

The Fullness of His Grace

Book of Ruth

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of Ruth. The book of Ruth. I thought this would be our last message in Ruth but I think I thought wrong so I'm not going to say that next week will be. We'll be looking this morning at verses 13 to 17 and the title of the message is "The Fullness of His Grace." We've noted as we've been working through this book when we began back in the summer, that though the book is titled Ruth really the main character of the book is the lady, Naomi; that it is really told from her perspective. In the truest sense, the reader is to identify with her. Ruth is a hero, no doubt, as is Boaz, and I think that's why the book was titled Ruth because of her exemplary character. We're going to see some of that today that's just astonishing, breathtaking, the love that she has for her mother-in-law.

But it's about Naomi and Naomi's journey, first of all from the land of promise, the land of Canaan, the land of Israel, the land of Judah particularly, Bethlehem, their home. She and her husband, remember, leave and they go to Moab in a time of famine and during that time of journey and sojourn in the land of Moab, her husband dies, her two sons marry Moabite women, intermarry, violating the Scriptures, and during that time both sons die childless so that Naomi is left with her two daughters-in-law in the land of Moab without a man. To be at that time in history without a man for a woman was to have no hope, no future. No man meant no future, no hope, and so they were threefold in that predicament: three women with no man, no future, no hope. But the story is told and we'll see it again as we look a little bit later, how it's from her perspective. When you read the flow of chapter 1, Naomi is left without her husband and then after her two sons die, Naomi was bereft, this is how the text reads, bereft of her husband and her two sons. The focus isn't on Ruth or on the other daughter-in-law, Orpah, the focus is on Naomi and Naomi makes the decision to return and Naomi sets out to return and when Naomi gets to Bethlehem, the focus is on her.

She says to the ladies there, "Don't call me Naomi. I went out full but have come back empty." There Ruth is, she is ignoring her, "I'm empty." And we're going to see that the end of the book, again in the passage that we're going to look at this morning, the focus, the spotlight is on Naomi. We're going to go to the day of the birth of the child, the birth of the child that comes through the union of Boaz and Ruth and what we're going to see is Boaz and Ruth are nowhere to be found yet we see Naomi, we see the child, and

Naomi is surrounded by the ladies of Bethlehem because she is the main character. It's her journey from fullness to emptiness back to fullness.

When she says in chapter 1, verse 21, "Don't call me Naomi, call me Mara." Remember, Naomi, the word in Hebrew means "pleasant one." Their names meant something. They were not just words gathered together for a sound that we sort of name our children based on sound, I guess, mostly. They had meanings in their names and her name meant "pleasant one," and so they say, "Is this Naomi?" when she comes back into town after being gone more than 10 years and she says, "Do not call me Naomi. Do not call me," in other words, "pleasant one, call me Mara." Mara means "bitter." Mary comes from that. The root in Hebrew is bitterness. "Call me bitter one for the Almighty has dealt harshly with me, dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, I left the land full but he has brought me back empty."

But we see in this unfolding of the chapters, God's amazing grace and the fullness of his grace in that he restores this undeserving woman beyond her wildest dreams. Her emptiness becomes fullness. And we see in her life as we identify with her, we see the agony that can come in living in a fallen world, the profound sense of loss, hopelessness, despair. And we're going to see like Naomi that very often our brokenness and hopelessness and despair is not entirely outside of our control. I mean, God is sovereign and we are going to see as she sees and we have seen, he's sovereign over everything but she also deals with the fact that some of her wounds are self-inflicted. Isn't that a bitter feeling when you know that your life, that you are experiencing profound agony and those around you are experiencing agony because of your own sin? There's a hopelessness and a hopelessness that can overtake you in that. Well, the book of Ruth is good news for people in that predicament because the God of heaven, the Lord, is a God who delights to take emptiness and pour through his grace make it fullness. So the title, "The Fullness of His Grace."

Let's read Ruth 4, beginning at verse 13.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi [not to Ruth], "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. 15 May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. 17 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we come to your word we are profoundly aware of our inadequacy and our inability to understand, to apply, to obey, and so we ask that your Spirit might help us,

that the same Spirit that inspired these perfect words might now illuminate our minds and our hearts and teach us, lead us, help us, restore us, all for the glory of your Son. We pray in his name. Amen.

