

We Must Live in Hope

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning again, and welcome to faith. We're so glad that you are here with us, whether we're here in person or you are listening on your computer or your phone.

We're so glad that you've joined us. We are in the book of Ruth, and as we continue in the book of Ruth, going verse by verse, we are looking at Ruth, and we're in chapter 2.

We'll be starting with verse number 17 this morning, and we have seen last week, and we're going to be looking this morning, that Ruth had labored all day long with a happy and a hopeful heart because of how she was treated by Boaz. We were introduced to Boaz a couple of weeks ago, and we see that Ruth has gone out into the fields, and she's getting food for her and for her.

her mother-in-law. She didn't have to worry about any of the men harassing her because of what Boaz had done or the other workers hindering her. She had enough food when she was hungry. She was able to drink when she was thirsty. She had a place to rest when she became weary, and all this was provided by the master of the place, by the one who owned the field. The grain she gleaned, we noticed last week, amounted to about half a bushel, about 30 pounds. So she also had enough food left over from lunch.

We see that in verse number 18. Ruth was not only a diligent worker, but she was also careful not to waste anything. She probably packaged up the leftovers from her meal, and she brought a doggy bag home to her mother-in-law. And so she was careful not to waste anything. So our question is, how does Naomi respond to all of this, to these experiences? Remember, what was Naomi's attitude?

[2 : 0 6] It was one of bitterness. She said, don't call me happy. She said, call me bitter because God has dealt very bitterly with me. We know that she and her husband, Elimelech, went into the country of Moab after Bethlehem was experiencing a famine. And so they were thinking about themselves. They were thinking about how they were going to eat. And so they go into the country of Moab. Their two grown sons, Elimelech, ends up dying. And their two sons marry Moabite women, which we know from Scripture that God had already said, this is something you do not allow your children to do. Do not allow them to marry anyone who is not part of the family of God or the family of faith, and especially not people from Moab or Ammon. And so what do they do? They allow their sons to marry two Moabite women, and then about 10 years later, both the sons end up dying. And so we have Naomi who's left with two daughters-in-law, and they end up hearing that back in Bethlehem, the famine is over, and they have a harvest. And so she decides to go back. And so on their way home, she looks to her two daughters-in-law, and she says, come on, you don't need to come back with me. Go ahead, go back to your mom, go back to your parents, and go get remarried so someone can take care of you. And we know that one decides to stay. Ruth decides to go along with Naomi, and Naomi is bitter. So how does Naomi respond to these experiences the way that Ruth was treated? The last time we met Naomi, she was sharing her bitterness with the women of Bethlehem, and she was complaining about the way God had treated her. She was blaming

God for her poverty. She was blaming God for her sorrow as well. And so when Ruth asked permission to go glean in the fields, we know that that was part of God's provision for the poor.

Those who planted and those who harvested were told by God in the Old Testament not to reap the corners of their fields and to allow those who were hungry, allow those who were poor to come and to pick up the grain so they could have something to eat. So all Naomi said, she didn't encourage her. She didn't say, may God be with you. She just said, go, my daughter, in verse number two. She gave her daughter-in-law no words of encouragement, not even the promise of her prayers. But now let's listen to what Naomi has to say when Ruth comes home with all of this provision. We are in Ruth chapter two, beginning with verse number 17, and we're going to read through verse number 23. Bible says in verse 17, So she gleaned in the field until evening and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. These were the leftovers from her meal. And her mother-in-law said to her, where have you gleaned today, and where did you work?

Blessed be the one who took notice of you. So this is the first time we hear the word blessed come out of her mouth. She told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. Then, verse 20, Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and to the dead.

[6 : 12] And Naomi said to her, This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives. Ruth the Moabitess said, He also said to me, You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.

So here was her marriage planning in progress. She said, verse 23, So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, which came after, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law. So Ruth's return home ended Naomi's emptiness and filled the older woman with anticipation, with thankfulness. And ultimately, I believe we see hope in Naomi. Hope that God was beginning to work in their lives. And that, remember we said from day one when we started verse one of the book of Ruth, that no matter where we go, no matter who we are, if we are part of God's family, we are always part of God's plan. Amen?

