the status of a man—including who joined him for a meal. Needless to say, by these rules and traditions, Ruth—a woman and a foreigner—does not belong at the table with someone like Boaz. But let us call to mind *hesed*, the loving kindness that is not bound to any custom or standard, and continues to actively permeate Ruth's story.

Paul Miller writes, "*Hesed* love isn't just doing love; it is the enjoyment of love. It likes to have parties." Because of *hesed*, Ruth has a seat at the table—and so much more. Through this passage, let us experience and reflect on the abundance *hesed* brings to Ruth—and to us.

Study

1. *Warm up: Share a time you have received an unexpected invitation.*
2. In verse 14, what commands does Boaz give to Ruth?
 - a. "Come here" is translated from a Hebrew word that means *close proximity/near enough to touch*. What might it be like for Ruth to decrease her distance from Boaz and move near to him?
 - i. How does this invitation strike you, especially in these times of COVID and social distancing?
3. Ruth responds by sitting beside the reapers. Recall that Ruth is a foreigner. How might Ruth be feeling to be among Boaz's workers and eating at his table?
 - ★ a. Can you think of a time where you were included, though you felt you were an outsider? What was that experience like for you?
4. In addition to Boaz inviting Ruth to his table for a meal, he serves her the food!
 - a. Remember where Boaz and Ruth are on the status chart (page 42). What might Boaz's willingness to serve Ruth (and his reapers) exhibit about him and his character?
5. Notice the words the writer uses to describe Ruth after the meal in verse 14. What are they?
 - a. Since gleaners were poor, a full meal is no small blessing! How do you respond to Ruth's satisfaction and abundance?
 - b. What might this small sentence in the story of Ruth— "And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over."—reveal to us about God?

- ★ c. "Saba" is the Hebrew word used here for "satisfied" and connotes the idea of fullness and completion. As you reflect on this picture of satisfaction, can you think of a moment where you have experienced similar satisfaction?

6. When the meal concludes, Ruth goes to glean, but Boaz stays with his reapers to give further instructions. Re-read verses 15 & 16. What orders does Boaz give to his reapers at this time? List them.

- a. Do any of these instructions stand out to you? If so, why?
- b. God's law specifically gives instructions regarding reaping and gleaning. Read the following passage from Leviticus 19:9-10:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord you God.

- c. How does Boaz not only honor the law of God through his directives to his reapers, but instruct them to go beyond the law?
- d. Why doesn't Boaz just give Ruth the bundles of barley? What might be his purpose in setting her up to glean?
- e. How is Boaz inviting his reapers to partner in caring for Ruth with these instructions? What impact might it have for his workers to participate in Boaz's efforts?

7. The first part of verse 17 shares with us that Ruth "gleaned in the field until evening."

- a. What is your reaction to Ruth's acceptance of Boaz's grace and kindness in this passage? Are you challenged or encouraged by it? How might it instruct you?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ In a sermon on this verse, Charles Spurgeon remarks: *"But then, brethren, you will notice that these reapers were to let handfuls fall on purpose for her...As myself a reaper for Christ, I must try to follow the example of Boaz, and let fall handfuls on purpose for the gleaner."* Reflect on this for a moment. Is there someone in your life right now who may need this kind of love and sacrifice? Can you think of a "handful" that you could extend on purpose?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 10: *And Naomi said* Ruth 2:17-23

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Little by little, God gets through. Naomi hears his voice, feels his touch, and is revived by his love—not in some supernatural ecstatic epiphany but through the voices, hands and *hesed* of his image bearers.

Carolyn Custis James

...Somewhere in the vicinity of Bethlehem, a single grave contains the bones of two women – Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Even in death, Ruth is still doing *hesed*. Naomi is not alone. This is the Gospel of Ruth.

Carolyn Custis James

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 2:17-23

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. ¹⁹ And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." ²⁰ 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 also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers." ²¹ 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.'" 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." ²³ 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.

Prepare

As this week's passage begins, we join Ruth on the road returning home to a waiting Naomi after a long day of gleaning. When Ruth arrives home laden with barley, Naomi peppers Ruth with questions.

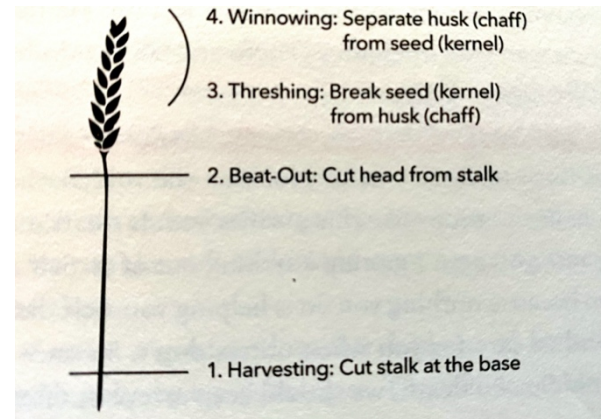
As Ruth replies, we see that while the reversal from the famine in Chapter 1 is astounding, it is the turnaround in Naomi that is truly remarkable. One day, a load of grain, and a full stomach give her the dim awareness that God has not forsaken her. David Atkinson says, "Naomi's whole attitude of mind has been to see the hand of the Lord in the circumstances of her life. Earlier she had held on to his grace through the sufferings of her bereavement. Now she experiences the grace of his provision through the generosity of a wealthy farmer." Could it be that God's kindness, His *hesed*, is that potent?