The fullness of his grace. I want us to walk through, there are three points we will gather our thoughts around this morning and it's following Naomi. The first point we want to take note of is Naomi's emptiness because here at the end of the book we're really seeing the conclusion of the whole book and we need to see it in context and the first thing was Naomi's emptiness. I alluded to it earlier but we need to look at it a little more carefully.

Turn back to chapter 1 of Ruth and let's look at this profound emptiness that defined her life. In chapter 1, verse 5, we've read at the beginning that they left and went to the land of Moab, then verse 5, "Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died," her two sons, her two boys died, "and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband." Now, we already knew she lost her husband in verse 3, "she was left with her two sons," without her husband. Now the author wants to remind us, "Don't forget she lost her husband. She's lost her husband and her two children." "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food." So she heads back home.

In verse 13, the daughters go with her part of the way, the daughters-in-law, remember, Orpah and Ruth go with her part of the way and then she encourages them to go back because she says, "I have no future for you. The most practical, sensible thing is for you to go back to your father's house and remarry young men in Moab" And Orpah takes that counsel, though at first she doesn't want to, she finally, Naomi pleads with them and Orpah leaves. Part of that pleading is there in verse 13 when she expresses her heart when they want to stay with her. She says, "No, my daughters," that last half of verse 13 of chapter 1, "No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me." God's hand is against me.

When she gets back to Bethlehem with Ruth who has gone with her, Orpah left, then she says as we said earlier, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" She sees herself not only as empty but as under the judgment of God. I mean, she's on the verge of despair. She sees the hand of God and she's got sound theology in a lot of ways. She understands that the Lord truly is sovereign over everything as the Bible clearly teaches, as the hymn writer discovered as he kept reading his Bible and left the Wesleyan tradition for the more Calvinistic tradition. This is what the Bible teaches, God is sovereign. He is in control. So you see this when she says, "the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me. I see that my circumstances aren't just random happenings. No, God is doing something."

Verse 20, "the Lord has dealt very bitterly with me. He's the Almighty. He can do all things. He has witnessed against me. He has afflicted me." She sees her circumstances as under the control of God. Now, she's not completely correct, she is verging on believing

that God is punishing her. That sermon Dr. Street preached last summer, remember, John Street came and preached a sermon and the question was, "Is God punishing me?" I encourage you to go back and listen to that. You can find it on our website, "Is God punishing me?" And the answer is: no. If you belong to God, he cannot be punishing you but he may be disciplining you. If he loves you, he will be disciplining you. Discipline and punishment are very different things. Punishment is just about justice, in meting out justice. For the believer, the justice has been settled at the cross. What God is doing in our lives is disciplining us and the beauty of the word "discipline," do you see the word "disciple" in it? He is at times spanking us but it's so that we will follow him more closely, and the image is like in Psalm 23 when David says, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Think about a sheep and the rod and the staff. The sheep gets the rod or the staff when the sheep is starting to spray. Pow! It doesn't seem like comfort. If the sheep is smart, it is comfort, isn't it? Because sheep, they go astray, they are foolish and we are like sheep and so we tend to wander but the Lord is loving enough that he pops us because he's not going to let us wander away so the rod and the staff, they comfort us.

But at the same time, she could know and she's not quite working out her theology very well, after all, she is struggling, but she knows that her sin is partly the contributor for the agony she's going through right now. In fact, I think the author of Ruth wants us to see that. It was not insignificant that she and her husband left Israel to go to Moab. The very leaving of Israel to go to Moab was a lack of faith in God's faithfulness. When famine comes in a land they were told in Deuteronomy, when God sends famine on the land, when you get in the land and God sends famine, what you need to do is not relocate, you need to repent. But they relocated and the emphasis that the author puts on it very subtly, there is such a beautiful, artistic flourish to the way God worked through the author of the book of Ruth; all of Scripture, of course, is beautiful but there is some literary elegance about this particular book that causes us to marvel.

