

# Finding Hope in a Broken World

*Book of Ruth*

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ruth 2, preaching again from this wonderful book. Dr. Mack actually said, "Are you preaching from the Gospel of Ruth tomorrow?" And yes, I am. It is the Gospel. All of Scripture is, but particularly this Old Testament passage, you get such a beautiful portrait of Christ and the reality of salvation.

The title of the message this morning is "Finding Hope in a Broken World." Finding hope in a broken world and the text is Ruth 2:8-17. We see in this passage a woman who experienced great suffering, profound loss. Ruth was a young widow, childless. Her circumstances were bleak. Though she had returned to the land of Israel with her mother-in-law, they were experiencing poverty and hunger. To be without a man was to be without hope in that time in history. So she was without a man and she was with a woman who was without a man so they were doubly cursed in that sense. But in this passage, she wondrously finds hope.

I'm going to read at verse 1 to verse 17, but we're going to focus on verses 8 to 17 for this sermon to get the context. Let's begin reading at verse 1,

1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. 4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" 6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab." 7 And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." 8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore,

do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. 9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." 10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" 11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. 12 May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." 13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." 14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left. 15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. 16 Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her." 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.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we ask that you by your grace and on account of your mercy would grant to us the fullness of your Spirit to understand your word, that you would take this written word and reveal to us the Living Word, even Jesus. We pray this for his glory. Amen.*

You know, finding hope in a broken world, there is so much hopelessness in this world because this world is broken. We see it all around us and it can lead us to, even those who know that God is on the throne and eternity is coming, we can still find ourselves tempted to despair, but so much more so the people who do not know God; who are as Ephesians says, "without God and without hope in the world." So much brokenness. We see the growing, even in America, the social chaos that's growing, sense of division racially and politically becoming more and more intensely hostile. We can see it more and more though in the eyes of the people, in the moral confusion. We see today this sad degradation into this confusion about gender, radical advancement of homosexuality and people now waiting and hearing that they're having a baby, waiting not until they find out from the ultrasound or until the baby is born to decide if it's pink or blue, but waiting until the baby decides what its gender is. And throughout it all, people becoming more and more identified by their desires. That's what gives them identity, it's your desires, the world is saying. That is a recipe for disaster, to live life according to your desires. It is something that is certain to bring more and more despair. Even as people rush away from God and rush away from the Gospel, they are headed for less and less happiness, more

and more brokenness, more and more despair, and it's something that we could get, if we just look at it and you focus on that alone, it's pretty depressing. But if we put it in context of what God is doing in history, it's actually something that is much more encouraging because one of the things that's happening in our day is as the world races more and more quickly away from God, what they're going to find is the emptiness more and more quickly and profoundly that is found when you run away from God and so there are more opportunities for us to speak to people who are hopeless about the hope that we have. Isn't that what we're called to do? To sanctify Christ Jesus in our hearts and to be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is within us? In a world of hopelessness, hope shines out like a bright light and God intends his people to be that city of hope set on a hill.

And we see this in this Old Testament account that has so much that is distant from us. I mean, basically the setting is the field. It's probably about 1200 BC, 1200-1300 BC, but the setting is the fields outside of Bethlehem. It's harvest time for the barley harvest. The reapers and the gleaners are going and working in the field all day and so it's an unfamiliar setting but yet in reality it's very familiar because Ruth is essentially a woman who is moving out of hopelessness and finding hope in the midst of her broken world and the way she finds hope is she comes to know the God of hope. She comes to experience what he is like and that is where hope is found. In fact, what every person, what the world needs more than anything else today is to see God as he truly is. What every person needs more than anything else today is to see God as he truly is.