Study

1. *Warm up: Share a memorable day you have had. Why does that day stand out to you?*
2. What is Ruth doing as we join her in verse 17?

- a. At the end of her day of gleaning, Ruth likely used a curved stick or wooden hammer to “beat out” the collected grain.

An ephah of barley is about 29 pounds—at least a two-week supply to feed the two women. Robert Hubbard says this amount is “truly astonishing” for one day’s work. What does Ruth’s bounty tell us about her?



- b. Ruth’s gleaning was the means God used to provide for Naomi and her. What is it like to work and partner with God to care for yourself or others? Can you think of some everyday examples (i.e. bringing a meal, stopping to talk to a neighbor, someone helping complete your yard work)?
 - c. While Ruth is gleaning, Naomi is at home waiting. What do you imagine that day was like for Naomi?
3. In verse 18, what picture do we have of Ruth? What might she have been thinking or feeling as she walked home from her day of gleaning?
 - a. Don’t miss the word “saw” in verse 18. Reflect on what you know about Naomi so far. Why might it be significant that Naomi sees Ruth laden with barley?
 - b. What else does Ruth bring to Naomi? Why might this have been surprising after a day of gleaning?
 4. Naomi then asks Ruth two questions in verse 19. What are they? What adjectives might you use to describe Naomi in this moment?
 - a. Before Ruth has a chance to answer, Naomi has more to say. What does she proclaim?

- b. Ruth responds by telling Naomi the name of the man in whose field she gleaned. It is Boaz! Recall the narrator introduced us to Boaz in Ruth 2:2, as a “worthy man of the clan of Elimelech.” How does Naomi respond to this news in verse 20?
 - c. Note the word “kindness” in verse 20 is our Hebrew word *hesed*. Commentators note that it is not clear whether “whose kindness” refers to Boaz’s kindness or the Lord’s kindness. What were your thoughts as you read this verse?
 - d. Do you find anything curious that Naomi’s blessing connects kindness to “the living or the dead?” Why might that be meaningful to her?
 - e. Do you recognize Naomi in verses 19 and 20? In what ways does she seem different from what we have known of her thus far?
5. At the end of verse 20, what more do we learn about Boaz?
- a. While we already knew that Boaz was a relative, Ruth didn’t. If you were Ruth, how might you respond to this news?
 - b. What do you think of when you hear the word “redeemer?” Are you surprised or curious that the word “redeemer” is used here?
 - ★ c. The Old Testament includes many examples of God redeeming His people through men. For example, Moses leading the people of Israel out of Egypt and Joseph saving his people & Egypt from starvation. God uses people as agents of His redemption. How do you react to a God who works in this way?
6. In verse 22, what are the gleaning instructions Boaz gave to Ruth?
- a. Naomi has the last word by affirming Boaz’s instructions, but she recasts them slightly. How do the two statements compare? Why might Naomi have stated the instructions differently?
 - b. Do you see any connection to *hesed* in her instructions?
7. While absent of dialogue, the last verse of this chapter (verse 23) paints a picture of a “new normal” for Ruth. What would Ruth’s calendar show for her daily activity until the end of the barley and wheat harvests?
- ★ a. Like Ruth, we have daily rhythms. What are some of the daily rhythms in your life right now? How do you feel about them?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

- ★ In this passage, we witness a transformation taking place in Naomi. She is awakened by the steadfast love and kindness (*hesed*) God has for her coming via Ruth and Boaz. Reflect on a time when God has worked some kind of change in you. What did you begin to realize about yourself? Did your perspective on God change?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Lenten Reflection

Ruth 2:23

23 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. Ruth 2:23

Settle

The kind of spiritual life and disciplines needed to sustain the Christian life are quiet, repetitive, and ordinary. I often want to skip the boring, daily stuff to get to the thrill of the edgy faith. But it's in the dailyness of the Christian faith—the making the bed, the doing the dishes, the praying for our enemies, the reading of the Bible, the quiet, the small—that God's transformation takes root and grows.....

Tish Harrison Warren

This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118: 24

Reflect

Excerpt from "Liturgy of the Ordinary" by Tish Harrison Warren

Daily life, dishes in the sink, children that ask the same questions and want the same stories again and again and again, the long doldrums of the afternoon—these things are filled with repetition. And much of the Christian life is returning over and over to the same work and the same habits of worship. We must contend with the same spiritual struggles again and again. The work of repentance and faith is daily and repetitive. Again and again, we repent and believe.

And every new day, this is the turn my heart must make: I'm living this life, the life right in front of me. This one where marriages struggle. This one where we aren't living as we thought we might or as we hoped we would. This one where we are weary, where we want to make a difference but aren't sure where to start, where we have to get dinner on the table or the kids' teeth brushed, where we have back pain and boring weeks, where our lives look small, where we doubt, where we wrestle with meaninglessness, where we worry about those we love, where we struggle to meet our neighbors and love those closest to us, where we grieve, where we wait.

And on this particular day, Jesus knows me and declares me his own. On this day he is redeeming the world, advancing his kingdom, calling us to repent and grow, teaching his church to worship, drawing near to us, and making a people all his own.

- Consider the "routine" and "mundane" parts of your day that are as repetitive as Ruth spending her days gleaning during the harvest. How do you feel about them? Do you believe they matter to God? Why or why not?
- During this season of Lent, consider offering a daily, repetitive part of your life (a moment, a period of time, a task, or a habit) up to the Lord, to use that time to wait for Him, to pray, to repent, or to thank Him.
- What story are you tempted to believe about your daily life? In what way are you encouraged or challenged by the reality that is God redeeming all things in your life, as part of His redemption story, just as He did in Ruth and Naomi's?



