

MESSAGE TITLE: Shown Grace to Show Grace

SCRIPTURE: Ruth 2

KEY TRUTH: God shows His grace to people through those to whom He has already shown grace. Like Boaz, we have been shown grace in order to show grace.

GETTING STARTED (pick any of these as potential discussion starters)

In our story today from Ruth 2, pay close attention to how Boaz demonstrates grace. Watch how he interacts with the reapers. Listen to what he says to Ruth and observe the kindness with which he deals with her. Boaz is a man of grace who has received grace and who becomes a source of grace for others. Ask God to make you into a channel of God's grace to those around you as you read the story from Ruth 2.

OBSERVATION

Read Ruth 2:1-23.

What sorts of trials might Ruth and Naomi have faced as widows living in Bethlehem?

What was Ruth hoping to accomplish by gleaning "among the reapers" (v. 2)? What does this tell us about her?

The initiative to confront their problem came from Ruth (v. 2). We read in Leviticus 19:9-10 that landowners were required to leave the edges of their fields unharvested. Neither were they to go back and pick up excess heads of grain that had fallen to the ground or had been missed by the harvesters. This grain was to be left as food for the poor to gather. Not everyone obeyed the law, of course, and Ruth had to seek a field in which she would be allowed to glean. Yet she faced up to whatever embarrassment that entailed and found a field where she was allowed to work.

What do we learn about Boaz from verse 4?

How did Boaz respond to Ruth's request to glean in his field (vv. 7-9, v. 14)? What does that tell us about his character?

How does Boaz show Ruth grace throughout this chapter?

The first words out of Boaz's mouth to his servants were about the Lord and were words of blessing. This tells us that Boaz loved the Lord and was kind to his servants.

Furthermore, we see Boaz showed kindness to Ruth by feeding her, allowing her to freely glean in his field, and promising her protection.

What did Boaz recognize about Ruth (vv. 11-12)? How did his actions provide for Ruth's physical needs?

What did Boaz ask the Lord to do for Ruth? Why is this significant, and what does it teach us about him?

Boaz also desired that God show favor to Ruth. He pronounced a blessing on her. Boaz viewed Ruth's turn to the Lord as fully genuine, a faith demonstrated by her devotion to Naomi. Boaz understood that Ruth had cast herself into the hands of One who was previously a foreign deity. Boaz affirmed that, in his view, Ruth was now part of the covenant people and thus was under God's protection.

Think about everything we have discussed today from Ruth 2. How do you see God's providential hand at work in Ruth's life?

How has God shown favor to Ruth through Boaz? What significance did this hold for Naomi? How did Boaz's treatment of Ruth give Naomi hope?

APPLICATION

How has God shown grace to you? Share some ways recently in your small group that God has shown you His kindness and mercy.

Read Romans 5:1-11. How does this passage describe the grace God has shown in Christ? What does his grace produce in our lives?

Ask God to bring people into your life who need to receive God's gracious gift of forgiveness? Who are your 'five'? Will you commit to pray for them this week? How might God want you to engage your five with the Gospel of grace?

How do you believe God would have you show grace to another person this week? Is there anyone in your life who is hurting, alone or scared? Commit to pray for them and to ask God to give you an opportunity to show them grace.

PRAYER

Read Ephesians 2:4-9. Thank God for the extravagant grace He has shown you in saving you and sanctifying you. Thank God for the person who took the time to share

with you the incredible Good News of the Gospel. Ask Him to make you into an instrument of grace for others this week. Pray that the Lord would bring into your path someone who needs God's grace in a very real, tangible way.

COMMENTARY NOTES

Ruth 2:1-23

2:1-3. The practice of gleaning allowed the poor to go through the fields after the harvesters, picking up the grain that was left behind, along with the grain that landowners were required to leave at the edges of their fields (Lev. 19:9-10). The phrase translated a worthy man could designate Boaz as possessing wealth and property, but it becomes clear as the story unfolds that Boaz is also a man of integrity. The family connection was unknown to Ruth. Humanly speaking, she just happened to end up gleaning in his field, but there are no coincidences in God's program, and this divine appointment proved that the Lord was not against Naomi, as she thought (1:20-21).

2:4-7. Boaz's noble character was displayed in his care for his workers. Even his greeting to them was in the name of the Lord, and he knew them well enough to recognize a stranger in their midst. His question did not seek Ruth's name but her relationships: Whose young woman is this? The servant's answer twice highlighted her foreignness. He also offered an unsolicited testimony to her diligent hard work in the hot sun.

2:8-10. Boaz's noble character is again on display in his kind words to Ruth. Gleaning could be dangerous, especially for a young foreign woman, and Boaz issued instructions to ensure her safety. He also allowed her to drink the water his young men had brought, saving her the lengthy trip to the well. Ruth's response was to prostrate herself as a mark of respect for a social superior. As a Moabitess, she could easily have been ignored by Boaz, but he had noticed her and shown kindness to her.

2:11-13. The death of a husband exhausted a daughter-in-law's obligations, as Naomi herself had made clear (1:11). Yet Ruth had remained with Naomi, leaving her own land and people, which meant entrusting her future to the favor of the deity of the new land. Boaz asked the Lord, the God of Israel, to reward Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi and to shelter her under His protecting wings, as a mother bird shelters her young. Ruth responded with an expression of thanks for Boaz's kind and encouraging words to her, even though she had no claim on him, not even that of a maidservant in his employment.

2:14-16. As an impoverished gleaner, Ruth would normally have had little or nothing to eat while out in the fields. Boaz, however, invited her to eat with him and his harvesters.

In contrast to Naomi's declaration in 1:21 that she went out full and came back empty, Ruth went out empty and came back full. There is no hint of romantic interest in Boaz's actions. He was simply demonstrating his compassion and generosity to Ruth who, even though a foreigner, was linked to him through Naomi. He went so far as to instruct his harvesters deliberately to leave some grain for her to pick up, an action that went far beyond the demands of the law of Moses.

2:17-20. The measure of Boaz's generosity and Ruth's hard work is demonstrated in the remarkable quantity of grain that she gathered—an ephah (about 26 quarts) of barley. This was enough grain to feed a working man for several weeks. Boaz's generosity was evidence for Naomi that the Lord has not forsaken His kindness to the living or the dead. This represents a change in Naomi's attitude toward the Lord from 1:21. The judgment that the family had experienced was not His final word for them.

Family redeemers (v. 20) were relatives who were obliged to buy back family members from debt-slavery or to redeem their field if they had to sell it (Lev. 25:25-30). The family redeemer would also receive restitution on behalf of a deceased family member or pursue his killer to ensure that justice was served (Num. 5:8; 35:12). He might also raise up a child for the dead relative in order to maintain the connection between the clan and its hereditary property (Deut. 25:5-10), though Boaz had no legal obligation to act in this way.

2:21-23. Naomi's approval of Boaz's invitation for Ruth to remain until the end of the harvest demonstrates a concern for Ruth's safety not evident in verse 2. However, the concern may also reflect Naomi's growing awareness of her own culpability in the fate of her own family. Her earlier journey to the fields of Moab was an attempt to glean food "in the field of another" instead of seeking refuge under the wings of the Lord as she should have done. Boaz's generosity may have provided food, but Ruth's need of a home with a husband of her own is still real.