He doesn't say anything explicit to tell us that she did something wrong but the emphasis is clearly there. When you look back at chapter 1, look at the phrase, the repetition of the phrase "the land of Moab." In chapter 1, verse 1, "it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there." Verse 3, Elimelech dies. Verse 4, "They took for themselves Moabite women." Now, of course if they married there you would assume they took Moabite women but the author wants us to understand that they took Moabite women. And remember, five times in the book Ruth is referred to as "Ruth the Moabitess, Ruth the Moabitess, Ruth the Moabitess. Don't forget she is a Moabitess." But look at verse 6 of chapter 1, "[Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food." Do you see the emphasis on the land of Moab? She needs to return.

The word "Moab" was very loaded, the name and the country was a loaded term for the people that first read this book when God inspired it for his people, the associations of Moab. Moab was the son of Lot and his daughter's incestuous sexual relationship. A child of incest, Moab. Moab then becomes an enemy of the people of Israel as they go into the land of Canaan. Balak and Balaam work together to seek to destroy Israel and the Moabites, the sin of Balaam is the sin of the Moabites and luring them into adulterous relationships. They wanted to destroy God's people and so God pronounces judgment upon him and, in fact, we saw in Deuteronomy 23 that a descendant of Moab could not come into the temple up to the 10th generation.

So all of that association is there. "The land of Moab. The land of Moab. The land of Moab. The Moabites. Moabites." And it's very significant, then, that she returns from that land. Now so she knows that her emptiness, at some level she is understanding it is self-inflicted. That's why she says what she says in verse 13, "the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me." "I deserve him to be against me. That's why he's dealt very bitterly with me. That's why he has afflicted me." She has a sense that, "God has witnessed against me. He has judged me and he is punishing me." She's right in that she has sinned and God is disciplining her, not punishing her. How hard it is to deal with just the profound emptiness that can come into our lives and when we see no sense of hope days can be so dark that no hope of light seems anywhere close and how deep is that darkness when it's our own sin that has helped bring it about. We can say, "If only... If only..." And we're helpless to do anything about it. We have brought it on but we can't get out.

Well, the beauty of this story is Naomi doesn't stay in emptiness. The one thing that she can do she does. The second point, we looked at Naomi's emptiness, now the second point is Naomi's repentance. We can do what Naomi did, she repented. Again, there is a subtlety about even the way the author describes this but the emphasis is clear. In the same way he emphasized Moab, he emphasizes a keyword in chapter 1, perhaps the key word in chapter 1 is the word "return." In the Hebrew, it's the word "shub." It occurs 12 times in the chapter, 12 times in chapter 1 the word "shub" occurs.

First of all in chapter 1, verse 6, look at verses 6 and 7, "Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab." She is leaving the land she wasn't supposed to have gone to in the first place and she is returning to the land of Canaan, to the land of Israel, to the land of Judah in particular, to her home in Bethlehem. The word "return" or "shub" is a word that is often translated in the Old Testament as "repent." It means "to turn, to return." It means to be going in one direction and to turn around and go in the other direction. It's a very important word theologically in the Old Testament that comes on into the New Testament with the doctrine of repentance. To be saved, what do you have to do? You have to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but you also have to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And the author is making this clear, this is what's happening. Naomi is no longer seeking sustenance and seeking life outside the place of God's presence, Israel. She was doing that. She was in Moab with her husband, at some level complicit with that and seeking life away from God, now she is returning to the Lord.

You see this continue on, this emphasis. Verse 10, they say, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people." She tells them to go back to their people and they say, "No, we want to return with you," at first. "We want to come with you." Then the emphasis is a return over and over. Verse 11, "Naomi said, 'Return, my daughters.'" "No, you go back that way." She's not thinking biblically at this point for their sake but she is returning for her own sake. But Ruth goes with her and you see this summarized in chapter 1, verse 22 when it says, "So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest." She has returned. In fact, that's the dominant theme, that echo is going to continue through the book.

In chapter 2, verse 6, remember when Ruth goes out into the field to glean, to find some food so that they can stay alive, she happens upon Boaz's field and she is there waiting to glean when Boaz returns from the city, the village, and he says, "Who is this young woman?" And his servant says in chapter 2, verse 6, "The servant in charge of the reapers replied, 'She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.'" This echoes again in chapter 4, verse 3 when Boaz says to the closest relative, remember, now they're at the city gate and he says to the closest relative, the kinsman redeemer, "Naomi, who has come back from the land of Moab." What is true about Naomi? She has returned from the land of Moab. She has done the one thing she could do which is to turn away from her sin, to turn away from trying to live life apart from God's blessing, and she has returned to the Lord. Repent biblically is not just to turn from sin, it is repentance toward God. You turn from sin toward God and that is what she has done. She has repented. She has returned.