Study 11: *Seek Rest*

Ruth 3:1-5

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
And he will make straight your paths.
Be not wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your flesh
And refreshment to your bones. Proverbs 3:5-8

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 3:1-5

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

Prepare

Although the entire events of the book of Ruth span a number of years, we are really only given concentrated moments of time to observe the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz – a conversation on a road, a morning's work in a field. Chapter 2 covered just one day. Chapter 3 also covers just one day. Yet between chapters 2 and 3, the barley and wheat harvests are held, about two to three months of everyday *living*.

And what has that *living* included? As the working and reaping repeats daily, the *living* has provided opportunities for *hesed* every single day. Boaz extends *hesed* to Ruth by granting permission to work in his field; Ruth extends *hesed* to Naomi by bringing home grain every day; God's *hesed* is over it all. This compounding of *hesed* is providing the characters opportunities to glean information about one another's character and everyone in town is watching.

The *hesed* is working on Naomi's heart, and now she will seek to extend *hesed* herself. In our text today, Naomi's instructions to Ruth are mysterious, but her motives are clear. She seeks the very rest for Ruth that she hoped God might give her back in Chapter 1, on the road out of Moab. "In response to a providentially given opportunity, Naomi began to answer her own prayer! Thus she models one way in which divine and human actions work together."
(Hubbard)

Study

1. Warm up question: What is something you do with your appearance when you get dressed up that is different from your everyday routine?

2. In verse 1, how does Naomi address Ruth and what does she want for her?

a. This is a repetition of Naomi's blessing to Orpah and Ruth in verse 1:8-9:

"...May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!"

b. When we connect Naomi's blessing in Ruth 1:8-9 with her desire to find rest for Ruth in 3:1, why might this be the rest she seeks?

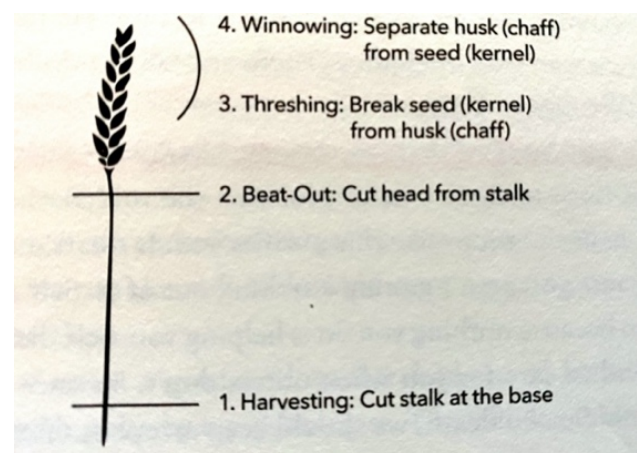
c. Remembering the status list (page 42), why would it be essential for these women to seek rest and support outside of themselves?

3. In verse 2, who does Naomi have in mind?

a. Other than a kinsman, can you think of any other reasons Naomi would consider Boaz as a prospective husband for Ruth?

4. What does Naomi say Boaz will be doing "tonight" in the end of verse 2?

a. Hubbard describes winnowing and threshing: *"In ancient agricultural practice, winnowing was the festive, joyous climax of the harvest process. Harvested grain was first bundled in the field, then carried manually or by cart to the threshing floor, an open space of exposed bedrock or hard, stamped earth. There the grain was threshed, i.e., beaten with a toothed sledge, trampled under animal hooves, or crushed under cart wheels. The purpose was to remove the husks from the kernels. Winnowing then separated the kernels from the husks, chaff and stalks. With a fork or shovel, the winnower repeatedly tossed the mixture into the prevailing breeze. The wind scattered the lighter chaff a distance away and the heavier grain fell near the winnower."*



- b. Depending on the amount of grain winnowed, the owner would sleep near his grain for security until it could be moved to storage. Threshing floors were also the site of food, drink, and merriment. Does Naomi's plan seem like a curious choice? Why or why not?
5. In verse 3, what steps does Naomi direct Ruth to take as preparation for going to the threshing floor?
 - a. Remember, both Naomi and Ruth are widows, a reality distinguishable by their clothing. How does Naomi's instructions signify a change in Ruth's situation?
6. What does she tell Ruth to do after arriving at the threshing floor?
 - a. What do you think of her plan? What questions does it leave you with?
 - b. Commentators conclude these steps are intentional, allowing Ruth to send a nonverbal signal of marriage to Boaz. Hubbard explains, "Naomi left nothing to chance. Rather, she calculated as carefully as she could to set up a favorable situation." How might these instructions set up Ruth for a favorable encounter with Boaz?
 - c. What do you notice about Naomi's plan at the end of verse 4? With so many specifics, what is your response to Naomi trusting Boaz with the next steps?
7. Taking this whole passage together, what are the potential risks to Naomi's plan? What is your response to the idea of taking this type of risk?
 - a. As Naomi seeks a husband for Ruth, how are the "cards stacked against them?"
 - b. Do you see *hesed* playing out in Naomi's search for Ruth's rest? If so, how?
 - ★ c. Has there been a time in your life where someone looked out for you, went to bat for you, took up a cause for you? What was that like?
 - d. Do you think Naomi's instructions reflect her faith in the Lord? If so, how?
8. At the conclusion of the passage, what are Ruth's only words in these verses? What strikes you about her response?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Reflect on a time when you took a risk or did something that maybe seemed a little crazy because either you trusted the person asking you or you sensed God was prompting you to take a risk. What were the risks? What was the outcome? Were there ways God revealed Himself to you during the experience?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 12: *Spread Your Wings*

Ruth 3:6-9

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

On this holy night in Bethlehem, the gospel is *preenacted* by three people who have never heard of Jesus, but whose words and actions speak unmistakably of him.

