

Ruth - Part 4

by John McGregor

The sermon explores Ruth's journey of acceptance, comfort, and grace through her relationship with Boaz, paralleling the invitation and love of Christ.

Duration: 41:41

Scripture: Ruth 2:8

Topics: "Ruth", "God's Invitation", "Comfort and Grace"

Description

John McGregor emphasizes the transformative journey of Ruth in the Book of Ruth, highlighting her invitation from Boaz, which symbolizes God's invitation to all. He discusses the comfort, grace, fellowship, and mentorship that Ruth receives, illustrating how these elements reflect God's love and provision in our lives. McGregor encourages the congregation to respond to God's invitation, emphasizing the importance of accepting His grace and finding comfort in Him. He draws parallels between Ruth's experiences and the struggles faced by individuals today, reminding them that they are not alone. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging listeners to embrace the invitation of Jesus and seek His comfort and guidance.

Transcript

It's been very good so far, so you've set yourself kind of a standard, so we're hoping that at least you reach that today with God's help. Let's pray for him. God, thank you so much for John and how he so desires to deliver the words from on high, and as he does so, God, continue to refresh his mind and his mouth with your words, Lord, and give us the ears to hear what the Spirit is saying in this time, for this moment, from these your words in your holy Bible.

Thank you for John. Amen. Thank you, Pastor Brian, and we missed you last week.

I had to put up with my jokes and didn't quite go over as good as that sunshine environment that you set for us, so what a pleasure it is to just turn to the Word of God this morning and go back to the second chapter of Ruth, this beautiful little story that's like a ray of light in the midst of dark times, and I'm just going to read from verse 8 through to the end of chapter 2, verse 23, and we'll look together into the Word. So Ruth chapter 2 and verse 8 says, Then Boaz said to Ruth, You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by, my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them.

Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn. So she fell on her face, and bowed down to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner? And Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.

Then she said, Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants. Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar. So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back.

And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposefully for her. Leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.

So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and she brought out what he gave to her, and what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. 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 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 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be the Lord who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead. 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 to my young man 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 woman, and that people do not meet you in any other field. So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you that it is for our help and for our teaching, for our encouragement, for building us up in the things of righteousness and truth.

Thank you, Lord, that it is by your Spirit that you take the Word and bring it to our hearts in just the right measure and way, time after time after time. Lord, in quiet surrender, our hearts call out to you this morning, Spirit of the living God, come and take this written Word and write it in our hearts, that we may benefit from it and profit in it and be drawn closer to you because of it. May your Lord be glorified and exalted in your Word this day, because we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, last time as we did the first 10 verses of this chapter, we talked about the fact that it's sort of centered on Boaz. He's a character introduced to us at the beginning of chapter 2, and this morning in our few moments together, I want us just to think a little bit on Ruth herself once again.

And as I said, this is one of those bright stories in the midst of a dark time in the history of Israel. It's a story that brings to our hearts encouragement and strength. And as you think with me this morning a little bit about Ruth, she's a foreigner in a strange land, and some strange customs must have been there, things she didn't grow up with, all kinds of challenges to learn new ways and a new way of thinking and so on.

And she's someone who must, I'm sure, have struggled with that as she faced it, as we all do. And as I look at the character of Ruth, I cannot help but think about the morning when she says to Naomi, let me go and glean in the field. Now she didn't know anybody who was going to be in that field, and it must have been kind of a lonesome walk from the house out to the field.

And we looked last time at the providence of God in that she just happened to be in the field of Boaz. But as you just consider the loneliness that she faced and the burdens and concerns that she must have had, although the times have changed and the fashions have changed, although I've discovered if I keep it long enough it will come back into fashion. Thanks, Brad.

As you just think about these things, it's good just to notice that although the issues were there before Ruth, they're still the same kind of issues that you and I face today. The kind of issues that focus on us as individuals, as families, in human relationships, in all of those kind of things. And the book of Ruth is primarily a love story, as we said at the beginning.

And you think about all of those things that she's carrying, plus she has the care of her mother-in-law. But I want you just to notice with me this morning five things that are given to Ruth. And in these verses, 8 through the end of the chapter, because it's so good just to think upon the fact that oftentimes we feel isolated and alone.