One of the reasons things are such a mess is because the world has forgotten and does not know what God is. Even though his glory is made known in his works, there is a great propaganda campaign going on. It started in the garden. Satan is lying about God. Essentially the essence of his lie is this: God is not good. It's also: you can be gods. Since God is not good, you should be your own god. That's essentially what he said to Eve. "Has God said you shall not eat from the tree of the garden, any tree of the garden?" She says, "Well, the Lord told us not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because in the day that we eat of it, we'll die." And he says, "You shall surely not die. But God knows that when you eat of that fruit, you will become like him, knowing good and evil." In other words, "God is not out for your good because God is not good. You cannot trust him. The way to really find fulfillment is to turn away from God." And thus began this propaganda campaign that continues relentlessly throughout history. Satan is a liar and the father of lies and what he lies about chiefly is who God is. He tells the world that God is not good; that God cannot be trusted; that in your brokenness, in your despair, you should not seek the Lord, you should run away from him. That's essentially the lie.

Then to add to that, 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "the god of this world has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, that they cannot see the light of the gospel." And to add to that though, we as sinners born into a sinful world, a broken world, we are broken ourselves, and we are willing participants in the propaganda campaign. We want to believe the propaganda. It's willful blindness, what Romans 1 describes when it says that we "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." The truth about God is made known in the world, the truth about God

is made known in our hearts, by writing his law on our hearts, and yet man, all of us, would willingly suppress that truth were it not for the grace of God changing us.

So this is the reality of the people that are around us that are broken, that are in despair, that are heading toward more and more despair. Their greatest need is to see the truth of who God is and where are they going to see it? How are they going to see it? Our passage today illustrates this for us, that where they're going to find it is essentially in God's country which I'm going to suggest to you that the best application of this is to say that where are people going to see what God is like? They're going to see what God is like when they interact with God's people because Boaz is essentially a picture, a living picture, a picture is worth a thousand words, and he is a picture of what the God, the true and living God is like and this picture dispels those lies that God is not good, that God cannot be trusted. Now, it is true that God is holy and we as sinners are under his wrath, a just and righteous wrath, and it's good that he is a holy God, that he punishes evil. What kind of world would it be if there was no one who was stopping those who would do evil? But the wonder of it is that if you will humble yourself before this God who is holy and who is righteous and who is just, if you will humble yourself before him and run to him as your refuge, you will find that he is also a God of compassion and mercy and tenderness and love; that he will heal you; that he will restore you; that he will not only pardon you and not punish you, he will bring you, not just among his people, he will bring you into his very own family. That's the God of the Bible. That is the true and living God who is made known supremely in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but here we have in the Old Testament a picture of what Jesus would be like and Boaz for us really pictures that.

There are a couple of key words in the passage. I mentioned one of the key words last week is the word "favor" repeated three times in the passage in verse 2, verse 10 and verse 13. Ruth says she needs to find favor and I mentioned to you that that word is essentially the word for grace, the Hebrew word for grace, which is an attribute of God. It's a part of who he is and his grace is defined as a sense of unmerited favor which gives the power to do his will but it's essentially, the essence of it is, it's a heartfelt response of someone who has something to give toward someone in need. There is no sense of constraint or obligation on the part of the giver but it's a heartfelt response of just giving to the need.

This is what God is like. Now, he's not obligated to show mercy but it's his nature to show mercy. We deserve wrath. We have no claim on anything good from God because we joined in that rebellion and in that propaganda campaign willingly. We have each turned aside to our own ways. We have each lived our lives our own ways. We have each tried to define God as we would have him be. You know, whenever you say something like, "My God is not like that," you're guilty of idolatry. You're defining who God is rather than receiving from him what he's like. So we all deserve wrath but it is his nature to give grace. It is his nature to show favor.

That's one of the key words, but there's another key word that I want us to look at. It's actually a little later in the passage but it's a word which describes what Boaz has done.

Now look with me at verse 20. We're going to look at this more carefully next week, but I want you to see this because this is one of the key words in the whole book. Naomi, after she reports to him what Boaz has done for her, "Naomi," in verse 20 of chapter 2, "said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness,'" and the key word is "kindness." "'May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.'" Now Naomi is hearing about Boaz, is pronouncing a blessing upon Boaz, "May he be blessed." And there is a little bit of ambiguity about who is it that she's talking about has shown kindness or not withdrawn kindness. I think she's talking directly about the Lord. Some argue it's Boaz but it really is both because the Lord has shown his kindness through Boaz. That's what she's saying. "The way Boaz has treated you today," which we're going to look at more fully in a moment, "is an expression of the kindness of Yahweh."

