

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

May 1 – Ruth 2

Yesterday, we saw in Ruth a picture of God's covenant loyalty to us. Today we see a picture of God's covenant grace to us. As Ruth and Naomi arrive back in Bethlehem, there is no way for them to provide for their needs. They have a plot of family land that was given to them when Joshua divided up the Promised Land among the tribes and clans of Israel, but that land is not theirs to use at the present time, because they probably sold it when Naomi and her husband went to live in Moab. Under Jewish Law, there is a provision for them to reacquire this land, but they don't have the financial means to do so. Their prospects are bleak. They have no land, no money and no food, so they do what the poor had to do in Old Testament Israel, they went out and "gleaned" for food. Gleaning was a means established by God as part of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 19:9) as a means of providing food for the poor. Basically what it meant was that as the harvest was progressing, the poor could go out into the field behind the harvesters and pick up the grain that the harvesters missed.

That is what Ruth volunteers to do here in chapter 2, but Ruth is young girl and foreigner at that. It was dangerous for her to go out into the field by herself, but their situation is so perilous there is no other choice. By God's providence, Ruth winds up in the fields of Boaz who is from the same clan as Naomi's family. In an act of great kindness and grace, Boaz tells Ruth to only glean in his fields, and he arranges for her to be kept safe. He also arranges for her to get more of the harvest than a gleaner would normally get (verse 16). But Boaz's generosity doesn't stop with that. He also invites Ruth to eat with him and provides food for her from his own food. Because of Boaz's kindness to Ruth, Ruth was able to glean much more than one would normally be able to glean.

There is a picture in what Boaz did for Ruth of the grace that God has shown to us. Boaz did far more than what was expected of him. In the same way, God does much more for us than we could ever expect Him to do. God not only provides for our biggest

need by providing a way for our sins to be forgiven, He also pours out a blessing on us that goes far beyond that. It is wonderful thing to have our sins forgiven, but God doesn't stop with just that, just as Boaz went far and above what was expected of him, God goes far and above what we deserve for us.

Ephesians 2:4-7 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

God doesn't just forgive our sins through Christ, he makes us alive again, and he raises us up and seats us with Christ in the heavenly realms. In Boaz's eyes, Ruth was more than just a gleaner, she became an object of his affection and kindness, and he went far above what was required to bless her and Naomi in an extraordinary way. In the same way, in God's eyes, we are more than just sinners trying to get by. We are the objects of His affection and mercy. In Christ Jesus, we aren't just forgiven; we are raised to the heavenly realms.

May 2 – Ruth 3

In Ruth chapter 2 we were introduced to the term “kinsman-redeemer” and as chapters 3 and 4 play out we see what this term means. A kinsman-redeemer was one who protected the interests of needy members of their extended family. In carrying out this role, he would provide an heir for a brother who had died.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 *If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷ However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me." ⁸ Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," ⁹ his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off*

one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." ¹⁰ That man's line shall be known in Israel as *The Family of the Unsandaled*.

He would also be responsible to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside of their immediate family.

Leviticus 25:25-28 *"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. ²⁶ If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, ²⁷ he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. ²⁸ But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.*

These were the very conditions that Ruth and Naomi found themselves in. Because of the deaths of their husbands there was no heir to take possession of the family property and provide for the family, and they were too poor to be able to buy their family land back when they returned to Bethlehem. Naomi and Ruth were without hope—they desperately needed a redeemer.

As Naomi finds out that Ruth, by God's providence, had gone to glean in the field of Boaz, and that Boaz had shown extraordinary kindness to Ruth, Naomi is filled with hope. Boaz was one of the kinsman-redeemers for Naomi and Ruth's family, and so Naomi arranges for Ruth to go and offer herself to Boaz to be his wife in the hopes that Boaz will agree to act on their behalf as their kinsman-redeemer.

