

A Greater Redeemer

Ruth 2:17 to 23

The Hesed of Boaz, the Hesed of God, and the Greater Boaz Who Redeems Us

SERMON SNAPSHOT

Big Idea: Boaz showed Ruth hesed, a costly and generous covenant love that went far beyond what the law required. In doing so he points us to a greater Boaz, Jesus Christ, who is a greater lawkeeper, a greater lover, and a greater redeemer.

Key Word: Hesed. Covenant love. Relational, self giving, loyal, active, and generous beyond what duty requires.

Key Texts: Ruth 2:17 to 23; Leviticus 25; Matthew 5:17; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 10:9; 1 John 4:19; Matthew 22:37 to 40 (ESV)

Sermon Notes

Naomi went to Moab full and came home empty. Her husband and her sons were buried in a foreign land, and she returned to Bethlehem with nothing but bitterness and a Moabite daughter in law. But while Naomi was grieving in Moab, a harvest was growing in Bethlehem. And in that harvest, Ruth would step into the field of a man named Boaz.

Generous Provision

The Mosaic law required landowners to leave the edges of their fields and any missed grain for the poor, the widow, and the foreigner to glean. That alone would have been a kindness. But Ruth came home with about an ephah of barley, roughly thirty pounds, which is far more than a typical day of gleaning. That is close to two weeks of food in a single afternoon. Ruth and Naomi went from wondering how they would eat to having enough stocked away.

Extraordinary Kindness

Boaz did not stop at the legal minimum. He invited Ruth to drink the water his men had drawn. He told her to stay in his fields with his young women through the entire barley and wheat harvest, about seven full weeks. He told his men not to harass her and to deliberately pull stalks from their bundles and leave them for her. The law said tolerate her. Boaz treated her like family.

Hesed: The Word That Holds It All Together

In verse 20 Naomi blesses the Lord, whose hesed has not forsaken the living or the dead. Hesed is famously hard to translate. The NIV calls it love. The NKJV calls it lovingkindness. The ESV calls it kindness. Modern translations reach for steadfast love or loyalty. The reality is hesed is all of those at once.

- **Covenantal.** It is rooted in a relationship and a commitment.
- **Relational.** It binds people, the living and the dead.
- **Self giving.** It is extended without regard for what the other can return.
- **Loyal.** It is steadfast, lasting, persistent, faithful.
- **Active.** It is not a hidden feeling. It shows up in action.
- **Generous.** It always goes beyond what duty requires.

Whose hesed is Naomi praising? Boaz, or God? The Hebrew is ambiguous, and the ambiguity is the point. Naomi sees God's covenant love being expressed through Boaz. The same Naomi who said, "I went away full and have come back empty," is now full again, and she knows the Lord did it.

The Kinsman Redeemer

Verse 20 also drops a hinge word: redeemer. Leviticus 25 spells out who a kinsman redeemer is. When a relative became poor and had to sell off the inheritance God gave them, the nearest kinsman was responsible to buy it back. When a relative became destitute and had to sell themselves into slavery, the nearest kinsman was responsible to pay the price for their freedom. The redeemer paid out of his own pocket and got nothing tangible in return. Redemption only applied when the person was helpless to save themselves.

Boaz Points to a Greater Boaz

Boaz is a type of Christ, a person God used in the Old Testament to foreshadow a greater fulfillment in the New. You can applaud Boaz, and you should. But Jesus is greater.

Jesus is a greater lawkeeper. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17, ESV). He stepped down out of heaven, took on flesh, and fulfilled every requirement of the law perfectly.

Jesus is a greater lover. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, ESV). Jesus does not love you at your best. He loves you at your worst, and loved you enough to die for you.

Jesus is a greater redeemer. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7, ESV). At infinite cost to himself he paid our sin debt in full, then rose victorious. We receive that gift through faith. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, ESV).

Aligned With His Love

So if Jesus is a greater redeemer, how are we supposed to live? Christianity is not a list of dos and don'ts where good people earn their way in. No one is good enough. The Christian life works like this: God loves us, and as a result we love Him and others in return. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19, ESV). When the Pharisees asked Jesus for the greatest commandment, He said love God with everything you are, and love your neighbor as yourself. Everything else hangs on those two.