This is why that is the call of the Gospel in the New Testament. What is it that John the Baptist begins preaching? Jesus is about to be revealed, John is told to go before him and what does he say? "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Turn from your sin back to God for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of God is here." What does Jesus preach when he goes about preaching? Matthew 4:23 says he went about Galilee preaching, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You read the Gospels, the message of repentance is there. You read the early preaching of Acts, Peter, what does he say at the end of his great sermon in Acts 2, the day of Pentecost when the people are cut to the hearts after he has presented Christ to them? "Jesus, whom they crucified has now been declared to be Lord and Christ by the resurrection from the dead." And they are cut to the heart and they say, "What should we do?" And he says, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. Turn away from your sin back to God." Chapter 3, verse 19, his next major sermon recorded. He says, "Repent and return that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." This continues to be the message. Paul preaches in Athens in chapter 17, Athens, Greece, and he tells them that God has overlooked times of ignorance but he is now calling all men, commanding all men to repent, to turn back to the Lord. And this is what Naomi does. She repents.

As that word continues to be developed in the New Testament and into the epistles, we see that "repent," the New Testament word for "repent," is "metanoia." It means "to

change one's mind; to be thinking a certain way and to have a change of mind." But when we look at all of the teaching of repentance in the New Testament, we see that it's not just a change, a mental change, I'm just making a change just philosophically, a thought process. No, it's something much greater than that, it's a change of heart. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7 that it is godly sorrow that leads you to repentance; that real repentance has an element of godly sorrow. There is sorrow in repentance. You don't turn from sin back to God without having your mind changed and your heart changed. In fact, it's the evidence of a regenerated heart that God has given you a heart of flesh. He has taken out your hard stony heart and he has given you a heart of flesh.

So Naomi is returning. She has had a change of mind, she has had a change of heart and that then, a change of mind, a change of heart leads to a change of direction. That's what repentance is, those three things: a change of mind, a change of heart and a change of direction. It's a change of life. So that is what has happened for her. Now, what's instructive is when she gets back, she's come back but her circumstances haven't yet changed and there is no guarantee that they will change dramatically but she has decided she's going to go back to the place of God's presence and she's going to stay in the land and put all of her hopes there. That small decision God then pours his lavish grace upon. Repentance and faith are really small things. They are not great works. They are not works that earn salvation. They are nothing. They are essentially what Luther said are the empty outstretched hands of a beggar. Repentance is basically, "I'm no longer going to seek life here. I turn to the Lord in faith." And it is to lift up your hands to him. And that's all it is. It's not a work. It merits nothing. Repentance and faith basically acknowledge that, "I have nothing," as the song we just sang about, "I have nothing to bring. Nothing in my hands I bring, only to your cross I cling." But Naomi does the one thing she can do, she repents. And so what would the Lord have you to do when you find yourself in the misery, hopelessness, sense of overwhelming helplessness? Turn back to him. Go back to the Lord. Repent and return that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Hosea 6, how God uses affliction. Actually Hosea 5:15 is a nice contextual help in seeing and the first couple of verses of chapter 6 are precious. Hosea, the prophet, writing to unfaithful northern kingdom of Israel, shows us the heart of God, God's tender heart that will be shown to those who repent. He says in chapter 5:15, the Lord is speaking here and he says, "I will go away and return to My place." I'm going to leave the people and I'm going to return to my place, "Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." That's what's happened to Naomi. God has used her affliction, her hopelessness, to lead her to seek the Lord.

And he says, "In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." And look what the people then say to one another, "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth." The prophet is saying, "If we will say this to one another, the people say if we will turn back to the Lord, he's

the one who has wounded us, we turn back to him and he will bandage us. He will heal us." How soon will it happen? It will be like the spring rain. You may have to wait a season or two to see the rain fall but he will be faithful.

