

## Ruth 2: 1-23

### Introduction

#### I. How do we handle power?

We all have areas in our lives where we are relatively powerless and areas where we are relatively powerful. What does faithfulness and steadfast love (Hebrew word: "hesed") look like in those areas?

#### II. Summary

A. Places of powerlessness offer us unique opportunities to go to God and seek shelter under his wings

B. Places of power offer us unique opportunities to be like God and reflect his love and care to those without power

### The Passage

#### I. Coming from different sides of the power spectrum

##### A. Naomi and Ruth

Widows = "unable to speak": powerless

##### B. Boaz

A man of standing (v. 1) = wealth, influence, reputation: power

#### II. Ruth gleaning in the fields

##### A. Ruth takes the initiative to care for Naomi (v. 2-3)

##### B. Gleaning in the ancient world

1. Backbreaking work, competition from other gleaners, danger of rape and mistreatment from men, the possibility of land owners who don't want you there

2. God's kind laws for gleaners (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:19-22)

Those laws were consistently disregarded

##### C. Ruth and Boaz

1. Boaz is a man of God (v. 4)

2. Boaz is not necessarily romantically interested in Ruth at this point. He simply notices a new gleaner (v. 5)

3. Ruth has been polite and hard working (v. 6-7)

4. Boaz offers words of hesed (v. 8-9)

= provision, protection that goes beyond expectations

5. Ruth's response of gratitude and humility (v. 10)

6. Boaz' knowledge of Ruth's decisions

v. 11: language reminiscent of Abraham's decision of faith

v. 12: the key verse in the chapter

7. Ruth's humble response (v. 13)

8. Boaz invites Ruth to lunch (v. 14)

a. Eating together is an act of fellowship, trust, and equality

b. They are on such opposite sides of the power spectrum

c. Imagine the CEO of a large real estate company coming onto a construction site and sharing a meal with one of the foreign day laborers

9. Boaz gives Ruth special gleaning privileges (v. 15-16)

- a. Allows her to glean among his workers
  - b. Tells his workers to purposely leave extra grain behind
10. Ruth finishes a full day's work (v. 17)

### III. Ruth returns home to Naomi

#### A. v. 18-20

- 1. even in her grief, Naomi hasn't lost her faith in God
- 2. "kindness" = hesed
- 3. "Kinsman Redeemer" = a relative who has the moral responsibility to come to the aid of family members in need

#### B. v. 21-23

Ruth and Naomi will be provided for through the harvest

### Reflection

#### I. How to faithfully handle powerlessness: Ruth

##### A. She acts faithfully in the midst of powerlessness

Notice Ruth is not a passive victim waiting for something to happen.

- 1. She takes initiative (v. 2)
  - 2. She takes a risk by gleaning
  - 3. She is hard-working (v. 6, v. 17)
  - 4. She has humility and gratitude (v. 7, 10)
- no sense of entitlement

She doesn't let her powerlessness lead her to despair. She acts.

##### B. Ultimately, she depends on God (v. 12)

"You have come to take refuge under God's wings"

- 1. Image: God is a mighty eagle, she is a baby eaglet (vulnerable), and she has chosen to take refuge under God's wings
- 2. When she left Moab (home, family, culture) she was counting God's protection better than any other
- 3. That's what God is looking for: people who come to him in their powerlessness, depend on him, find shelter in his faithfulness.

God responds: v. 3: "as it turned out" = God's providence

##### C. Where do you feel powerless? Without control? Vulnerable?

- 1. Those places offer a unique opportunity to run to God, find shelter under his wings, rather than depend on human wisdom and resources
  - 2. Doesn't mean that we sit around, be passive victims.
  - 3. We are all powerless in our standing before God
- We need to seek shelter under Jesus' wings (trust in his death for us) to be protected from God's judgment

#### II. How to faithfully handle power: Boaz

##### A. Boaz uses his power/influence to care for the powerless

- 1. He notices her (v. 5)
- 2. Provides for her (v. 8)

3. Protects her (v. 9)
  4. Gives her dignity
    - a. Eats with her as equals (v. 14)
    - b. Does not enable her or give her a handout but allows her to work and prove her faithfulness to Naomi (v. 17)
- B. Reflecting the heart of our God
1. God is powerful but he dwells with the powerless (Isaiah 57:15)
  2. Will we reflect God's heart for the lowly?
    - a. Boaz is a living picture of God's faithfulness to Ruth
    - b. "Wing" (2:12) is the same word as "garment" (3:9).  
Boaz is demonstrating God's protective wing in letting Ruth come under his protective wing
- C. A Biblical view of leadership: power used in the service of love  
See Mark 10:42-45  
See Ephesians 22: 25-33
- D. Where are you powerful/with resource/control?  
Those places of power offer us a unique opportunity to be like God and reflect his care to the powerless
1. Who are the Ruth's in your life who need care and protection?
  2. How can you navigate your daily relationships/roles in a faithful way?

### Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Read Ruth 2:11-12. Discuss Ruth's twofold decision to leave many things behind and seek shelter under God's wings. How does that parallel the life of discipleship to Christ?
3. Where in life right now are you in a position of relative powerlessness (where do you feel out of control)? What does faithful living look like in that situation? How do you navigate depending on God and also doing what you can in that situation?
4. What's a situation in your life where you have power, influence, and control and have an opportunity to exercise those on behalf of someone who is powerless or in greater need? What might that look like?
5. Read Mark 10:42-45. Where in your life have you seen power used well? Where have you seen a person use their power to care for others? What specifically did that look like?