

The Power of Kindness | Ruth 2:8-16

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[0:00] All right, good morning, everyone. Let's just bow our heads in prayer, and then we'll open God's Word. Father, thank you for your Word. Lord, thank you that you still speak to us today.

Lord, thank you, Lord, that these words aren't just words written on a page. Lord, that you've promised them to be life to us, food for us. Lord, and we pray, Lord, that we would honour your Word.

Lord, and obey your Spirit. Lord, help us this morning, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Ruth chapter 2.

I want you to try and imagine with me that you have just moved to a new country. I don't know if you're going abroad on your summer holidays this year, but whenever we go away, whenever that may be, there's always a little bit of a sense of fear, I guess, that we don't really speak any other language apart from English, and we don't do that very well either.

But imagine that you've moved to another country, and you've moved there. It's not just for holidays. And they're not being gracious to you and then speaking your language. Sometimes that happens, doesn't it?

[1:19] Like, we'll go to another country, and we try to speak their language. They're trying to speak our language, and actually, that doesn't help. But imagine that you've moved to that country, and you have no family there.

You have no safety net there. You have no credit history. You have nothing to offer anyone. You're not just poor. You're a foreigner. And everyone knows, as soon as you open your mouth, that you don't belong.

You've heard that there is a custom in that land, that if you are desperate enough, you are allowed to walk behind the harvesters in someone else's field, picking up whatever grain falls to the ground. It's not charity, exactly. It's the bare minimum of the law. It's dignity. Dignity's last stop before begging. Well, that's Ruth.

That's where we pick up Ruth in chapter 2. That's where we find her. A Moabite widow, a foreigner in Bethlehem, with nothing to bring to the table, but her own exhaustion, and her loyalty to a bitter, grieving mother-in-law named Naomi.

[2:40] One morning, to escape starvation, she goes out to a field to glean and pick up the scraps left over by the reapers, the harvesters.

And if you look there in verse 3, it says that she happened to come to part of the field belonging to Boaz. That's what we looked at last week.

And Boaz was a relative of Naomi's husband. So you remember, Naomi's husband died when they were in Moab, and her sons had died also when they were in Moab, and they'd come back, and she'd come back a widow.

But now, Ruth happened to come to the part of the field belonging to this relative. And by the end of our passage today, this destitute foreigner is sitting at a table eating bread and drinking wine until she was full with leftovers to take home to Naomi.

Something's happened between the edge of that field and the table. And what I want us to see this morning is that what has happened to Ruth is what happens to every single one of us who comes to Jesus.

[4:01] This is not just a nice story about a nice man being nice to a needy woman. Like, I mean, that is the story, but there's way more than that going on.

It's not a coincidence that we are coming to a different kind of table this morning. And I want you to hold that in your mind as well. Because what we see here is that Ruth is, Ruth and Boaz are performing a Last Supper Lord's Table communion act together 400 years before actually it

happened.

So, here's where we're going today. I've just stuck the outline on the screen. You've got the outline and you're following along notes as well if you've got that. Here's the things that I just want. I want them to be more than notes.

These things like need to be in our bones, right? I don't think hearts are deep enough, right? So, firstly, invited before improved, a table not a test, a spiral not a staircase, and more than leftovers. believers. So, firstly, look at verse 8 where we see invited before improved. Then Boaz said to Ruth, now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women.

[5 : 30] Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn.

So, the interesting thing is that Boaz doesn't wait for Ruth to prove herself, right? He doesn't ask her to tidy up her theology, right?

So, if you know anything about the Moabites, the Moabites worshipped a bog they didn't, a god called Chemosh.

And, you know, Chemosh, if you have got your following notes, there's a whole bit in there about Chemosh appearing all over the place in the Old Testament. And so, even to the point where, you know, King Solomon goes out and builds an altar to Chemosh as part of his kind of rebellion and downfall.

people. And, despite the fact that she is coming from that background, Boaz doesn't ask her about her theology first.

[6 : 42] He sees her first. And then, immediately, he moves towards her with provision. So, he says, stay here. Don't go somewhere else. Stay in this field. Stay close to my young women.

I've told the men not to touch you. And, when you're thirsty, drink from what they've drawn. That's it. Now, the thing I think that we probably need to feel more than we need to understand is that Ruth has done nothing to deserve any of this.

Right? Like, literally, she's just gone out and she's looking for a way to feed herself and her mother-in-law. Verse 7 tells us that she's actually only just arrived and she's only just asked permission to glean.

She is, at this point in the story, purely a recipient. And, Boaz's kindness lands on her before her situation is resolved. And, actually, as you go through the story, and I would encourage you to, her situation doesn't really resolve until chapter 4.

So, we're only kind of halfway through the story. And, I think sometimes this is where so many of us get the gospel backwards. We assume that God's kindness is a reward.

[7 : 59] that first we clean up and then we get invited in. That we do some spiritual gleaning on our own, prove we're serious, prove we've changed enough, and then somehow grace notices us.

But that's not, of course, how grace works. That's how every other religion works, but that's not how Christianity works. That's how Chemosh worked. Appease the God, receive the blessing.

But Jesus doesn't operate that way. Look at what Paul wrote to the church of Rome. He said there in Romans chapter 5, he says, for one will scarcely die for a righteous person.