So Naomi repents. So we've seen Naomi's emptiness, we've seen Naomi's repentance, now the third point is Naomi's fullness. What we see in Ruth 4:13 to 17 is a complete reversal of chapter 1. I think the author is actually intending us to see it in a lot of different ways. I said the artistic beauty of this, in chapter 1, the emptiness comes to a head, where? When Naomi is talking to the women of Bethlehem. In chapter 4, verses 13 to 17, what is the setting? Naomi and the women of Bethlehem. In chapter 1, verses 20 and 21, those women of Bethlehem heard Naomi cry out in anguish concerning the wretchedness of her emptiness, sorrow, despair. In chapter 4, verses 13 to 17, those women who heard the cry of despair now cry shouts of joy, fullness. Their hearts are full and overflowing and they are sharing that joy with Naomi.

Look at this, I want to look at it under two subpoints, Naomi's fullness under two subpoints. The first subpoint is the riches of God's grace. The riches of God's grace because what we see is the Lord, now I said Naomi is in the spotlight but now the Lord comes into the spotlight and, of course, in the whole book he's been, as he always is in Scripture, the main character. But we see this because in verse 14, after we're told about the conception of the son, the birth of the son in verse 13, the women say to Naomi, what do they say? The first thing they say, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer." "The Lord has acted, Naomi. Yahweh has acted on your half and behold his grace, the riches of his grace." The first subpoint: the riches of his grace.

There is a wordplay happening. I mentioned that one of the key words in the book is the word "return," and in Hebrew it's the word "shub." There is a very important use of it here in chapter 4, verse 15, "May he also be to you a restorer of life." The word "restorer" in the NASB is the word "shub," it's the word "return, repent." It could say, "May he also be to you a returner of life. May this child that has been born, may he be one, may he be someone who returns your life to you." In fact, the word "life" is the word "nephesh" which can mean "breath." "May he restore your breath to you. You have been out of breath. You've been like someone who has been hit in the stomach so hard that you can't breathe. That's what your life has been like. May this child who has been born fill your lungs with oxygen again. May you have the life and vitality to come. May this child be that." And it's an exact counterpart to what is said in chapter 1, verse 21 when she said, "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty." The three words in English, "brought me back," is the Hebrew word "shub." She's saying, "I went out full, but the LORD has returned me empty." So in that same setting with those same women, she's talking about how God has returned her. She has returned to the Lord but she feels like, "Though he has brought me back, he has brought me back empty," and now they're saying, "The Lord who has given you this child, he's going to return to you all fullness." It has come full circle.

They lay term upon term. First of all they say, "The Lord has not left you without a redeemer today." A kinsman redeemer. It's interesting here they are speaking of the boy

that has been born, not Boaz. "The child is now your kinsman redeemer." The only time in Scripture that a child is named kinsman redeemer. But the baby that has been born is now the redeemer, the kinsman redeemer, "and may his name become a famous in Israel. The redeemer, the kinsman that draws close to you and pays the redemption price. He's going to make sure, he's going to ensure your place in the land. This child, the redeemer."

And let's look again at that phrase, "restorer of life." He's going to be a restorer of life and, secondly, "a sustainer of your old age." Restorer of life and sustainer of your old age. Restorer of life, he's going to be breath, he's going to give you life again. I think one of the things that's happening here for Naomi, what gives her breath and hope is that the line of her family is now saved. The descendant, the seed, that's what gives her vitality and life. She thought she was at a dead end but God has reestablished the line of Elimelech, her husband. She is given back life.

Then also, there were two things, she was empty in chapter 1 for two things: she had no family line and she had no food. Now she has a family line, a restorer of life, but then she has a sustainer of her old age. Actually in the Hebrew, literally "a feeder of your gray head. You have someone who is going to feed you. He's going to feed your gray hair. He's going to provide for you all the days of your life. You thought you came back empty but now look what God has done. Because you returned to him, God has overflowed and lavished upon you fullness."

Then in verse 17 when they say, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed." For some reason they allow her to name the son. We're going to come back to that in a moment but it seems so out of place at the beginning. Usually that's the mom and dad, right? "What are you going to call this child?" Usually you have a name picked out already. Sometimes people go into the delivery room between a couple of names. If you don't know if it's a boy or a girl, you definitely have at least two names unless you're going with something neutral like Pat. But you don't usually wait this late. But not only did mom and dad not name the child, the women of Bethlehem do it. But the name is significant and it's interesting, it's emphasized in the fact that when they said in verse 14, "may his name become famous in Israel," now they are the ones that name him.