Nobody can feel the things that I do. Nobody can live my life, right? But there are so many things that we all of us face and that still remain to this day, even from the time of Ruth. And so she is given five things here in these verses that we just would look at this morning.

And I think about Ruth too as one who understood brokenness. Her heart was broken because the love of her life had died. Her relationship with her land is broken.

It's interesting when you stop and think about the place where you grew up. There's an attachment there. There's an emotional attachment to that place, but that is gone, that is broken.

And her relationship with her family, her father and mother and so on, that is broken. She must have had that sense of being very isolated from all of these things, and there certainly can be pain in each of those broken relationships. And so as a widow with no food and no help, she is going out to the fields alone.

But just look at the things that are given to her here with me. In verses 8 through 10, you see the first thing that happens is she's given an invitation. As Boaz speaks to her, he's saying, don't go and glean anywhere else.

Let me give you an invitation. I like invitations. You know, that's the problem with an evangelist.

They just keep inviting people to Jesus. And that has been the purpose of my life for 41 years, and I don't plan on changing it, not one little bit. And I've quit making excuses for it.

And if you just happen to be here this morning and you don't really know Jesus, let me just say right off the top, He's the best one at inviting that I know. He can take any of us and give us an invitation, and it's so personal. It's so singular, just as Boaz here is inviting Ruth.

He says to her, you stay here. Stay with my people. Work here.

And you know, it's so good when you think about this invitation. He knew everything about her, and she knew nothing about him. Now, how do I say that? Because the Scripture says that he says to her, I know what you've done as you've come, and I know how you've looked after your mother-in-law.

Now, isn't that a relationship that everybody treasures with their mother-in-law? Come on, Glencairn, there's a little whoo-hoo should be in there. Okay. Maybe it's a bit like that prayer that Tevye makes in Fiddler on the Roof.

He prays, God bless and keep the Tsar far away from us. Anyhow, human relationships are interesting, aren't they? But he is giving her this invitation, and he knows all about her, just as Jesus knows all about you and me. You know, there are so many things that we hide from people and so on, and yet Jesus knows all about them.

I think about the things that were so full of shame in my life that night when I came to trust Jesus all those years ago. Oh, I'd be so heavily burdened if anybody knew the kind of things that I was involved with and doing, and yet in that moment as Jesus walked into that little bedroom, and he's really saying, I know all about it. There's nothing that you've done that's hidden from me.

There's nothing that you can hide away from me. I see it all. I know it all.

I know everything that you've done, but I want you still. This is the glory of the gospel, isn't it? And you know, none of us lives life perfectly, do we? And so she is receiving this invitation, and we see the gospel in it if we just pause for a moment, because just as Boaz is saying to Ruth, listen, come. Come on along here.

So the Lord Jesus says, come. You ever noticed in the New Testament how often he uses that word, come? Just come. And it's such a life-changing moment in the life of Ruth here.

It's a clear invitation for her, and the invitation of Christ is so clear. You can come with all the burden, and all the sin, and all the guilt, and all the shame, and he will save, and he will cleanse. It's not that he might.

There's nothing ambiguous in it. It's a straight, direct shot. One of the things I love about young people these days is they basically say, listen, just stay straight.

Don't mess about. Just make it clear. I love it.

There's a few of us you could teach lessons, because we've learned not to make it clear in life. It is such a clear invitation, and it is a free invitation. Stay.

Not just come for this one time, but stay. Stay here in this field. Stay here with my people.

Stay in this place of security and of love. And it is an invitation that demands a response. I believe with all my heart that the gospel demands a response, and that preaching demands a response.

And I'll tell you why I believe that, because there have been times when I myself have sat and listened to a message, and God has brought a conviction to my heart that there's something there that ought not to be there, and then the service closes, and instead of going to the cross to deal with that, I shook hands with people and chatted a while and skipped out, and in the next hour or two I convinced myself that I really don't need to do with that just today, and so I put it off. But an invitation demands a response, and as God's Word encounters you and I, and as Christ makes his claims over your life and mine, it demands a response. It demands the response to say, yes, because any other response is to say.