No matter what happens in our life, if we belong to Him, if we have trusted Christ as our Savior, if we are part of the family of God, we are always part of the plan of God. So now Naomi is beginning to see. God has a plan for us. Isn't it great that God led Naomi or God led Ruth to the field of Boaz, one of their close relatives. And as we're going to see in just a few moments, Naomi was already thinking ahead of the Levirate law. And we're going to look at that in just a moment in the book of Leviticus. But she says in verse 19, blessed is he. Ruth not only blessed Naomi's, Ruth's benefactor, Boaz, but she also blessed the Lord. She was beginning to see that God was still there and that God was going to be blessing Naomi and blessing Ruth. So when Naomi saw the grain, she blessed the man who had allowed Ruth to work in the field. And when she heard that the man's name was Boaz, we see that she blessed the Lord as well. Now, what a change. What a change taking place in the heart of this widow. She leaves Moab, comes back to Bethlehem bitter. But now as she begins to see God at work in their lives, we see the seeds of hope planted in her heart. And she begins to say, blessed is this man and blessed is the Lord who is taking care of us. And this change came about,

I believe, because the hope that she had in her heart and the one who gave her that hope was Boaz. Remember what we last week, who was Boaz or the relationship between Boaz and Ruth, a picture of?

There are so many commentators that see this is a picture of the way Jesus is or the way Jesus treats his bride, the church. And so let's see why Naomi had hope. Number one, I believe we see Naomi beginning to see to have hope is because Naomi had hope because of who Boaz was. This man was somebody important. Not only was he rich and not only was he influential in town, but there was a different thing about Boaz that was important. It was because he was going to be able to be part of the God's plan to be able to take in Ruth and Naomi and raise up a family that would continue Elimelech's name, Naomi's husband's name. So let's look verses 19 through 20.

[10 : 39] And her mother-in-law said to her, where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you. She told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. There we go. We see in verse 20, then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, blessed be he of the Lord who has not forsaken his kindness to the living, which was Ruth and Naomi. But notice she said, God is also showing kindness to the dead.

Elimelech, Malon, and forget what his other brother's name, but he is showing, God is showing favor, not only to us, but he's also showing favor to our husbands because this Boaz is a close relative and he is going to be able to continue on the family name and the family lineage. So Naomi had hope because of who Boaz was. He was a near kinsman. That's a Bible term for what Boaz was. He was a near kinsman, but he was also wealthy and he was also influential. Naomi's mind immediately perceived the significance of this Boaz who was beginning to show some kindness and beginning to show some favor to Ruth in that the name of her husband, Elimelech, her dead husband could live on through her daughter-in-law.

In this society, that was important. Not so much today, although it's still important to many, many people that the family name continue, the family name go on, that there will be a son who could carry on the family name. And especially in this economy, especially in this period of time, the way a family was seen by culture was important if the family name could be continued. So she saw in Boaz some hope that God was going to begin to work in their lives. Now Boaz, as Naomi says, is a close relative.

But more than that, he was, using the Bible term, a kinsman redeemer. He could act as a redeemer of property. He could act as a redeemer of persons. And he could act as lever, which is the Latin term for brother-in-law.

Now Boaz could redeem by fulfilling the Levirate law, which required a brother of a deceased man to marry his widow and raise up a son in his name. Now to us, that sounds a little weird and a little creepy. But in this society, this was important because how else would this man's name be able to be continued? Somebody else with the same last name, somebody else in the family. And also in that economy, a widow had no means of support.

[13 : 41] And so that would mean that she could continue to be supported. And so this, we see this in Deuteronomy chapter 25, verses 5 through 10. Though Boaz was not a brother to Malon, Ruth's deceased husband, we see in chapter 4, verse number 10, he was a close relative and he could act as that brother-in-law according to the Levite or the Liberite law. So we don't have any explanation because what we find is, we'll find a little bit later when we go into this, is Boaz says, no, well, wait a minute.