"So they named him Obed." The word "Obed" comes from a Hebrew word which means "to serve." They named him "servant." "God has given you a servant. God has given someone that is going to look after you and care for you, his name is Obed." And beyond that, it's going to be more wonderful than that because we are told then, remember verse 14, it's so interesting, they said, "may his name become famous in Israel." Look at how what they said, the women said in verse 14 compares with what the men said to Boaz in verse 11. Do you see where they say, "May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah," in verse 11 of chapter 4, "both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem." "Become famous" literally in the Hebrew means "to have your name called out," where people just know your name. "Boaz, may this result in you becoming famous all throughout Bethlehem."

But look at the son. The women say, "may your son become famous in Israel." There is movement from the local to the national. This redeemer that has been born, his name is going to become famous in Israel, verse 14, and then in verse 17, "they named him Obed," and look at the subtle quiet way that the author then tells you, "look how famous his name is. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Obed, Jesse, David. "God has done way beyond what you could have ever imagined in giving you fullness. You were full, you thought. You left the land full, you came back empty but the fullness you have now is greater than you could have ever imagined." It's like Job when Job lost all that he had, remember in chapters 1 and 2? Loses his family, loses his health, loses all of his possessions but at the end of the book we find out that God gives Job more sons and daughters than he had before, more possessions than he had before. But he has something more wonderful than more children and more possessions, he says in chapter 40, I believe, "Before I had heard about you with my ears, now I have seen you with my eyes." That's what's happened to Naomi. She now has more than she ever had and she now has seen God in a way that she never had.

So the fullness of his grace. What does this say? If you repent and return, the Lord will be faithful to his word. He will give you beauty for ashes. He will restore your fortunes. He delights to do that. The riches of his grace but, secondly, the lavishness of his love. The second subpoint under Naomi's fullness. She is full because she receives the riches of his grace but also the lavishness of his love. It's something I had never seen until this week and a commentator helped me see it.

There is a key word in verse 16, "Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse." The word "nurse," it's from a Hebrew verb which means "to support, confirm, uphold." It's a word that is sometimes used of a pillar supporting a building. So Naomi will be the nurse. It's also found in other places in Scripture and outside writings to mean "a foster mother; a foster father," would have this word, the word "nurse" here. What's happening here, now legally when the child is born, he has a legal obligation to look after Naomi all of his life and he will live on the inheritance of Elimelech. That's legal. It's a legal transaction that was settled at the gate, but what you see happening in the language and even as I mentioned before, the fact that the child is not named by Ruth and Boaz, something profound has happened. The picture is almost, we are not exactly sure how it transpires but it seems that they have taken the child from Ruth and Boaz and the ladies have brought the baby to Naomi's house, as it were. They are celebrating with her. She takes the child on her lap. They name the child. She becomes his nurse. What has happened is Ruth has gone beyond the requirements of the law and has said to Naomi, "He is your son. He will call you mommy. You will be the one that holds him and supports him. You will be the face that he looks at as his mother." She has given her son to Naomi. Such is her great love and this is what explains the fact that they named the child, but also the lavish praise of the ladies who say to her, "may he also be to you a restorer of life," verse 15, "a sustainer of your old age; ; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Ruth's love for her mother-in-law is so great that she surrenders, she yields her son over.

You know, Naomi when she returned to the Lord, she returned to the land, she was so overwhelmed with bitterness and despair and a sense of guilt mingled with, "Why has this happened to me?" Returning and she's still hopeless when she gets back to Bethlehem, "Why call me Naomi, call me Mara." She's not taking the initiative, remember. Ruth takes the initiative to go out and provide for them. Naomi's in kind of a depressed state. She's not doing anything but she has done the one thing, she has come back to the Lord and she has laid herself down before him and what you find in this is that when you return to the Lord, the Lord returns to you. You draw near to God and he says, "I will draw near to you." You go back to the Lord and you say, "Lord, you have broken me. You have wounded me but you will heal me," and you will find like the prodigal son, the prodigal son when he made his way home, he didn't have to get all the way home, his daddy met him on the way. That's what the Lord has done with her. He met her on the way. There she is leaving Moab, going back to the land hopeless, what did God do? He met her on the way and he met her on the way by changing the heart of the most unlikely person, a little Moabite young woman, her daughter-in-law. He changed her heart and he filled her heart with love. He put his chesed in her, his lovingkindness. So that woman, though she was encouraged by Naomi, "Go back. Go back. Don't go with me. Have I got sons? I've got nothing for you." The daughter-in-law said, "No, where you go, I will go." That's God manifesting his kindness and his mercy to Naomi.