This is one of the key words in the Old Testament, it is the word "chesed," c-h-e-s-e-d, the Hebrew word "chesed," which speaks, it's very much like grace but it's different. It's a word which historically has been translated by a host of words: mercy, kindness, love. Often in the NASB, the translation I read, the New American Standard, it's translated "lovingkindness," and I think that's actually a good, even though it's not a word we use, it captures something of the multifaceted nature of this word. It's where mercy and love meet. It's where mercy and love and kindness meet, chesed, and it's the essence of who God is.

So when she says, "the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead," the Lord is showing his kindness, and how did he do it? He did it through Boaz. So in other words, where did Ruth and Naomi experience that God is chesed? That he is kind? It was through the very real actions in life of the man, Boaz. It was through what he did that they experienced that the Lord is good. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease. How do we know? We've experienced it through his people, through his man, through Boaz.

So this is what we're seeing where people are going to find hope is through God's people who, in our love as we have received the chesed of God, we manifest it in our lives. Remember, chesed essentially means it is freely given help from someone who is in a position to help, to someone in great need. In that sense, it sounds like grace; it's almost kind of an overlap of that word but the idea is of the help. It's the pitiful position of the person in need and it's the fact that God is moved and it's the movement of the heart is what is really described. It's the movement of the heart of God toward great need. He is not an unmoved impassionate God. The God of the Bible is the God of chesed. He's a God who when he sees misery is moved to relieve it, to help. He is an ever-present help in trouble. He wants to help but to receive his help, we have to come to him on his terms because he's also a sovereign Lord. But it is his heart to show kindness and love.

Now, with that introduction, what I want us to do is to see how Ruth finds hope in the midst of her broken world through three steps. We're going to organize our thoughts around three points, three things that she does. The first is, the first step to finding hope in a broken world, this is essentially our message to the unbeliever and it's our message to

each other to continue finding hope because we continue to deal in a fallen world with, you know, we're broken, our world is broken, and how do we help each other. These points apply to us as Christians but particularly are a special help as we reach out to unbelievers.

What is the first thing that Ruth does? The first point is, to find hope in a broken world, first of all: humbly acknowledge your great need of hope. Humbly acknowledge your great need of hope. Ruth is a woman in great need and she acknowledges it. She doesn't pretend that she has it all together. She doesn't pretend that she doesn't need grace or favor. She's convinced that she does because she acknowledges humbly her great need of hope. She is a woman with no husband, I mentioned. No husband means no home. It means no property. It means no means of attaining income. In that day, she is without help. She is helpless and, in that sense, hopeless, and she acknowledges that because to acknowledge that is then to open herself up to grace.

And what we see in the passage is that there is this sense of expectancy. She acts on the one thing that she can do. As a woman, she and Naomi have no possession, they have no land. God has put in his word a provision for the poor that you can find daily sustenance by gleaning in the fields, and to glean in the fields would be to go behind the reapers, the reapers are chopping the grain down, and then there are gleaners behind the reapers that are paid by the man who owns the land and they gather the stalks into bundles and tie them up into sheaves, and then later they're going to take those sheaves and beat them so that they get the grain, and then you grind it and you have flour. Big process. But gleaning was something that God had allowed for the poor to do. They could go into the land of Israel in any field, they had the right according to the Scripture, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, to follow behind the reapers and to glean the things they drop, the accidental stuff. They drop some stuff and it falls out of that sheaf, that's for the poor, and the instruction was, "Leave that so that the poor can come and get it and leave the borders of your fields so that the poor can come and get it."

So she goes, knowing that this is one possibility that they have, but even with that, she goes with a sense of moderated temperate expectations because she is a Moabite and she goes even more humbly aware of her need of grace and her need of hope. There is no sense in which she has what she needs and so she goes as a person, you know, if you were an Israelite and you were gleaning, your prospects weren't that great. I mean, think about this: I'm going to eat off what and, remember, grinding grain, you've got to have a lot of grain to grind it and to get some bread. It's not like people are dropping slices of bread out there. That would be bad enough eating it off the ground, but at least it's a slice of bread. Dust it off. If you're hungry enough, I mean, when Patti's not looking, I've done that anyway. You know, you drop something, pick it up quickly.