You know, as I read sometimes of the older time preachers in days gone by, I love how singularly simple they made things. D. L. Moody, for instance, used to finish an evangelistic sermon like this. He would read from Revelation and chapter 20 about the marriage supper of the Lamb, and he'd say, let me give you an invitation.

Here it is, while sitting here in Glencairn Alliance Church on Sunday morning the 23rd of May, Jenna's birthday, I receive from one of your servants a pressing invitation to the marriage supper of your dear son. He said, I'll write an answer for you. Please have me excused.

Would you sign that and sign away any hope of eternity in heaven? You see, it was so clear, so crystal clear. And then he stated again and say, let me give you a different sense of opportunity to respond to that invitation. While sitting here in Glencairn Alliance Church, May 23rd, I receive from one of your servants a pressing invitation to the marriage of your only son.

I will by the grace of God attend. Would you sign that and be sure of heaven? And oh, my friends, this thing of eternity is so important. We can have all of the other things all lined up.

We can have a great education and a great family situation and a good job and good health and all those things, but without settling this issue of eternity, we've missed it. We've missed it. And God forbid that I should leave the pulpit this morning without leaving it clear.

If you have not come to a place of making that response to Jesus, oh, by the grace of God, make it this morning and be sure as we move on with him. This is a turning point in the life of Ruth. Nothing will ever be the same again from the day that she went into the field of Boaz, because ever from that day she is no longer a foreigner.

She is no longer an outsider. She is on her way into the kingdom of God by the grace of God. The second thing that she receives is comfort in verses 11 and 12.

As Boaz is saying, it's been fully reported to me all that you have done. And then she goes on and says, you have comforted me, a foreigner. Wow.

I like this unfolding, don't you, where the aloneness is no longer true. There is this sense where he is speaking to her, speaking kindly to her, and with understanding about all that she has been involved with, with her mother-in-law, leaving her family, and all of those things. This powerful landowner is comforting her with his words.

And does not Jesus do the same thing for you and me, to bring a comfort to our brokenness and our struggles? When we go to him in the midst of it, there's a word for us. There's a strength of the Spirit of God to touch us and to minister to us. You know, this thing of comfort is really very interesting.

There's some years ago, I directed a Billy Graham crusade in St. Louis, Missouri, and our office was in a place called Creve Coeur, or Creve Coeur, as you may try in French to say, and you French-speaking folk can correct me afterwards. It's part of the greater St. Louis area. But while we were there, we heard of a young man called Douglas Morier.

It came in as a prayer request. He was 15 years old. He had flu-like symptoms and was very sick at home with a temperature of 104.

And after a couple of days, his mother said, Douglas, we're going to the hospital. Took him into the hospital in St. Louis, and after running some tests, the doctors gathered a Ryan Douglas, this 15-year-old young man, and said to him, there are some things that we need to say to you, and they're not easy things to say. The first is that you have leukemia.

The second is you will have to take a course of chemotherapy, and it is a very tough course. We're not going to pull any punches. We want you to know how serious this is and how difficult this is.

And you know, as Douglas, at 15, heard this news, he began to be thoroughly depressed. That's the most natural reaction in the world, isn't it? Everybody has forgotten about me, God is not even going to touch me, here I am now with this terrible thing. And his aunt called a local florist and she asked for a big spray of flowers to be sent to Douglas's room to seek to cheer him up a little bit.

And as the flowers arrived, and Douglas looked at that arrangement, and he read the card from his aunt, and how she said she was looking for great things from him, and so on. But then he found a second note, and this is what the second note on those flowers said. Douglas, I took your order.

I work at the florist. I had leukemia when I was seven years old. I'm 22 years old now.

Good luck. My heart goes out to you. Sincerely, Laura Bradley.

Douglas found that his heart was comforted and lifted. Here he is in a hospital, in the midst of millions of dollars worth of equipment, in the center of doctors who are so skilled and experienced, and so on, and know what to do. But what is it? It's a lady who makes \$170 a week working in a florist shop who took two minutes to write a little note to say, I had that, and I'm still here.

And that's what Boaz is doing to Ruth here in that field as he speaks to her. And that's what Jesus wants to do to your heart and to mine this morning. He is the one who is the God of all comfort.

We seem to think that we should only quote that verse from 1 Corinthians 1 at time of funeral and death, but he is the God of all comfort. All the time she was comforted. She says so in verse 13.