Because of our spiritual poverty, we too need a kinsman-redeemer—someone who will give us hope and a future, by buying back for us what we have lost. Of course, our kinsman-redeemer is Jesus. He is our brother:

Hebrews 2:17 *For this reason he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

And he is our redeemer:

1 Peter 1:18-21 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

May 3 – Ruth 4

As we have read through the book of Ruth, we have seen a picture of God's covenant faithfulness in Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi; a picture of God's grace in the way Boaz cared for Ruth in his fields; and a picture of Christ as our kinsman-redeemer as Boaz takes on that role for Ruth and Naomi. Now as we come to chapter 4, we see a picture of God's redeeming love, as Boaz not only takes on the role of kinsman-redeemer but also loves Ruth as he takes her for his wife.

It is clear that Boaz acted as he did because he loved Ruth and wanted her to be his wife, and it was this love that motivated him to act on her behalf. As you read this text it becomes clear that there was another kinsman-redeemer who was a closer relative to Naomi who had the "first right of refusal." This man was ready to act as the kinsman-redeemer until he realized that meant he got Ruth as part of the bargain (verses 5-6). The moment he realized this he backed away from the role. In other words, he was fine to take on the responsibility of taking care of the widow Naomi, but he didn't want a wife as part of the deal, because it would require a great deal of a sacrifice on his part and might mess up his estate. Because Boaz loved Ruth he was ready and willing to take the role of kinsman-redeemer and make whatever sacrifice was necessary to take that role.

So we see one man who didn't want the role because the sacrifice was too great, and one man, Boaz, who was willing to sacrifice because of love. What a beautiful picture of Christ's redeeming love for us. Christ gave up everything to redeem us from our slavery to sin.

Philippians 2:7-8 *but {Jesus} made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in*

appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Galatians 4:4-5 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

By acting as kinsman-redeemer Boaz sacrificed what was his, so that Naomi and Ruth could be restored and made right. Isn't that exactly what Jesus has done for us?

Oh by the way, through Boaz, Ruth, the widowed Moabitess, became the mother of Obed who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of the great King David from whom Jesus would one descend.

Matthew 1:1-6 *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ Salmon the father of **Boaz**, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of **Obed**, whose mother was **Ruth**, **Obed the father of Jesse**, ⁶ and **Jesse the father of King David**.*

May 4 – 1 Samuel 1: 1 – 20 and 1 Samuel 2: 1 - 10

In some ways the story of Samuel's birth mirrors that of Joseph, a hero from the Book of Genesis. You may recall that Joseph's father Jacob also had two wives, Leah and Rachel, and he loved Rachel the best. Samuel's father's name was Elkanah, and he too had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. He also loved one of his wives, Hannah, more than the other. Both Rachel and Hannah were unable to conceive and have children, but God was gracious to both and later in their lives allowed both of them to conceive and bear sons. Joseph would become a great leader of God's people, and as we will see, so will Samuel. It is amazing how many times God works through unusual pregnancies to provide a leader for his people. It seems as if God is in the business of raising up for His people leaders from the most difficult of circumstances. Jesus our savior was also born in a most unusual

way to a peasant girl that no one ever would have ever dreamed could be the mother of a king. But that is how God works.

1 Peter 5:5 *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Mary the mother of Jesus, were also both assumed to be doing something that was wrong. Of course, Mary seemed to have gotten pregnant outside of marriage and in today's reading Eli the High Priest accuses Hannah of being drunk as she prays and pleads with God to give her a son. But both of these women who were humiliated through the circumstances of their pregnancies were raised up by God to bring forth from their bodies a deliverer for their people. Samuel would be the last judge of Israel, and Jesus would be the last king not just of Israel but of all mankind.

In 1 Samuel 2, Hannah prays a prayer of praise to God who has miraculously given her a son. In Luke 1, Mary borrows parts of Hannah's prayer from 1 Samuel 2 and uses them to exalt and magnify the Lord in her own life.