But with grain dropping, it's just a little bit here and there and you're trying to get a bundle together so that you've got some sustenance, something to provide for you. Your expectations are pretty meager at the beginning and then you add to that, the fact that the workers out there, they don't want to drop any grain and when they drop it and you rejoice and run after it and get it, it's kind of irritating. I mean, they're trying to bring in a

big crop and so there is kind of a negative attitude. In fact, you see this when Boaz later tells his workers, "Don't insult her. Don't rebuke her." The idea is that you can see if someone is really hungry and you're gleaning, you could see where the person so hungry would start getting ahead a little bit of those who are gathering the sheaves together and start kind of getting stuff because they're so hungry and so it would create conflict.

So that was a normal part of this process and you could expect some verbal abuse, possibly somebody being physically violent, and that's if you're an Israelite but she has the added burden of being a Moabite. She has the ethnic racial tension that is there. She's an outsider. But more than that, it's not just ethnic racial tension, it's moral, religious and spiritual tension. The Moabites were known to be an immoral people characterized by immorality from their inception. Remember, that Moab was the son of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter, and they were the ones that tempted the Israelites in the wilderness as they got ready to come into the Promised Land, into immorality. They worshiped the God Chemosh and were characterized by all kinds of spiritual darkness.

So you had that, the natural anticipations of people, the natural antipathy, "Oh, a Moabite." So she has all of that but she knows that and she realizes she's going to have to find favor, that word repeated three times in the passage. Verse 2, she says to her mother-in-law, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." There is a sense on the part of Ruth, she knows she doesn't have hope, she's not trusting in her own resources, she's trusting in God's grace, in God's favor. And you see that, again, when Boaz shows kindness to her, what is her first response? She falls to the ground in verse 10 and she says to him, asks the question, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should even notice me?" She can't believe that he's even taking note of her. "Why would you even notice me? I'm not even like one of your maidservants," who if you were a really generous and wonderful man, you might know all of your servants by name. But a lot of landowners wouldn't even care about their servants. "But I'm not even worthy of one of your servants. Why should you even notice me?" You see that wonderful humility that God brings about when he prepares us to receive his kindness, his goodness and his hope. Then in verse 13, she says it again, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant." She was looking for favor.

So the first thing to finding hope is to humbly acknowledge your great need of hope. To acknowledge your great need of hope that, "I am personally, I don't have the resources that I need. My life is a mess." And when I look at it correctly, this is what God does to bring someone to himself, they begin to look at themselves like the prodigal son, and they come to themselves. They suddenly begin to see that what they're doing is eating out of a pigsty; that they have nothing to commend themselves to God and they look at themselves and they see for the first time, they see the ugliness and the brokenness with spiritual eyes and they have a sense of overwhelming brokenness, but yet when God is working, there is the glimmer of hope that maybe the Lord, maybe the Lord. In fact, this is evident in the fact that she, you know, what the Lord began to do to her when she was in Moab when her husband died and her brother-in-law died and her father-in-law died

and she remained childless and her sister-in-law remained childless and they had no means, the Lord began working on her to show her her great need and her brokenness and maybe in looking at Naomi's life, she saw the difference between Naomi and herself. And when Naomi heard the word that in Bethlehem, the house of bread, there is bread, Ruth decided to go with her to the land of Canaan, to the land of Israel, to follow Naomi and to follow after her God and that maybe she might find bread.