Now Boaz knew that she didn't have all the things that an Israelite lady would have, but he's ministering to her and comforting her. Here's the third thing that she is given in verse 13. Grace.

Look at that verse. Let me find favor in your sight, my Lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant. And the thing about grace is that when we find it, we're looking for more.

She has already said, Oh, I'm so glad I find favor. In verse 10, she has bowed before him to say that. And now she is saying, Let me find favor.

This is the thing about grace. It's not just that amazing grace that saved us back then. It is that growing grace that Peter speaks of in 1 Peter chapter 3, or 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18.

Grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is meant to multiply in us and to grow in us. And there is this longing in her for more of that grace that has been extended to her.

Do you have that this morning? We were singing that this morning. I didn't talk to Tom and Rachel about what I was going to preach on. There's no collusion here except what the Holy Spirit brings together.

And we were singing about that very fact, weren't we? This grace of God and this longing for more of him. Do you have that this morning? Oh God, I just want more and more and more. I read sometimes in history of the church and some of those men and women who've been greatly used of God, and it seems that there is a time in their lives when they have often had to say to God, Just wait, Lord.

I can't take anymore. But oh, my brother and sister, that's not our problem today, is it? It's all kind of, God, she receives grace. You know, I like to preach about grace, but I better motor along.

When I think about grace, I cannot help but think about the Graham family and Franklin Graham in particular. Growing up in the home of Billy Graham, what do you think might have been the subject of conversation fairly often? Jesus, oh yeah, radical thing to talk about around the family table. And Franklin ran as hard as he could for a long time, until one day in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in the grace of God, he just sat down in a heap on the floor and said, Oh God, I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Can you really change my life? And I got to tell you, God has. He's not even allowed to pray at the White House because of his comments about Islam. I would say he's standing on Jesus, wouldn't you? And I remember when Ruth Graham was wheeled out at Franklin's ordination out in Colorado, she had had hip surgery, and sitting in that wheelchair she said, I just came to encourage you parents tonight, because not very long ago this young man was somewhere in the world with a bottle of Daniels, but look at the grace of God.

Hurry up, John, it's a holiday weekend. You got seven minutes to finish. Let's do it.

The fourth thing that she was given or received is fellowship. In verses 14 through 17, this is their first meeting, Boaz and Ruth. This is a first date, guys.

You know, think about the idea here. He took her to lunch on the first date. It happened right there.

Don't you love how he invites her close to him? Don't you love how as he says to her, you come close? Verse 14, come here and eat the bread. Come on close. Somehow we accept the lie that the Lord doesn't want us to be all that close, but look at this.

Here's the illustration of Boaz and Ruth, and he's just saying to her, come on over here. Come on over here. Not only is he inviting her close, but he's providing in all of those things that we looked at last week.

And there's so much more that she wants to do as she returns to Glean to get some more food for her and Naomi. What does he say? He calls those reapers and he says, listen, you see her? Drop something right in her pathway. Take that good stuff that you're harvesting and just leave it there for her.

Drop it right in her pathway. Think about this with Jesus and you and me. When was the last time that you knew that sense of, Lord, you give this just to me.

Just to me, Lord. Out of all, just to me. When we were going to build that Arendelle Alliance Church in Saskatoon some years ago, I had booked a series of meetings and was asked to go to Dexcom and explain the building thing.

Sam week? Try to explain that to the DS. I know Bob Peters was a good friend, but he's going to say, cancel the meetings. Get the important thing.

Get the first thing first, right? I was praying like a rocket. And then he called and said, John, would you mind if we change the meetings, the Dexcom meetings by a week and put them back a week so that, would that interrupt your schedule too badly? And I stuck my tongue in my cheek and said, well, I suppose we could do that. Said, Bob, I have to tell you, I booked to preach a series of meetings in Montana that week, and then he said, you rat! You're the one! Nothing would come together.

You're the one! But you know what it was? It was just a loving hand of a Savior saying, look at the tangle you got yourself in. Let me drop something in front of you on purpose, just for you, just for you. Last thing that she receives is mentorship.

In verses 18 through 23, when she goes back to Naomi, there's a mentorship going on there. I won't take time to go back into the verses just to say. Naomi's not just her mother-in-law.