One of the best tools to help us see God's love clearly is our own sin. The clearer we see how great our sin is, the clearer we see how loving our Savior is. That is why step one is stepping out of denial.

Law vs. Love

Boaz did more than the law required because love does more than the law requires.

- The law said let her glean behind the harvesters. Love said let her drink from your water and eat from your table.
- The law said permit her to glean. Love said provide for her and protect her.
- The law said give her what is left. Love said give out of what you have already gathered.
- The law said tolerate her as a foreigner. Love said treat her like family.
- The law said do what is required. Love said be generous and kind.

Questions like "Do I have to serve in the church?" or "How much do I have to give?" are concerning, not because they are wrong to ask, but because they are questions of law, not love. The point of our lives is to point to Jesus.

This Is the Year of Great Faith

Take your next right step:

- Turn to Him in faith
- Love God
- Devote yourself daily to Him
- Gather consistently with the body
- Reflect His love to those around you
- Commit yourself to living in community
- Serve faithfully in the church
- Give sacrificially
- Engage missionally, sharing the Gospel

Opening the Conversation

1. When was a time someone went above and beyond for you, far beyond what they were required to do? What did that kindness do to you?
2. If you had to describe Naomi's emotional state when she got back to Bethlehem, what words would you use? Have you ever been in a season that felt like that?

Digging Into the Text

Read Ruth 2:17 to 23 together as a group. Take your time. Notice what Ruth brought home, what Naomi recognized, and the word in verse 20 that changes everything.

3. Ruth came home with about thirty pounds of barley, roughly two weeks of food, plus the leftovers from her meal with Boaz. Why do you think the writer of Ruth wants us to know how much she brought home? What does that abundance tell us about Boaz, and about God?
4. Boaz did far more than the law required: water from his men, protection from harassment, instructions to leave extra grain on purpose, and an open invitation through the entire seven week harvest. Where does the line between law and love show up in your own life right now? Where are you doing what is required, and where is love asking for more?
5. Read the six descriptions of hesed from the notes (covenantal, relational, self giving, loyal, active, generous). Which of those six does our culture most often forget? Which one is hardest for you personally to live out?
6. In verse 20 Naomi praises God's hesed, and the Hebrew is intentionally ambiguous about whether she is talking about Boaz's kindness or God's. Why is that ambiguity actually beautiful? When have you seen God's love expressed to you through another person?
7. Naomi started the book saying she went away full and came home empty. By the end of chapter 2 she is full again. What changed? What does that say to anyone in the group who feels empty right now?

Boaz Points to a Greater Boaz

8. A kinsman redeemer paid out of his own pocket to free a relative who could not free themselves. Read Ephesians 1:7 and Romans 5:8. How does the picture of Jesus as our redeemer hit differently after seeing what Boaz did for Ruth?
9. The sermon said Jesus is a greater lawkeeper, a greater lover, and a greater redeemer. Which of those three lands hardest for you this week, and why?
10. Jesus does not love us at our best. He loves us at our worst. Why is that hard for some Christians to actually believe about themselves, even after years of following Him?

Bringing It Home

These last questions are for personal reflection and group sharing. Pick what the Holy Spirit is bringing to mind. Do not feel pressure to answer every one out loud.

- 11.** The sermon said one of the best tools for seeing God's love clearly is our own sin, because it shows us just how loving a Savior we have. Where in your life have you been minimizing or excusing sin lately? What would it look like this week to step out of denial?
- 12.** Look back at the law versus love list (let her glean vs. give from what you gathered, tolerate vs. treat like family, etc.). Where in your relationships, your work, your church involvement, or your generosity is God inviting you to move from law to love?
- 13.** This is the Year of Great Faith. Read back through the next right step list at the end of the notes. Which one is your next right step? Tell the group, and ask them to pray with you and check in on you about it.
- 14.** Naomi recognized Boaz as a redeemer before Ruth did. Who in your life is asking the kind of questions that hint they are looking for a redeemer? How could you reflect Jesus to them this week?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that Your hesed has not forsaken the living or the dead. Thank You for Boaz, who shows us a glimpse, and for Jesus, our greater Boaz, who paid the full price we could not pay. Help us this week to step out of denial about our sin and to step deeper into Your love. Make us people who do not just keep the law but who love generously, like You have loved us. Lead each of us into our next right step of faith. In Jesus' name, amen.