She doesn't even know that the Lord has met her, though. She gets back to Bethlehem and she says, "I came back empty." And there is Ruth standing right there. "I've got nothing." She thought she had nothing but there was the Lord loving her and ministering to her. There the Lord, as it says, she went back with her mother-in-law Naomi, she lived with Naomi, she goes out and she works the fields, she brings back the food to Naomi, she saved food for Naomi. There she is just lavishing love upon her mother-in-law. Then she follows through with Naomi's plan to marry and she didn't have to follow through with the biblical command about a kinsman redeemer, an old man like Boaz. But Ruth's love for Naomi is so great. She also respects, Boaz must have thought he was a nice guy too. But it's really her chesed for Naomi. That's why Boaz says, "Your second kindness is greater than your first." He marvels at her character. "The fact that you left Moab and came back with Naomi, that was an amazing act of chesed but now that you have chosen to marry me, an older man when you could have had younger men, you are loving your mother-in-law." And who is loving her mother-in-law? God is loving her mother-in-law. The Lord is being faithful to his promise. And now that same daughter-in-law is going above and beyond the requirements of the law, doing something that the Israelites who were reading this must have just been stunned by when they read it. Not only has she done all of these things, a Moabitess, but she is giving her her son.

I have a pastor friend who was telling me that they have, I have known for several years they have some foster children and they wanted to adopt them. He told me on the 25th of January they are going to be adopting two little girls that the mothers are signing over parental rights. They have had the kids for about two years, it has taken that long. Now, these situations, the mothers' drug situations, it's terrible terrible situations. And they take them as foster children and hope that the mothers will get their acts together but when they don't, the state then encourages them to sign over their parental rights and finally

these ladies have done that and so they are going to be brought into their home and raised as their own daughters.

But how hard it is, how hard it is for a woman even that's messed up in drugs whose life is so far away, so disoriented with her sin, but how much harder was it for Ruth. She had been childless. Ten years married with no children. Waiting for a child and yet she surrenders the child to Naomi. Such is a lavish love of God and in that she pictures what would happen when the descendant of Obed, the descendant of this child that would come from this baby's flesh, when God would send his Son into the world. He would take that which was most precious to him and he would give his Son not only for you, he gives him to you. The one who was in the bosom of the Father, he gives to you. And truly as a Christian when you repent and believe the Gospel, when you place your faith in Jesus Christ and you place all of your hope in what he has done, his perfect life of righteousness, his atoning death at Calvary, his resurrection, and when you repent, when you surrender and turn back to God and receive Jesus, what happens is you become his, yes, that's what repentance is, you surrender yourself to him, you become his but don't miss this, he also becomes yours. The song, "I am his and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ." The Redeemer who bought us with his blood becomes ours.

What a glorious God we serve. Why would you not repent and return to a God like that? Why would you stay in your misery? In your sin? Why would you keep looking at the brokenness around you and lamenting it and not make up your mind that, "Now let us return to the Lord for he has wounded us, he will heal us. He will bandage us. He will love us."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the riches of your grace, the lavishness of your love. We are so unworthy. Each of us, Father, have rebelled against you, we have run away from you, hated you, sought to live our lives for our own purposes, our own glory, and yet in spite of all that you have done everything necessary to save us, to change us, by giving your Son, not holding him back but delivering him up. We praise you. We pray that those that are here that do not yet know Christ, that you would open the eyes of their hearts. Grant them the ability to turn from their sin and to turn back to you. Grant them eyes to see the beauty of Jesus and the grace to trust him, to surrender to him, to know that if he loved me this much, then I can give him everything that I am. Be glorified, Lord, in the hearts of your people. Those of us who belong to you already, forgive us for our foolishness, our doubts, our anxious thoughts, our worries, our fears. What have we to fear? What have we to dread? If you gave your Son for us, will you not together with him freely give us all things? We believe, Lord, help our unbelief. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.