Carolyn Custis James

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 3:1-9

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? ² Is not Boaz our relative, with whose young women you were? See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ And she replied, "All that you say I will do."

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

Prepare

When Naomi laid out her plan, her motivation was to "seek rest for you [Ruth], that it may be well with you." One day Naomi will die, leaving Ruth alone as a Moabite widow living in Bethlehem. How can Naomi ensure safe haven for Ruth? Practically speaking, Naomi's only option for Ruth in this ancient patriarchal society was marriage. Boaz, their kinsman, has been generous and kind to Ruth these past months. Anticipating his *hesed* will continue, Naomi sends Ruth to the threshing floor with nonverbal signals to indicate marriage is what she seeks.

While Naomi's hope is that Boaz will bring Ruth into his home through marriage, consider what this means for Naomi. Ruth has been a blessing to her, a vessel through which Yahweh has shown her *hesed*. Marriage and security for Ruth means loneliness and loss for Naomi. Yet she is willing to give her away! In this moment, Naomi is an active, sacrificial participant in the Lord dealing kindly with Ruth.

But don't forget Ruth! We see her commitment to Naomi and Yahweh. "Heart and soul, Ruth belongs to Yahweh. His *hesed* courses through her veins, and she loves him best by loving and sacrificing for Naomi." (James) While Ruth will honor her mother-in-law's plan, she will change course and extend herself on behalf of Naomi because that is the nature of *hesed*.

Study

1. *Warm-up: Share a moment in which you were startled or surprised.*
2. The narrator moves the story forward in verse 6. What does he tell us? Why might the narrator reiterate what Ruth already told us in verse 5?
3. The spotlight is now on Boaz. What does the narrator tell us about his night in verse 7? What words might you use to describe the evening?
 - a. It seems Naomi accurately predicted how Boaz's evening would unfold! In this scenario, what sets Ruth up to interact with Boaz?
4. Ruth continues to carry out the details of Naomi's plans. How does Ruth approach Boaz in verse 7? What does she do?
 - a. What tone do you sense as you read this moment? How do you feel and react as Ruth lays down?
 - b. The narrator describes this scene with ambiguity and sexual connotations. According to Paul Miller, in Hebrew:
 - *Feet* can be a euphemism for the male sexual organ
 - *Uncover your nakedness* is a way of saying sexual intercourse
 - *Lie down* is another metaphor for sexual intercourse
 - *Threshing floors* are places where forbidden sex may happen
 - *Know* can be a euphemism for sexual intercourse
 - c. Carolyn Custis James concludes that the narrator "deliberately created a scene riddled with sexual tension...to drive home an important point—namely, that Yahweh's people are perpetually confronted with difficult situations and hard choices."
 - i. What can we glean of Ruth and Boaz's character through the decisions they have made up until now? Why might that be important to remember at this moment?
 - ★ ii. Consider some of your own difficult situations and hard choices. What was it like to be in those circumstances? How did you feel in the midst of them?

5. At about midnight, Boaz startles. What does he do and say?

6. Ruth quickly responds, "I am Ruth, your servant." The word used for servant implies an improved status from when she called herself his servant in the fields. Instead of a lower-level servant (Ruth 2:13), here she calls herself his maidservant or handmaid.
 - a. Why might it be significant for Ruth to identify herself in this way?

7. What does Ruth request Boaz to do in verse 9?
 - a. Up until this point, Ruth has done all Naomi asked. How is Ruth deviating from Naomi's instructions with this appeal?
 - b. Remember Naomi told Ruth that Boaz would "tell you what to do." How do you respond to Ruth instructing Boaz what to do?

8. "Spread your wings" is an idiom for marriage. Paul Miller explains that it "is a request for marriage that means to spread the hem of a man's garment over his future wife." Ruth is proposing marriage to Boaz! How would you describe Ruth in this moment?
 - a. Remember that "Ruth is a Moabite; Boaz is an Israelite. She is a woman propositioning a man; a servant asking a landowner; a poor person entreating a wealthy one; a young woman approaching a middle-aged man." (Miller) How is Ruth placing herself in a vulnerable situation? What potential risks is she voluntarily undertaking?
 - ★ b. How do you feel about vulnerability? What hinders you from being vulnerable with others? Are you challenged or encouraged in any way by Ruth's actions? Share together.

9. In Ruth 2:12, Boaz blessed Ruth, and describes "the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." Now on the threshing floor, what is Ruth asking Boaz to do? Do these seem connected? If so, how?

10. There is a final point Ruth makes (that we will talk more about next week). Who does she declare Boaz to be at the end of verse 9?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Ruth's request for Boaz to cover her with his "garment" reminds the reader (and us) of the protection provided by Yahweh under His "wings." Consider this image of being covered by God's wings. How does it feel to ask for, need or experience the covering of God as our refuge? Are there any ways you have known rest under His protective wings? If so, when and how?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 13: *I am a redeemer* **Ruth 3:10-13**

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Giving is the way the world is. God gave himself. He also gives away everything that is. He makes no exceptions for any of us. We are given away to families, to our neighbors, to our friends, to our enemies—to the nations. Our life is for others. That is the way creation works. Some of us try desperately to hold on to ourselves, to live for ourselves...afraid to risk ourselves on the untried wings of giving...and the longer we wait the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace.

