

Ruth 2

God's Grace at Work

Ryan Perz – December 15, 2019

There has been a tendency of some people to see that the God in the OT is predominantly full of wrath and judgment, but that the God in the NT, especially through Jesus, is all grace and mercy. The OT God is mean, the NT God is merciful.

That's simply not true. God's grace runs throughout the OT, as does his wrath. And God's wrath is very much present in the NT, as well as his grace and mercy.

- As we move into scene 2 in Ruth, a predominant theme we see is God's grace at work.
- We are introduced to our 3rd main character: Boaz. The text highlights his character and the fact that he is in the same clan as Elimelek, Naomi's husband.
- God's grace clearly runs through this man.

First, the whole theme of grace is introduced by Ruth in v2. She and Naomi are in Bethlehem and need to find food. She has expectant hope that someone will be gracious (v2 "in whose sight I shall find grace" KJV).

- The law made this provision in Lev 19:10. The crops on the edge of the field were to be left over for the poor and sojourner; Ruth is doubly qualified.
- Gleaning is picking up that scraps of grain that harvesters accidentally dropped or left behind.
- Ruth is hopeful she will find favor—but we need to see this as an act of faith on her part, and God's ruling providence.

Remember, this is the time of the Judges. The fact that Ruth could be victimized and assaulted showed how Israel is not a safe place (v22).

- In Vs 3 the text says, "she happened to come to the field belonging to Boaz".

With a Biblical understanding, we know nothing just happens! There is a hidden hand of God at work.

We are supposed to see the hand of God at work here!

—It's the same hand that sent famine; it's the same hand that provided bread; it's now the hand that works to lead Ruth to the right field.

But we need to see this that Ruth sets her hope on Grace.

******We may very easily miss the grace God wants to pour out on our lives if we do not expect it.

~ Expectant hope of Grace: Did you come this morning with it?

- But where does this expectant hope of grace begin?
- Jump back to 1:8-9. It's Naomi's prayer. Specifically, she prays for a husband and rest for Orpah and Ruth. We simply don't know what happened in Orpah's story.

The door of grace that opens in Ruth's life seems to be connected to a prayer was spoken over her earlier.

Illus: It reminds me of a great story of a mom praying and God hearing. If you ever heard of the name Augustine—the church father. God's grace was at work in his life. Augustine articulated the doctrines of grace in his theology. The means of his experience of grace...was his Christian mother who prayed. At the time of her death, Augustine tells of how his mother spent years weeping for his salvation.

God often uses our prayers to open the door of his grace in someone's life.

We learn 4 things about grace:

Grace rooted in God's presence (v4)

- The root system of grace is God himself.
- Enter now our main character, Boaz. In v4, we are told to look at Boaz. What do we see? *A man who prioritizes looking to the Lord.* *Always take note of the first words you hear from someone in scripture.
- The very first words we hear from him, "The Lord be with you"—it's a greeting and blessing to his works.

"The Lord be with you." It's a prayer for God's presence.

Here is the point: God's grace is at work where his presence is. Boaz's field was a ripe place for God's grace—but it's tied to *God's presence dwelling* there.

Fast forward into the 1st century.

God's grace and presence are connected to the person of Jesus. Presence and grace go together.

(Jn 1:14, 16)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of *grace* and truth

¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

Application:

Sometimes the main hope people have is that God will get them out of some problem or pickle, or just help us with our work. He does that for sure. But here we are getting more of his heart. Our main concern should not be that God help us get out of trouble. Our main concern should be to have the *abiding presence of God*.

Grace received with humility (10, 13)

- V5 Boaz started to notice Ruth.
- Then in v8 Boaz takes the initiative to offer two essential things to Ruth: permission and protection. Permission to keep gleaning, and protection from being assaulted.

Boaz is a model of true masculinity. He takes leadership and initiative. But also cares about the safety of women under his care. Boaz is also a source of grace!

- Look at the way Ruth encounters the grace.
- First, her posture is worshipful.
- Her words are humble: "10...Why have you treated me so well?" (also, v13)

Apply: The point is, in the world of God's grace, there is zero-tolerance for entitlement. I've heard someone recently say we are in the most entitled and thankless time in human history. That's probably right.