That's essentially the...I like what Martin Luther, his definition of evangelism. Christian evangelism is not something that where we who have it together are helping someone else whose life is a mess. Now, in reality in this world, isn't it amazing how much grace and the truth does to your life? I mean, think about where you were before you knew Christ and where you are today. Look at the incredible distance that God takes you. Look at the change in your outlook, your attitudes, your thought processes. Yeah, we're still in process, we still have struggles, yes, but just think about where you were. I heard a pastor one time say, "If you think I'm bad today, you should have known me ten years ago." That's really true. We're making progress. The Lord is moving us along but we can forget where we came from and when we get around unbelievers whose lives are a mess, we can find them distasteful and want to turn away instead of loving them the way God does. We can forget our own ugliness before Christ found us because you see that as they're looking at their ugliness, they're looking at the scars, they're looking at the brokenness and they're wondering, "Is there any hope for me?" And they see you and they see the distance between you and them and they wonder if they could ever come to where you are. Evangelism is not someone who's got it together telling someone else that, "Hey, get it together." Evangelism, Martin Luther said, is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread. That's what evangelism is, "I found bread. I'm just as hungry and helpless and hopeless as you but I found bread. I found the bread of life and his name is Jesus."

That is the essence of what our message is. We have found bread and when someone that the Lord privileges us to have them open up their life to us and they start unpacking the ugliness that sin has brought about, we have to keep our eyes on the God of hope and remember where we came from and remember that those scars that they're looking at, that you're looking at when you look at someone whose life is a mess, those scars will one day be glorious testimony to the transforming power of grace. Jesus loves to take the scarred and the broken and to restore it and to make it new. Just in the same way in heaven as John, remember when John saw Jesus in heaven in Revelation? What did he say? He was looking for the Lion of the tribe of Judah, then he sees a lamb come out and what does he say? "A lamb as if he had been slain." The marks, the nail prints are still there in heaven. How can that be that the nail prints of the most wicked thing that ever happened in the history of man, the most unjust thing that ever happened was the death of the Son of God, and yet it was according to the plan of God? The only way that we could be saved and so that those nail prints are still there in heaven, those scars are there in heaven giving glory and testimony and praise to God, in the same way the Lord takes us in our brokenness and he turns it and transforms it into a beautiful portrait of his saving power.



So acknowledge your need of hope. Ruth humbly acknowledged her great need of hope. Secondly, what do you do to find hope in a broken world? You actively pursue the God of hope. Actively pursue the God of hope. Romans 15:13 says, "may the God of hope fill you with joy." May the God of hope, he is the God of hope. Seek the Lord, and that is what she has done. This is, in fact, what we see in what Boaz says when he commends her in verse 11, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full." You don't just sit in your despair and do nothing. The person that is hopeless, what do we tell them to do? We tell them to actively pursue the God of hope. "Seek the Lord while he may be found. Seek me with your whole heart," as we read in Isaiah, "and I will be found by you, declares the Lord, but you must seek me with your whole heart," and that's the message and that's what Ruth has done.

That's what Boaz is commending for her. She's wondering, "Why are you showing favor to me? Why is God's favor coming to me through you? Why is the Lord blessing me? I don't know why he's blessing me." And Boaz is telling her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law has been fully reported to me." What has she done? What are the things that she did to actively pursue the God of hope? Well, the first thing is that she stayed with Naomi. "All you have done for your mother-in-law." It's interesting in chapter 1, verse 14, the word for "clung," "Ruth clung to, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, Ruth clung to her." She cleaved herself to her. She joined herself to her and she said, "I'm not going anywhere," and she made that pronouncement, that oath. "Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people. Your God, my God." She joined herself to the one person in her life that knew Yahweh and that was the means that God used to save her.

You see, God works through people. Now, often people get saved reading the Bible but they usually get saved reading the Bible because somebody has been impacting their life. He uses people to save people. That's why Paul says, "How will they hear without a preacher? You've got to go and tell them." And he has done that with Naomi. Even though she has been struggling, the Lord uses her and what did Ruth do? She clung to her. That's interesting. One of the reasons this is used so often I think for marriages, you know, we talked about this a few weeks back that, "Where you go, I go. Where you lodge, I will lodge." It is often used in wedding ceremonies but it's a woman with her mother-in-law.