She's her mentor. And how great a picture there is here. Somebody to instruct, somebody to hold on to, somebody who can really fit the bill and do the job, somebody who can help her become what God designed her to be.

It's a thing of mentorship, you know. Another way to say it would be discipleship. We all need somebody who keeps pointing us in the right way.

I thank the Lord for fellows like Bill McLeod, who at 91 years of age, still say, John, how many chapters did you read today? You ever feel like going to the principal's office, Brad? It's what it feels like, brother. Six. But mentors are not just judges.

They're people who say, when I read the word today, this is what I got out of it. And when you read the word today, what is it saying to you? And there's continuing growth in the family of God. I love historical illustrations.

And you know, the American Civil War was a terrible time. But one Sunday morning in 1865 in Richmond, Virginia, a black man walked forward in a church at the end of the service, came to the altar, and got on his knees alone in a totally white congregation. And everybody was going, huh? But you know, the congregation that morning had a mentor, a man very highly respected.

His name was Robert E. Lee. Seeing that, he got up and came to the altar and got on his knees beside this man. And all of a sudden, everybody in that group knew what to do.

That's the love of God, isn't it? I need to finish, and it's time for us to enjoy this beautiful weather and holiday weekend. Friends, the Lord provides everything that we need in Jesus. And Ruth found life in coming to the Lord.

And there is still in him the invitation, the comfort, the grace, the fellowship, the mentorship. But we need to make a response. So as I close this morning, I'm just going to go to a few moments of prayer.

Am I speaking to someone, and perhaps you've heard the invitation of Jesus many times, and found a way to put it off? This morning, don't put it off. Come to him. Everything that you're looking for and longing for is in him.

Am I talking to someone, and you need comfort? He is the God of all comfort, grace, fellowship, someone to come alongside and mentor. Yes, he does that too. And he supplies the right person in the right way.

So as we go to prayer for a moment, let me just lead in a simple prayer for someone who needs the Lord Jesus. But you can make this your moment of response to him. We would simply say, Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for the invitation to come to him, to be saved and free. Lord, as I look at my life, I know that I'm a sinner. I repent of that sin.

Come and live in my heart and give me new life in Christ. And yet, my Father, as I pray this morning, I know that for many hearts there are burdens and struggles and disappointments and wounds. And so in this moment, we want to come to you and ask, God of all comfort, touch us.

Renew that strong fellowship in our hearts by your grace, and enable us to walk with one another and encourage one another in the things of Christ. These things we ask in Jesus' name. In God's people's name.

Amen. I'm going to ask Brad to come in a second and lead us in the benediction. Come on up, brother.

I just wanted to say again, thank you, Glen Cairn. It is such a privilege to pastor this church. And I am just blessed in that role.

Next Sunday, I will be praying and enjoying a Vietnamese sort of sense of life because I'll be speaking to the Combined Alliance churches in the Toronto area. And I'd appreciate your prayers for that. And also on Sunday morning at Bayview Glen in Toronto.

And I was asked to come and preach on reconciliation in Bayview. So if you would remember that in prayer, I would greatly appreciate it. And I know that as Brad preaches next Sunday, the Lord will mightily use him.

And you will pray for him and encourage him along. He's preaching on lordship, and he's got a very busy week. So just keep him in your prayers.

If you would like prayer, I'm going to ask our elders just to linger with me over here after the service. God's been speaking to you about something, and you want someone to pray personally with you and for you. You make this your opportunity just to come.

And we'll be delighted to do that. I'll take the microphone off so you don't need to worry that it will be broadcast. Okay.

God bless you. Thanks, John. We'll be praying for you for sure.

I'm going to read you with a little bit of scripture as we go into this Sunday afternoon. And 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 to 5 says this. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in its time. Amen. It is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and it's waiting for you.

That invitation that John so eloquently spoke about to go to heaven. I hope you have a great week, and I hope that you take these things on this time of worship, these times of praise and thanksgiving, these words that God has not accidentally put in your ears and in your mind, and that you would sort them out and that you would live them out, and you would look for those opportunities to receive and show the grace of God in our lives, in your lives, wherever you are. Have a great week.

You are dismissed.

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