We live in a culture of entitlement. Everyone feels like they have the right to something. If you work in the service industry, the customer is always _____.

If this is the air we breathe, then it's really hard to know and experience grace.

Grace comes to the humble.

(Ps 138:6) “For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.”

Grace repaid to the gracious (12)

- Now I want to be careful here, because clearly grace is *not a repayment*—that would run counter to the concept of grace being free.

- *Free Grace means God is under no obligation or compulsion to extend it.*

Rom 4:4 makes that point—“the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but what is due.”

But there is a principle here

- This is an answer to the “why” question from Ruth — “why are you gracious, Boaz?”
- He says—b/c you have a gracious heart towards others (11-12).

It’s similar to what Jesus says about receiving mercy

(Mt 5:7) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- There is a parable Jesus tells in Matt 18 about a graceless man who was forgiven a great debt, but almost choked to death someone who owed him money.

Mt 18:32-35

“32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Apply: There are various intelligence measurement tools. There is the classic IQ that’s supposed to test reason and problem solving. Then there is something called Emotional Intelligence (EQ). It’s how well you can emotionally connect and read people. People with high Emotional Intelligence are supposed to be more successful.

We need a third category. Grace Intelligence. We could call it GQ, but that might cause confusion.

Grace Intelligence is simply the capacity to extend grace and mercy, based on knowing God's grace and mercy.

Is your Grace Intelligence low or high? How easily can you overlook minor offenses? Do you hate someone?

Is there a person that you don't think you will ever forgive? Is your general disposition gracious towards strangers?

Grace is repaid to the gracious.

Grace runneth over in satisfying abundance (14, 17-18)

- (Ps 23:5)

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

Boaz acts like the Shepherd-provider that Ps 23 speaks about. He provides, protects, and invites to a feast.

- Notice that as Ruth eats, twice the text notes how she is satisfied (v14, v18).
- For us this does not seem odd—we eat till satisfied at least 3 times a day. But if you lived as a poor widow in the ancient world, it's a different story.
- The fact that Ruth brought home around 50 lbs. of leftovers speaks of satisfying abundance.

In the Bible, often the *appetite is a metaphor of our soul*

(Ps 63:5)—My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.

(Ps 36:8-9)—How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house.

- So yes, Ruth's physical appetite was satisfied; but the bigger picture *is her soul finds rest in the presence of the Redeemer.*

Apply: Is your soul satisfied? Has grace runneth over in satisfying abundance? This is not a one and done thing either. How many times do you need to eat?

We usually visit our family twice a year. This last visit, they ran short on food and kept commenting about how much our family eats. After I thought about it, it made total sense—*the evidence of healthy mature growth is in the appetite*. As our children have grown over the past 13 years, so have their appetites.

As we grow and mature, our appetite for more grace should increase. Our hunger for God's presence through his word and worship should not be occasional nibbling, but ongoing feasts. We should be larger consumers of grace.

- Finally, notice how God uses the soul satisfied with his abundance as a conduit of his grace to others.
- Picking up in v19, Ruth reports back to Naomi all that had happened.

The focus is on who she met: The Redeemer.

Satisfying abundance comes through the Redeemer

- V20 we are introduced to a very critical word—Redeemer.
- A redeemer is one who was under obligation to help and rescue relatives if they fell into debt and they could not repay.

But it also describes God and his work of rescuing Israel

Ex 6:6 "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm."

Ex 15:3 "13You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed"

And now we see a critical turn in the story, Naomi's heart.

- Her heart turns toward grace. There is a great reversal. There is a softening and sweetening.
- She actually mentions that the LORD is a God of grace. She uses the Hebrew word (Hesed).

Hesed: It's a conglomeration of words that describe positive devotion: love, grace, mercy, kindness, loyalty, faithfulness.

God's work of grace provides a great reversal in this story and for Naomi.

Conclusion

God's work of grace opens the door to another great reversal. In the Song that Mary sings when she discovers she is pregnant with the Lord Jesus, her praise is centered on this Redeeming Grace.

Hear these words and worship

(Lk 1:46-55)

46 And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,

54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

55 as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

May our hearts be always satisfied in the satisfying abundance that Christ came to give.