I'm not the closest relative. There is another guy who is a closer relative to you guys. So we'll give him first chance or the first opportunity to either take this responsibility or not. So why Naomi didn't mention the closer relative? We're not sure. But we see that in chapter 3, verse 12. But as we shall see, a near kinsman could rescue a relative from poverty and give them a new beginning. We see in Leviticus 25, verses 25 to 34, if one of your brethren becomes poor, this was where Naomi's mind went. If one of your brethren becomes poor and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold. Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to redeem it, then let him count the years since its sale and restore the remainder to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return to his possession. But if he is not able to have it restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the year of Jubilee. And in the Jubilee, it shall be released and he shall return to his possession. If a man sells a house in a wall city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold. Within a full year, he may redeem it. But if it is not redeemed within the space of a full year, sounds kind of complicated, but then the house in the wall city shall belong permanently to him who bought it throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee. However, the houses of villages which have no wall around them shall be counted as the fields of the country. They may be redeemed and they shall be released in the Jubilee. Nevertheless, the cities of the Levites and the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time. And if a man purchase a house from the Levites, then the house that was sold in the city of his possession shall be released in the Jubilee for the houses in the cities of the Levites or their possession among the children of Israel.

But the field of the common land of their cities may not be sold for it is their perpetual possession. No, that's a lot to say. And it all goes to the fact that Naomi was thinking, how are we going to be taken care of? Their property could not be repurchased. It would have to be through a brother-in-law who would take care or a close family member who would be the kinsman redeemer and could redeem property and could redeem goods and could redeem individuals. So this is where Naomi's hope is coming from because of who Boaz was. Now think about this. We also have a redeemer. His name is Jesus Christ.

And we can have hope because of who Jesus is. Jesus is our redeemer. We have sinned and we have been separated from God because of that sin. And we can have hope and we can be purveyors of hope and going to those that we work with, going to those in our neighborhoods and saying, there's hope. There's hope in life because of who Jesus is. Jesus can redeem you from this lost condition or Jesus can redeem you from a life of hopelessness. And there are a lot of people living in this world without hope.

We see so many things that are on the rise. We know that suicide is on the rise because of lack of hope and feelings of helplessness. Ruth, Naomi, I know felt hopeless and helpless when she came back from Moab. That's why she was so bitter. That's why she was so dejected. God has dealt bitterly with us.

[18:30] We leave for a better hope to find food. And what happens? We come home with no husbands. God has taken our husbands from us. God has left us destitute. And then she begins to realize, wait a minute, they're still part of God's plan. There's hope because there is a redeemer.

And because of Jesus Christ, we have hope. And also Naomi had hope because the second thing we see, Naomi had hope because of what Boaz did. Not only because who he was. Now, had it just stopped there?

Had Naomi been thinking, well, there's Boaz. He's a kinsman redeemer. But Ruth never caught his eye. And he has absolutely no intention of doing any redeeming. That would have been the end of hope.

That would have kind of been, oh, this is great. And then nobody wants to fulfill their their level right responsibility. And it's like, oh, hope's dashed again.

But when Naomi hears, he did what? He said what? And so now there's hope because of what Boaz did.

[19 : 50] She had hope because he showed kindness to Ruth. She had hope because he took a personal interest in her situation. It might have been enough for Boaz to just simply allow her to glean in his field.

But it didn't stop there. As a matter of fact, he sees her. And now this is just personal opinion. But I think she might have been nice to look at. And so Boaz says, who is that?

That young woman. And they tell Boaz who she is, where she came from, who she belonged to. And then he goes out of his way to tell his workers, don't bother her.

Let her glean wherever she wants. And as a matter of fact, guys, I want you to take the heads of the barley and I want you to break them off and I want you to drop them so she'll have more to pick up.

Boaz. And if she gets thirsty, she can drink out of the water pot. If she gets tired, she can come in under the covering and she can rest in the shade. Boaz literally went out of his way to begin to care for this poor widow. And I believe in Boaz's mind already was working the idea.

[21 : 19] This is a responsibility that I have or that potentially may fall upon me. And Boaz was taking care of his responsibility. I think he was looking ahead.