But there are echoes of marriage about it. In fact, the word "cling, cleave, but Ruth clung to her," sounds like Genesis 2:24, "A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, shall join himself to his wife." Ruth joined herself to Naomi. And then you add to that even what Boaz says about her. There are these echoes that the author of Ruth seems to be intentionally putting before his readers that create a sense of anticipation as you read through the book. Here is one of those echoes. When he says in verse 11, "how you left your father and your mother, you clung to Naomi and you left your father and your mother." I think that's one of the reasons it gets used in weddings

because the Lord seems to be intentionally alluding to that. What happens when a man and woman get married? They leave their father and mother and they cleave to one another, and he's saying, "What you've done is that same thing, you left your father and your mother and you clung, you cleaved to the people of God. What you were really doing was not cleaving to God, you were leaving your father and your mother and you were marrying Christ. You were joining yourself to the God of Israel." And that's what you must do. You have to leave and cleave.

And he goes on and he makes this emphatic, he says, "All that you have done has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth." You have to leave your family relationships, you have to leave the land of your birth. Now, what does that mean? It doesn't mean that you disown your parents. Usually when somebody becomes a Christian, if they are Muslim or a Roman Catholic and they come to faith, usually, or a Jew, their family disowns them. You don't have to disown them and you aren't disowning them, you're supposed to honor your father and your mother still. But what does it mean that you leave your father and your mother? Now, she had to leave them physically but spiritually what I think we're talking about here is what Jesus says when he says, "Except you hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, you are not worthy to be my disciple." That a person to come to God to really find hope, you have to turn from every other relationship that has been primary in your life and make the relationship with God central, and if it means losing everything else, "I want God so much," that is saving faith.

This is a picture of saving faith in Ruth's life. She left her father and her mother. She left the land of her birth. She left the land where she was comfortable, all the relationships that she had. She was willing to turn her back on all of that if necessary. Now, in our situations, we don't have to just immediately break off friendships. That's not what God intends us to do. When you get saved, what does he want you to do? Witness to your friends. Witness to your family. Love them. Serve them. Show them the difference, the life that is in you. But if it happens that they reject you, you don't reject Christ. You have found the treasure of all treasures. You have found bread. What should you do around the people that are still without bread? You tell them where you found bread.

But the idea is that the saving faith is not just a simple intellectual decision. "Yes, I believe and assent to the fact that Jesus died on the cross for my sins." It's not just intellectual assent, it is complete surrender and trust. It is repentance. It is turning from. A key word in this book has been "returning from." In fact, in this chapter when the servant even said, verse 6, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab," that's the key word "shuwb" which so often in the Old Testament is translated "repent." To repent, to return; to turn. She has turned from Moab and she has turned to Israel. That's what's happened and that's what it means to pursue the God of hope. We do it by leaving everything else, being willing to lose everything else. Jesus said, "He who loves his life will lose it." If you love the things of this world, if you love all of the relationships, all of the values of this world so much that you hold onto them, if you love these things, you will lose them. If you love your life you lose it, if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it. If you lay everything else down, you will get

Christ and then you will get everything else he wants to give you. You will have more than you ever imagined.

That's what Ruth has done. It's a picture of saving faith. A glorious picture of saving faith. She left her father, her mother, the land of her birth. She came to a people that she did not formerly know and that's what happens when someone comes to faith. Now, you see, when the Lord is working in someone's life, what's going to happen out there is, our understanding of the Scriptures is we gather as a church family, as people who love Jesus and we're always happy to have new people come in and join us to hear about the love that we have for Jesus, to share in it each week, but in essence, our basic plan is we come together to be encouraged and we go out and we establish relationships with people, we tell other people where we found bread. And the Lord allows us to be around people who are hurting so that we can love them and encourage them and they can see the difference that Jesus is making in our lives, and as they see the hope that is within us, they begin to want what we have, and especially as they see our family relationships because we're a family and that's essentially what it means when she left her father and her mother. When you become a Christian, your true family is the family of God. It doesn't mean that you don't have an earthly family. Yes, you do, praise God for our parents. We're grateful for our families, our brothers and sisters, our cousins, all of that, and we're supposed to honor them but in reality, the true family is the family of God. That's a blessing when your physical family is also your spiritual family, but the important thing is the spiritual family. This is why Jesus said, remember when they came and said to him, "Hey, Jesus, we need to interrupt your teaching right now, your mother and your brothers are outside." Remember what he said? "Who are my mother and my brothers but he who does the will of my Father." He was basically telling us, it was probably a little jarring for mom and the brothers but was something they needed to hear, that what matters is not the physical lineage and the physical relationships, what matters is the spiritual relationships. It far outweighs that. It doesn't mean that these are unimportant at all. No, they have some importance but comparatively, they are nothing in comparison to being a part of the family of God.