Eugene Peterson

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 3:6-13

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. ⁷ And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. ⁸ At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ⁹ He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer." ¹⁰ And he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. ¹² And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. ¹³ Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."

Prepare

We ended our last study with Ruth saying "*I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.*"

Ruth's words are sure and strong. She does not ask, but proposes marriage to Boaz. Yet Ruth does not stop there! She asserts that Boaz is a redeemer. Carolyn Custis James explains, "In a single sentence she appeals to both the levirate and kinsman-redeemer laws. It's an unexpected legal twist that actually proves to be brilliant."

This is a "brilliant" and strategic move on Ruth's part, yet one she cannot implement without help. She needs a redeemer. Boaz responds that Ruth has "made this last kindness greater than the first." What is it he is seeing in Ruth? Today we consider *hesed* once again.

Study

1. *Warm-up: Share a time you made a bold request.*
2. Ruth has declared Boaz to be a redeemer which is not something Naomi told her to say. How does Ruth's change of course go beyond Naomi's intention to "seek rest for [Ruth], that it may be well" with her?
 - a. Custis James goes on to say, "by putting marriage and land together, Ruth is asking Boaz to redeem, buy back, Elimelech's land and bear a child, an heir, to inherit that land." Ruth request is grounded on two of God's laws:
 - i. Levirate Law: Addressed the situation when a man died without an heir. His brother was required to marry and provide a son, continuing the family like of his deceased brother.
 - ii. Kinsman-Redeemer Law: Focused on land and encompassed a wider range of relatives. When a man was forced to sell his land, his nearest relative was to step in and purchase the land, keeping the property in the family.
3. As Boaz begins speaking in verse 10, how would you describe his reaction?
 - a. What does he declare about Ruth and her choices?
 - b. Do you find anything surprising or curious about his response?
 - c. Boaz calls Ruth's appeal for marriage a "kindness," a *hesed*, "greater than the first." In the previous chapters of Ruth, when was Boaz struck by Ruth's kindness?
 - d. Think about what we have just learned about the role of the redeemer. Boaz seems to be more than flattered. He connects with and sees what Ruth is doing. How does Boaz see this act by Ruth to be an even "greater kindness?"
4. In verse 11, Boaz continues. What assurances does he give Ruth?
 - a. "Naomi told Ruth to do all that Boaz would tell her, but here Boaz tells Ruth he will do all that she has asked." (Miller)
 - i. What is he saying yes to? What is he committing to?

- ii. What might it mean for Ruth to hear these words?
 - ★ b. Have you ever experienced someone being really with you in something? (Example: a big project, an emotional moment, a burden) Have you ever been that person for someone else? What impact did that have on you or your situation?
5. At the end of verse 11, what does Boaz (and fellow townsmen) proclaim Ruth to be?
- a. Boaz uses the same Hebrew word for Ruth (worthy woman) that the narrator used to describe him in Ruth 2:1 (worthy man). David Strain explains that “in the Hebrew ordering of the books of the Bible, Ruth follows immediately after Proverbs, which ends with a description of the woman of noble character.”
 - b. In essence, Ruth is a living picture of a worthy woman. What is your response to that?
6. We learn an important detail in verse 12. What is it?
- a. Why do you think Boaz brings up this information? Why might it matter?
7. Boaz mentions the word redeem five times in verses 12 and 13. This redemption is costly to whomever endeavors it. Remember that “Levirate marriage was a brother’s responsibility. Boaz is not a brother; he’s more likely a cousin. This law does not apply to him.” (James)
- a. Regardless of how near his kinship, what is Boaz pledging to do? What tone do you hear in his intentions?
 - b. How is Boaz mirroring the sacrifice, the *hesed*, that Ruth has exhibited? How is Boaz a picture of giving himself away in this passage?
 - c. Put yourself in Ruth’s place—what might she be thinking and feeling as she lies down that evening? How is the picture of her lying down “the rest” and “refuge” Naomi and Boaz prayed for in earlier chapters?
 - ★ d. What freedom might there be in trusting the outcome of our situations to God? Is there anything encouraging or challenging about how Boaz approaches Ruth and this situation?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.



Reflect on a time when you sensed God calling you to give up yourself in some way. (Examples could be your time, status, comfort, money). What was it like? What do you remember? What impact did it have on you or others?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 14: *Wait*

Ruth 3:14-18

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

If anyone in Bethlehem wanted to explain to a stranger how Yahweh has loved His people in the covenant in which he betrothed Israel to Himself, all they would need to do would be to say four words: "As Boaz loves Ruth."

Sinclair Ferguson

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 3:14-18

¹⁴ So she lay at his feet until the morning, but arose before one could recognize another. And he said, "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." ¹⁵ And he said, "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. ¹⁶ And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "How did you fare, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her, ¹⁷ saying, "These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said to me, 'You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" ¹⁸ She replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today."

Prepare

This week's passage begins on the threshing floor and ends at Naomi's home. All three of our main characters have speaking parts, with words from Boaz in verses 14-15, and a conversation between Naomi and Ruth in verses 16-18. As we observe how the lives of Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth are intertwined, we see each one outdoing the other in *hesed* love.