When Ruth shared with Naomi what Boaz had said, Naomi's hope grows even stronger because of what she heard that Boaz said and what Boaz did. And I believe the words of Boaz revealed that his love for Ruth and his desire was to make her happy. That Boaz had insisted that Ruth stay close to his servants. And in his field was proof that Naomi, proof to Naomi that her husband's relative was already making plans that included her daughter-in-law and ultimately would include her as well. Now, when we include who Jesus is and when we consider what Jesus has already done for us and when he says to us in his word that there is no other reason to feel hopeless, we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

We know who he is and we know what he did for us. What did Jesus do? He bridged the gap. Jesus made the way possible for us to be reconciled, for us to be redeemed out of the slave market of sin, for us to be redeemed and bought back to become a part of the family of God. He's died for us.

Jesus Christ intercedes for us in heaven. And in his word, he says he has given us exceeding great and precious promises. Just like Boaz was promising to Ruth, do this and I will take care of you.

Don't worry. Follow the workers. Follow the women who are working in my field and I will take care of you. So he has given exceeding and great promises. We see that in 2 Peter 1, verse 4.

[23 : 35] And the promises of God never can and never will fail. So no matter how you feel today, no matter how difficult your circumstances might be, whether it be through separation, whether it be through financial trials, whether it be through physical trials, we can rejoice in hope when our faith is in Jesus Christ and when our hope is in him. Because really we can't hope in anything else.

Can we hope in our government? I don't think so. Can we hope in other people? To a degree. But we will always, ultimately, fail one another, sometimes on purpose and sometimes through no fault of our own. The only true and lasting hope is in Jesus Christ. The American agnostic lecturer, Robert G. Ingersoll, called hope the only universal liar who never loses his reputation for veracity.

Wow, that was a negative way of looking at things, right? I mean, hope, what's that? Hope never, hope promises a lot but never comes through. Wouldn't that be a horrible existence to have that attitude about hope? But the late Norman Cousins, former editor of the Saturday Review, who miraculously survived an almost incurable illness and a severe heart attack, unequivocally disagrees with Ingersoll. This is what Cousins says. He says, that's why the patient's hopes. He says, the human body experiences a powerful gravitational pull in the direction of hope. He goes on to say, that's why the patient's hopes are the physician's secret weapon. They are the hidden ingredients in any prescription. And in his work with patients in the

UCLA School of Medicine, cousins proved the power of hope could change people's lives. What a dramatic difference in attitude and outlook from Ingersoll. Hope makes all the difference in the world. And we see hope beginning to make the difference in Naomi's life. She was bitter. And what began to shine the rays of hope upon her life that would dispel, utterly dispel the bitterness in her life. The hope that God had a plan for their life. Hope that there was going to be potentially a redeemer that was going to be able to redeem them from their poverty and to be able to carry on the name of their deceased family members. This hope is God's gift to his children through his Holy Spirit, who reminds us of the promises found in God's Word. We see that in Romans chapter 15 and verse number 13.

We have hope because of what Boaz did. We also can have hope because of what Jesus did. Let's remember, God's Word was written so that we on this side of the New Testament could look back and see how God worked in the lives of his people. And it was all written for our inspiration and for us to be able to glean.

[27 : 14] We've been using that word a lot the last few weeks because we've been in Ruth and talking about gleaning. But what we can get out of Scripture is so important and so hope-giving. We can have hope because of what Jesus did.

Ruth's half bushel of grain was the first fruits of all that Boaz was ultimately and eventually going to do. Think about that. Those first few pieces of grain that Ruth picked up.

And then when Boaz said, go ahead and follow my workers. Go ahead, workers. Break a few heads of the barley and drop them for Ruth. That was literally just the beginning of what Boaz had plans for Ruth for.

And so we see that these are the first fruits of all that Boaz would do in the future, just as the Holy Spirit within us is the first fruits of all that God has promised in Romans chapter 8, verse 23.

Because he's given us the Holy Spirit. That's his down payment. That's just the first fruit. That's just the first part of the harvest. There's more to come. And that's our hope that we have.