So you and I, we all come from broken lives. We come to Christ, we come together and we now are a family and the Lord wants other people to be coming into our family: people that are broken; people that are confused; people that have gone through things like transgender surgeries, and that will come to the point of being in despair because they are living against how God has made them and they are defining themselves by their passions and their lusts rather than by who they are, created in the image of God. And they're going to see the despair of it and they need people like you and me to love them enough to let them come into our lives. Now, listen, we don't let them come into our lives, we don't let them come to our church and say, "Hey, come in and don't change," because that's not the message for any of us, is it? "Hey, you're a habitual liar, come in and stay the same. You're a person ridden with anxiety, come in and stay the same. The church is a place for everybody to just stay the same and, you know, I'm okay, you're okay." No, that's not the church of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is people who were formerly, like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:9, "no drunkard, no adulterer, no fornicator, no homosexual, no effeminate," and he goes on, "will inherit the kingdom of

God," those whose lives are characterized by these things. But then he says this wonderful verse, "but such were some of you, but you were sanctified, you were washed." So we're people who have come out of broken worlds, God has transformed us and he is continuing to change us. So over time, we ought to have more and more people from all these different areas coming into our church. We ought to pray, "Lord, send us folks that have come out of the brokenness of that kind of even transgender confusion, because you can rebuild. Though your sins are as scarlet, I will make them white as snow. I will restore the years the locusts have eaten. I will give you beauty for ashes." We have the message of the God of hope.

So the Lord puts these people in our lives, we love them and we let them see the difference. We tell them about where we found bread through Jesus. And then they're going to have, we have to tell them the message. "Listen, the way you're going to find bread is you've got to repent and return from all of that and come to Christ." And you come to the people of God but when you come to the people of God, what the people of God tell you is, "Hey, you're coming to the man of God, Jesus." Because what they should find when they come to us is that we're all looking at Jesus and we're pointing to him, "It's not us, it's him. He's the one that can give you hope. He is the treasure of treasures."

So you not only humbly acknowledge your great need of hope and actively pursue the God of hope, thirdly, then you behold the glory of the God of hope. Behold the glory of the God of hope. This picture of what happens in Ruth's life through Boaz's generosity is astounding. I'm going to hit it quickly but essentially in verses 8 and 9 when he says, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids." The language is emphatic in verses 8 and 9. When he says, "Listen carefully," actually the Hebrew idiom is literally this: have you not heard, my daughter? It's a Hebrew idiom. Now, she couldn't have heard. He's not been talking about it but it's as if to say, "It's so clear. My purpose is so determined that it's almost as if you should have already heard about this because there is no doubt what I'm going to do for you." Here she is wondering, "Is he going to tolerate me? Is he going to allow me to glean in the field and just not be mean to me?" And what he comes and says is basically there is none of that. "You have no idea. It's my determination to welcome you." And he welcomes her. He says, "Listen, you don't go to any other place. You stay in my field because you are welcome here."

He says, "Indeed, I have commanded the servants," here again is the Hebrew idiom, it's a question literally in the Hebrew, "Have I not commanded the servants not to touch you." Now, in reality, we're going to find out he hasn't told them that yet. He's going to tell them that in a few verses. After lunch, he's going to tell them, "Don't touch her." But he says, "Have I not told them," because this is the way God speaks so often. In the mind of God, the future event is as certain as if it has already happened. "I am going to tell them and they are not going to touch you." He's saying it in the most emphatic way possible. Such an encouraging word. Such a welcoming heart. These are arms open to her. "Listen, my daughter, come in. This is your place."