It is interesting that each of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 have ended with words from Naomi. Chapter 1 closes with Naomi renaming herself as "Bitter" as Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem. Naomi suffered extreme emptiness from famine and the loss of her family. Chapter 2 closes with a transformed Naomi joining Boaz in looking out for Ruth. And now as Chapter 3 ends with this week's passage, Naomi instructs Ruth to wait. But what is Ruth waiting for? What is Naomi possibly waiting for as well?

Study

1. *Warm up: Share about a time when you were waiting to receive news about something (for example, waiting to hear about a school acceptance, a relative's safe travel, being hired for a new job, or even the results of a COVID test).*
2. Where do we find Ruth as verse 14 begins?
 - a. What tone does this verse have? What is the possible implication of Ruth being seen at the threshing floor?
 - b. What does the intent of Boaz's statement reflect about his heart toward Ruth in this moment?
3. Verse 15 contains lots of action! What does Boaz do?
 - a. Though the quantity of barley isn't exactly known, scholars estimate the quantity to be between sixty and one hundred pounds of ready-to-eat barley. Picture Boaz heaping that amount of barley on Ruth as she prepares to depart from the threshing floor. What's your reaction to this scene?
 - b. Now Ruth is on the move. Where is she heading?
 - c. In this one verse alone, do you see any ways that *hesed* love is at work? If so, how?
4. As Ruth enters the city in verse 16, take a moment to think about Naomi.
 - a. Recall that her last words to Ruth were her plan for Ruth to find rest (a husband) by going to Boaz at the threshing floor. With Ruth gone overnight, what do you imagine Naomi was thinking or doing all night?
 - b. Early in the pre-dawn morning, Naomi hears the sound of footsteps approaching her door. What do you think Naomi really wants to know?
 - c. What do you think it was like for Ruth to share the details of the previous night with Naomi?

5. Although we don't hear it directly from Boaz's mouth in verse 17, who is the barley really for?
- Note the word "empty-handed" in Boaz's words revealed by Ruth. Do you hear an echo of any theme we have encountered earlier in the book of Ruth?
 - What might Boaz's gift of barley tell Naomi about Boaz? What might it tell them and us about Yahweh?
 - ★ In the barley, we have tangible evidence of God's abundant provision for Ruth and Naomi. Can you think of an example in your life where God's grace was visible through a thing, a place, an event, or a person? If so, describe how you saw the goodness of God.
6. Naomi has the last word in this chapter (see verse 18). What do you hear in the tone of Naomi's instructions to Ruth?
- Naomi says "the man will not rest" in verse 18. The narrator weaves in the word "rest," which we have seen in earlier words from Naomi:
 - "The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" (1:9)
 - "My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" (3:1)
 - What might Boaz **not** resting "until the matter is settled" mean for these two women?
 - After all that has happened with Naomi and Ruth, they now are called wait on another person. What do you think it was like for them to wait?
 - ★ Reflect on a time of waiting that you have experienced. What is it like for you to wait? What words would you use to describe yourself?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Ruth and Naomi are in a holding pattern with how the matter will be settled, while literally holding an abundance of grain. Are you in a similar place in any way? Are you waiting on something? Can you see any evidence of God's abundance toward you in this moment?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 15: *Redeem It* **Ruth 4:1-6**

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Hesed is driven, not by duty or legal obligation, but by a bone-deep commitment — a loyal, selfless love that motivates a person to do voluntarily what no one has a right to expect or ask of them.

Carolyn Custis James

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 4:1-6

¹ Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, "Turn aside, friend; sit down here." And he turned aside and sat down. ² And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. ³ Then he said to the redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech. ⁴ So I thought I would tell you of it and say, 'Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.' If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you." And he said, "I will redeem it." ⁵ Then Boaz said, "The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance." ⁶ Then the redeemer said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

Prepare

From Moab to Bethlehem, to barley fields and a threshing floor, we have found ourselves moving to a variety of places in our journey through the book of Ruth. In today's passage, we find ourselves at the city gate. In ancient Hebrew times, the city gate was the hub of society. At the gate, villagers would come and go, the government would rule, and business would be conducted. And today, a business transaction is precisely what we see.

Now, Boaz re-emerges into the spotlight as he orchestrates the legal transaction to secure the redemption of Ruth, Naomi, and the entire Elimelech family, just as he promised he would do. This business matter is far from predictable and dull. It involves a man, who on his pursuit of redemption, goes beyond the letter of the law. Boaz mirrors Yahweh's desire to care for the most vulnerable. Not only is this the climax of the storyline, but it is the climax of *hesed*—loving kindness by way of decisive and costly action. So like the individuals in this passage, let's sit down and experience this extraordinary love that exceeds rules and responsibilities.

Study

1. *Warm up: Name a task or an activity in which you are quick to act and refuse to procrastinate.*
2. Notice the frequency of the word *redeem* in this passage. How many times do you see it or a variation of it? How does the repetition of redemption set the tone for the interaction between these two potential redeemers?
3. Verse 1 begins with Boaz taking action to secure Naomi and Ruth's redemption. Where does he go?
 - a. Although scholars are not certain when Boaz acted, many agree that it was soon after his promise to Ruth in 3:13 **"Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning."** Why do you think Boaz acted so quickly?
 - b. Is there a time in your life where you have felt insistence to settle a matter? What thoughts or emotions motivated your urgency?
 - c. Sinclair Ferguson writes that the word *behold* is "the author's way of raising his eyebrow at us as if to say, 'There goes God's providential activity again!'" What is the evidence of God's presence and action in verse 1?
4. When Boaz speaks to this "redeemer" in verse 1, what does he ask him to do? How does the man respond?
 - a. What words would you use to describe Boaz in this moment?
 - b. Commentators remark that *friend* is more accurately translated in Hebrew as "No Name" or "Mr. So-and-So." What do you make of the narrator's intention to leave this relative nameless?
5. As Boaz continues with his mission to secure redemption, what does he do in verse 2?