[28 : 31] We have more to look forward to. Although Ruth's supply of grain would be gone, about half a bushel, it would have been gone in a couple of weeks. There would be more to come.

That was not the end of it. You see, it's not just what God does when he saves us. We live from hope to hope.

We live by faith each and every day. And God ultimately is going to bring us home, to bring us to be home with him forever. The witness of the Spirit within us will remain until our hopes are all fulfilled when we see Jesus Christ.

We see in verse 23, not only that of Romans chapter 8, not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit.

Ruth experienced the first fruits of the harvest that she was able to glean. But that was just the beginning. There was going to be more to come. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

[29 : 51] The exciting new hope that these two women possessed was centered in a person. It was centered in Boaz. And just as our hope is centered in the Son of God, Jesus Christ is our living hope.

Just like we sang just a few moments ago. He is our hope when things are bad. He is our hope when things are great. They can carry us through the most difficult times in our life.

Jesus Christ is our hope. 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 3. Colossians chapter 1, verse 27.

All talking about the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. And through faith in Christ, we have been born again to a living hope.

1 Peter chapter 1, verse number 3. And because it's a living hope, it can grow stronger each and every day. And it can bear fruit in our lives.

[30 : 50] When we have hope and when our focus is centered upon the Lord of the harvest, focused upon our Redeemer, it can bear fruit in the lives of others as well.

Because look at Ruth. Look at the difference she made in Naomi's life. Look at what was happening to Ruth and how it affected Naomi. We can see the same thing happening in our lives.

The hope that clings... The hope that many people cling to are dead hopes. Sometimes people cling to their retirement.

The hope of their retirement. Sometimes people cling to the hope of a relationship. Sometimes people cling to whatever. On the promises people make.

And we talked in Sunday school about how do we feel when someone doesn't follow through with a promise. And that happens. God will always fulfill His promise.

[31 : 50] Ours is a living hope because it is rooted in the living Christ. Naomi cautioned Ruth. She said, Obey the commands of Boaz.

Stay close to His servants as you glean in the field. The barley harvest, we know, occurred during March and April. And the wheat harvest during June and July.

Meanwhile, Ruth kept busy. She kept going back to the field. And I think it was important that she stayed in Boaz's field. He could keep an eye on her. And he could continue to follow through with what he knew.

I believe he knew was what God's plan was for him. And she was joyfully anticipating the day of redemption. I believe ultimately.

It's encouraging to see the changes that took place in Naomi as well. Because of Ruth did. God used Ruth to turn Naomi's bitterness to gratitude. Just like He can use us.

[32 : 47] Just like He can use you. Just like He can use me in the lives of others. Turned her despair into hope. One person trusting the Lord and obeying His will can change a situation from defeat to victory.

Ruth's faith ultimately led her to the field of Boaz. The love of Boaz for Ruth compelled him to pour out His grace upon her.

We saw last week how that we are to live a life of grace. Because grace is love that pays the price to help the undeserving one. That's what God does for us.

He loves us so much. He pays the price for us who do not and could never deserve that love. So Ruth's experience of grace gave her a new hope as she anticipates her kinsman redeemer and what He would do.

1 Corinthians 13.13 as we come to a close. And now abide faith, hope, love. And they still abide with us as we abide in Jesus Christ and trust in Him.

[34 : 05] You see, it's important that we live a life of hope. Because without hope, what is life? It's empty. Let's live a life of hope rooted and centered in the living Christ.

Let's pray. Father, this morning we are so thankful for what You have taught us through Your Word. We pray, Lord God, that we could continually live a life of hope centered and rooted in our living hope.

Jesus Christ experiencing the first fruits, which is Your Holy Spirit within us. Knowing that You will come through and You will redeem us ultimately from this earth, from this life.

And we will be able to spend eternity with You. And Father, help us also to be a beacon of hope to others. Not negative, as we read this morning in Psalms, but that we would be purveyors of hope to others because of the hope that we have in Christ.

We thank You. And Father, we praise You. For it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Amen.