So he gives her a place. He makes room for her. He honors her. When she falls down on her face in verse 10, in verse 11 and 12 when he's telling her what we just talked about a minute ago, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law has been fully reported to me. All that you have done in leaving. May the LORD reward your wages and your wages be full." What he's doing is he is honoring her. He's basically saying, "I am so encouraged by your example." He's lifting her up above himself even to say, "Wow, look at your life." This is how God receives sinners who come back to him. He doesn't begrudgingly kick over a loaf of bread and ignore them. He receives them with open arms. This is chesed. This is a woman in misery, in hopelessness, and the Lord opening his arms and reaching out and embracing her and holding her.

He not only honors her, he blesses her. Verse 12, "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full." In fact, it's interesting that both words here, "reward" and "full," are from the Hebrew word "shalem," which is "shalom," basically. "May the LORD give you peace." Now, it does have the economic idea here too, "Your wages be full," reward, financial reward; it's a part of that meaning, the semantic range of that word. But it's the same word for "peace" and it also implies a covenant of peace. "May you have wholeness and fullness." Boaz blesses her.

Then he serves her in verse 14. She has wondered if she's going to have a place, is she going to be able to work in the yard. Then she comes up, it's mealtime, she is lingering back toward the back wondering what's going to happen and he basically says, "Come up here and sit down right here." Not only that, now you're sitting among the reapers, he then serves her. This is the God of the Bible. It's the God of the Bible, like Satan says, not good, not out for your good. This is the God of the Bible.

This is the true and living God, the one who stoops to serve those in need, and you see him more fully than this in the person of Jesus Christ. What was Jesus like? What is God like? What was Jesus like? He said, "I did not come to be served but to serve." He humbled himself. He left the glory of heaven and humbled himself, taking the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He lowered himself down. He said, "Come unto me you who are weary and heavy laden." Why? "I'll give you rest because I am gentle and lowly of heart." See him there on the night before he was to be crucified, just hours later he is going to be arrested and experience the agony of the cross and there he is washing the disciples' feet. What kind of God is that?

How can we not say yes to him? How can we not surrender everything that we are? How can we not in our brokenness run to him? Because you find a God that will pick up the pieces, get into the mess that you've made and start repairing, and even as he does, he is speaking kindly. I love what she said at the end of that in verse 13, she says, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your servant. You have comforted me. You have given me ease." The idea of this word "comforted," comes from a word which means "to breathe deeply." It's like a sigh. "You comforted me. You have spoken kindly." It literally means "spoke into my heart. You have spoken to the heart of my maids. I didn't think you would notice me but you not only noticed me, you have spoken to my heart."

That is the God of the Bible that has made himself known in Jesus Christ. He has proved his love forever by coming into this world. Jesus came into the world, took our flesh upon him, the likeness of our sinful flesh, was tempted in every way yet without sin, lived a perfect life and then offered himself as a sacrifice on the cross, bearing our sins in his body, treated as if he had lived our wicked evil lives, experiencing the wrath of God against every sin that would ever be committed by everyone who would ever believe. He experienced God's wrath in the full measure for that. Then he said on the cross, "It is finished! It is paid in full." After hanging for hours in that agony, he committed to the Lord, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." He died. The veil was torn in two showing that man now could get into the very throne room of God. Raised from the dead on the third day to prove his sacrifice was accepted.

A God who would do that, why would you not give him everything that you are? We have a wonderful message, a glorious message of hope for a world that is so much in need of hope and so we don't need to despair as things get darker around us. The light of the Gospel of the glory of God and the glorious God of hope will burn ever brighter.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we stand in awe of you and we acknowledge that you are more wonderful than we would have ever dreamed. You are beyond our wildest hopes, that you could find a way to forgive and cleanse and heal and restore us, is in itself astonishing because we are so broken and we are so dirty and we are so needy. We thank you that Jesus is everything that we need, that in him you have done everything necessary and that the work is finished. It is only a matter of surrendering and trusting. Grant each person in this room the ability to surrender and trust fully in Jesus and to know the hope that comes from being your precious child. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*