- a. In ancient Hebrew culture, it was customary for a body of elders to participate as witnesses in a legal transaction. Recall the last time the town noticed Naomi and Ruth, at the end of chapter 1. Why might it be significant that these men are being called together to bear witness to a matter involving Naomi and Ruth?
 - ★ b. Have you ever had an opportunity to bear witness to something that has benefited an individual or a group of people? What was that like?
6. Re-read Boaz's first proposal to Mr. So-and-So in verse 3 and 4. What does Boaz mention as the object of purchase (or redemption)?
- a. What stands out to you about how Boaz seems to be approaching the matter?
 - b. David Strain explains that "Naomi is selling not actually the land, but the rights to the use and profits of the land." This transaction would provide for Naomi in her destitution, allow Elimelech's land to remain within the clan, and give Mr. So-and-So the prospect of acquiring the land when Naomi dies.
 - i. What do you make of the brevity and tone of Mr. So-and-So's reply?
 - ii. Why might this initially be an appealing prospect—a bargain—with little risk for Mr. So-and-So?
7. Boaz does not stop with the land, but makes an addition to the deal. Re-read Boaz's second proposal to Mr. So-and-So in verse 5. Who does he now include?
- a. Why do you think Boaz left marriage to Ruth out of his first proposal? What did it accomplish to bring her into the request now?
 - b. What is the significance of the addition "to perpetuate the name of the dead"? What would that mean for Mr. So-and-So, his family, and his inheritance if he bears an heir for Elimelech through Ruth?
 - ★ c. In Israel, the loss of land and heirs was the greatest tragedy imaginable for someone, making the survival of Elimelech's family line of utmost importance. By setting up a system that includes kinsman redeemers, what do you think God is communicating?
8. Notice Mr. So-and-So's response in verse 6. What reason does he give for this change of mind? How does this new response strike you?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Mr. So-and-So's unwillingness to redeem Naomi and Ruth reveals to us something about Boaz and his willingness to redeem. Because Boaz is not technically obligated to redeem under the law, he could walk away with a clear conscience. But in Carolyn Custis James' words, Boaz is following "the spirit of the law." Once again in this story, we see God's heart in showing *hesed*. Boaz's desire to show the spirit of the law points us our true redeemer, Jesus, who was not obligated to redeem us, yet did so out of love. Can you think of any opportunities

you currently have in your life to follow the "spirit of the law" and God's heart in showing *hesed*?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 16: *We are witnesses*

Ruth 4:7-12

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine."
Isaiah 43:1

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 4:7-12

⁷ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. ⁸ So when the redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself," he drew off his sandal. ⁹ Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰ Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day." ¹¹ Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, ¹² and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman."

Prepare

In our last study, we ended with the kinsman redeemer (Mr. So-and-So) telling Boaz he will not marry Ruth or redeem the land. Boaz's conversation with the kinsman-redeemer has the audience (and us) on pins and needles!

The narrator then says, "Now." This word serves to create a break in the narration, a momentary pause in the story to address the listening audience directly. There is an explanation of legal proceedings—used to finalize redemptions—that feels out of place in the midst of this gripping narrative. What is going on?

Imagine you are hearing this story for the first time. You are so caught up in the *hesed* that the characters extend, and so amazed at the redemption coming to its climax, that you are literally out of breath in anticipation! This break allows you to keep from getting carried away in a romance and instead see a bigger picture. Boaz's actions are weighty, costly, and significant, not just for our three characters, but the community as a whole.

In like fashion, our *own* redemption is weighty, costly, and significant. We are told in 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 that, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price." Just as Ruth's redemption requires a legal and financial transaction, our own sin requires the same. What other similarities might there be between our redemption and Ruth's? Could our redemption impact a community?

Study

1. *Warm up: Describe a favorite pair of shoes and what made them special to you.*
2. In verses 7-8, we see a physical transaction occur between Boaz and the kinsman redeemer. Who initiates the transaction in verse 8?
 - a. What does the kinsman redeemer give to Boaz?
 - b. The foot is meant to represent *dominion*. Why do you think it might be important for the sandal to change hands?
3. In verses 9-10, the story resumes with Boaz speaking to the crowd. What have they "witnessed"? Make a list of Boaz's actions.
 - a. Why do you think the perpetuation of the dead is significant in the community?
 - b. Why do you think it is significant to God?
4. What do the townspeople say at the beginning of verse 11?
 - a. Why might it be important for Naomi and Ruth that the people so eagerly attest to witnessing this transaction? Why might this mean for their future in this community?
5. The townspeople have just witnessed *hesed* and redemption in action. How do they react? What tone do you hear in their words?
6. How might the way the town is feeling lead to this spontaneous blessing?
 - ★ a. Have you ever experienced a time when joy and awe led to spontaneous blessing, either that you extended to or received from someone?