Luke 1:46-55 *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."*

May 5 – 1 Samuel 1: 21 – 28

In verse 11, Hannah promises that if God will give her a son, that she would give that son back to God for his whole life. That is a remarkable promise, and what is even more remarkable is that Hannah kept her promise. As soon as Samuel was weaned, Hannah did what would be unthinkable for most mothers; she took her son to the Temple and gave him to the Lord, leaving him to be raised by Eli the High Priest. Think about that. From the earliest

possible age Samuel was given to the Lord, and his whole life was a life of dedicated service to the Lord.

Eight days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took their 8 day old son to the temple.

Luke 2:21-24 *On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. ²² When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."*

The word consecrated means to be set apart as holy unto the Lord. As Mary and Joseph took their young son Jesus to the temple, they not only fulfilled the law but they set Jesus apart to God for his whole life. The name Jesus means Yahweh is salvation, and Mary knew that was name her son was to have, but she had no idea what that name would mean. She no idea that she was setting her son apart to be the holy perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. She had no idea that her son would one day be crucified to take away the sins of the world. But listen to what a man named Simeon told Mary as she stood there in the temple with her young son Jesus.

Luke 2:25-35 *Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." ³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

As you think about all of this, think about how painful it must have been for Hannah to give up her son at such a young age, and leave him there in the temple with Eli. Think how Simeon's words word have pierced Mary's heart even as he spoke them and even more as she stood there and watched her innocent son be executed on the cross for you sins.

May 6 – 1 Samuel 2: 12 – 26

There is an interesting contrast in this passage between Eli's wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas and Hannah's young son Samuel. While Hophni and Phinehas were desecrating the sacrifices being offered to the Lord (verses 12 – 17), Samuel as a young boy was doing their job ministering in the temple (verse 18). While Eli's sons were losing favor with men and Lord, Samuel was gaining favor with men and the Lord (verse 26).

Samuel was so different, so dedicated to serving the Lord that he stood out, and that contrast was made even clearer because of the wickedness of Eli's sons. Jesus also stood out as he grew up.

Luke 2:40 - 52 *And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." ⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

You would have to agree that there is a striking similarity between Samuel growing up as a young child and learning to serve the Lord, and Jesus growing as a young child learning to serve the Lord. As a 12 year old boy, Jesus amazed the teachers of the law with his wisdom of God's word, and just as Samuel grew in favor with men and the Lord, so did Jesus. Watching these two boys grow into young men and learning to serve the Lord reminds us of the importance of raising our children so that they too learn how to serve the Lord starting at a very young age.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

May 7 – 1 Samuel 3

As Samuel served in the temple and he learned and grew, God called him to be his servant. The story of God's call is remarkable, but that is not what our focus will be as we consider today's reading. Instead, let's focus our attention on verses 19 – 21. Samuel heard the word of the Lord, and let none of those words fall to the ground that is he took them all in. That means Samuel made the word of God part of his very being. Because of that everyone realized that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord—he spoke for God to the people. Prophet was one of the roles that Samuel had in the nation of Israel. He also served as Israel's last judge (a king like position), and as a priest, offering sacrifices. Samuel is the only one who held all three of these offices in Old Testament Israel. As prophet, priest and king, Samuel is a picture of Jesus. We know Jesus as the king of kings, and we know Jesus as our great high priest offering himself as a sacrifice on our behalf, but Jesus is also the true prophet—the one who reveals God to us.

Hebrews 1:1-3 *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he*

has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Just as God revealed himself and spoke to the Israelites through Samuel, the writer of Hebrews tells us that through Jesus God has revealed himself and spoken to us. Look again at what the writer of Hebrews says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory, and the exact representation of his being.” Like Jesus said about himself in John 14: 9, anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the God. As Jesus walked on this earth, taught God’s truth, touched people’s lives in miraculous ways, he revealed the Father to us. Think about what Jesus going to the cross for our sin reveals to us about God. At the cross we see God’s anger over our sin—anger so great that it took the life of His own Son to appease it. But we also see God’s love for us that He would give His one and only son to die in our place. What more do we need to know about God? God is a holy God who hates sin, but He is also a loving God who loves us.