7. Which part of the transaction do they pray God will bless?

a. Here are the people mentioned in these verses:

Rachel – Second wife of Jacob; struggled with barrenness; mother of Joseph and Benjamin, two of the tribes of Israel (**Genesis 29-35**)

Leah – First wife of Jacob; struggled with feeling unloved by her husband; mother of six tribes of Israel, including Judah, the patriarch of Boaz's clan (**Genesis 29-35**)

Tamar – a foreign daughter-in-law of **Judah**; was barren when 1st husband died; was given in levirate marriage and remained barren when 2nd husband died; Judah refused to give her in levirate marriage again so she seduced Judah under disguise and gave birth to **Perez**, Boaz's ancestor (**Genesis 38**)

b. How do the townspeople view the impact of Rachel, Leah, and Tamar in their community?



c. Where do you see similarities between Ruth's story and the stories of these women? What is your reaction to these women being mentioned?

d. The witnesses pray a blessing that connects to the first blessing we saw in Ruth 1:8-9. Naomi says, "**May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!**" How do you think Ruth (and Naomi) would feel upon hearing that the town prayed this blessing for her?



e. Does any person come to mind that you desire God to bless? What blessing would you ask God for, on their behalf?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Reflect on a time when you witnessed the impact of redemption or *hesed* (or both) in a community. Perhaps you were a part of the community impacted, or perhaps you were the focal point of attention. What did the *hesed* look like? How did the community react? What did it feel like to you?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*





Study 17: *Restorer of life* **Ruth 4:13-17**

Settle *(Take a moment to quiet yourself.)*

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Ask

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Your judgments are like a great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.
For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

Listen

Ruth 4:13-22

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

¹⁸ Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Prepare

We began our journey with Ruth and Naomi steeped in loss - of homeland, sons, husbands, social status, food and hope. As Naomi returns with Ruth to Bethlehem, all she sees is emptiness. She is so empty, she shuns her given name in favor of *Mara*, which means bitter.

In the midst of these dark and troubled times, the Lord's blessing is both longed for by His people and as well as embodied in them. These blessings are wailed in despair, casually shouted to workers in the fields, and generously declared in response to the offerings of others.

We see the fulfillment of God's blessing through these same people. They each participate in His redemption. As the story concludes, Naomi is no longer bitter, but is called by her name which means "sweet." She holds a tangible blessing and has not been left without a redeemer. The same is true for the hearers of this story, including us!

Study

1. *Warm up: Is there something you like to hold? (A hand, a glass of wine, gardening soil, a paintbrush, a cup of tea)*
2. It takes many verses for one day to happen in the book of Ruth, yet here we have the opposite—much time (and lots of activity) occurs in just one short verse. Make a list of who is taking action and what each person is doing in verse 13.
3. In the book of Ruth, we have heard of God's direct action only twice. In Ruth 1:6, God had "visited his people and given them food". Now in Ruth 4:13, He "gave [Ruth] conception."
 - a. Do you see any role that people play in these provisions of God? If so, what?
 - ★ b. Do you find it difficult to understand or talk about the relationship between *God's activity* in your life and *your activity* in your life? If so, how?
 - ★ c. Have you seen God's hand in a circumstance in which you felt powerless? Is there a current circumstance in which you struggle to see His hand and activity?
4. Describe the setting in verse 14. Who is present and what do you think the mood was like? Who is the "spotlight" settling on now?
5. David Platt states that all the pronouns in this next blessing refer to the child who has just been born. What do the women say the Lord has already done, and what do they desire for Naomi and the baby (v.14)?
 - a. At the beginning of our story, Naomi lost her sons, her husband, her land and her hope ("don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, for I am bitter"). In what ways is the baby bringing redemption and restoration to her and her family?
 - ★ b. The baby still needs to be nursed, changed, burped, and held. He is utterly dependent. What is it like to consider that one so weak might be able to restore life? How does this point us to Jesus?

- c. Remember that the chart of social standing placed eldest sons as 7th and Ruth as 16th. No one was lower than Ruth! The women now declare she is worth more than seven sons! What might this tell us about how the women of the community feel about Ruth now?
 - d. Similarly, Naomi returned to Bethlehem, unrecognizable to her community. In light of that, what might it mean to Naomi to have the women in her community speak this blessing over her?
6. Verse 16 gives us a powerful snapshot. What is it?
- a. There is debate about Naomi's guardianship, yet it is likely she had a "semi-parental" role in the upbringing of the child, her redeemer. How might this relationship be particularly dignifying to Naomi?
 - b. This story is the only time a child is referred to as a "kinsmen-redeemer" in the Old Testament (David Platt). Describe the relationship between Naomi and Obed. How do they each play a specific role in giving and receiving the Lord's *hesed* (loving kindness) to one another?
7. Who names the baby in verse 17? Does this seem curious in any way?
- a. Obed's name means "servant". Remember that names were primarily descriptive or aspirational. Why do you think they chose this name for this baby?
8. According to verse 17, what is the family lineage of Obed going to be?
- a. Why would this be powerful for Jewish readers to hear? What impact might this have had on the first listeners of the story, to hear his lineage?
 - b. What do you think Ruth and Naomi would say if they knew that their son was the going to be the grandfather of a king (and that the Messiah himself would come from their line)?



Reflect

Take five minutes to consider and write about your own story. We encourage you to use the Reflection question below or to respond to something the Holy Spirit is stirring in your heart.

★ Reflect on a piece of your story where you have glimpse God's redemption at work. What would you have told yourself at the beginning of your struggle? Who were the agents of God's lovingkindness that you would thank? In what ways were those people meaningful to you? How did you feel about God in the beginning of your sufferings and in what ways did your understanding of Him changed?

Bless

*Although we are weeping
Lord, help us keep sowing
The seeds of Your Kingdom
For the day You will reap them
Your sheaves we will carry
Lord, please do not tarry
All those who sow weeping
will go out with songs of joy*