Pause there. He says, sometimes that does happen. Sometimes some people do die for good people and for good causes. He says, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. An invitation before improvement.

[9 : 15] Which means if you're feeling, if you're feeling, if you're waiting to feel clean enough to come to God and sorted enough and disciplined enough, before you come to God, you've misunderstood the book of Ruth and you've misunderstood the gospel.

Ruth didn't clean herself up before Boaz noticed her. She was noticed in the field with dust on her feet, with reputation as a foreigner and potentially as an idol worshipper and grace moved towards her anyway.

God and maybe you're here this morning and there's something in that for you. Maybe there is something in your background, in your past, in your present, maybe a sin pattern, some mess, some shame.

And the reason you haven't brought it to God is that you think that you need to fix it first and present him with a slightly improved version of yourself.

And look, we do that all the time and social media and all of that. I don't want to put a big blanket down on social media but I think that's part of it. It's like we're encouraged to paint a different version of ourselves and we do that with God.

[10 : 30] And we say well I can't come to God unless God has liked my post, has liked my version of me. For the truth is that you're invited before you are improved.

Now look, that is not permission to stay in the mess. And we need to be clear about that. It's the only thing that will actually ever get you out of the mess.

And look at her response and this should be our response to verse 10. Then she fell on her face bowing to the ground and said to him why have I found favour in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner.

And I love this moment because Ruth could easily have looked back at her past and she could have looked at her poverty, she could have looked at her widowhood and she could have looked at the tragedy that brought her to the field in that moment in that day.

And she could have looked at herself and said why would someone like Boaz ever notice someone like me? But Ruth does something slightly different. She takes her eyes off of her poverty and looks towards his abundance.

[11 : 43] She's not so much noticing and saying well woe is me, woe is me, who am I? She's saying look at this man. This man is a good man to look at me.

So she takes her eyes off of her own poverty and looks at his abundance. She stops staring at her fears and rests in his kindness.

And look, that's an example, isn't it, for the people of God today. Like in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2, it says, look to Jesus, not to yourself.

Like the more that we look at ourselves, the more problems we have, right? Like we can identify a whole bunch of problems the more we look at ourselves. look to Jesus, the author of Hebrews says, who is the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and then sat at the right hand of the throne of God.

And the problem is, is that we spend so much time looking inward that we lose sight of the God who is greater than everything we are facing.

[12 : 57] there is a kind of healthy self-examination that does appear in scripture, absolutely. But the problem is not that we look inward, the problem is that we look inward without looking upward.

Instead of resting in his perfection, we obsess over our own imperfections. Instead of rejoicing in his riches, we complain about our poverty. instead of looking at the abundance of his grace, we keep measuring the size of our failures.

We come to church looking for God to meet our needs, but we forget that the greatest gift God gives us is not simply an answer to our needs, it's God himself. And we don't gather merely to have our needs met.

We gather to worship the God who is greater than every need that we might have. And Ruth looks away from herself and she looks towards Boaz.

And the Christian life is in many ways learning to do the same. Not denying our fears, not covering or ignoring our failures, but refusing to let them become the center of our vision.

[14 : 21] So in verse 11, we read that Boaz answered her. and then he says, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me.

And how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The Lord repay you for what you have done. And a full reward will be given to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Then she said, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants. Now look at the second thing.

So the first thing is invited before you are improved. The second is a table and not a test. So look at verse 14 where it says that in the meantime, Boaz said to her, come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.

So she sat beside the reapers. Now I want you to notice something. I want you to notice what this is not. So this is not Boaz handling Ruth a checklist.

[15 : 38] Like this is not Boaz saying, Ruth, before you can eat with us, you'll need to demonstrate proficiency in Israelite dietary customs, recite the Shema and glean for two more weeks on probation.

Like he's not saying that, is he? He says, come here, sit and eat. Simple. And notice it says that she sat beside the reapers.

Don't miss that. That is not behind the reapers, not at a separate table from the reapers, not outside the circle looking in, it is beside the reapers as one of his own.

And then what he does is that he passes her roasted grain and notice this, she ate until she was satisfied and that Hebrew word is more than satisfied, it means full or completely full.

And she had some left over, it says. Now, she didn't bet on this coming to that field that morning. She was hoping for a handful, maybe a bag full of grain, the leftovers to take home, but now she's seated as one of them, she is full and satisfied, and now she has some to take home to Naomi, which means that she has more than she needs.

[17 : 12] And we'll come back to that. But this meal is not a test, this is not an audition for a bigger role later. And look, I think it's worth noticing the echo because the Bible does this fairly frequently on purpose.

If you fast forward a couple of hundred years, Jesus gets a reputation and it's a scandalous reputation for eating with the wrong people. And I'm absolutely convinced that some people sitting around that circle at the end of the day in that field are looking at Boaz and going, what is she doing here?

Right? Now, Luke chapter 15 should ring a bell because we spent six weeks going through Luke 15. How does Luke 15 begin?

Well, now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them. You might want to stick in there.

Now, the Moabite S's or the Moabite, the foreigners were drawing near to him. The tragedy of religion is that it tries to get you clean before you come to the table.

[18 : 36] But the gospel says come to the table because Jesus has already cleansed you. If you're a Christian, that's true today. And as you receive his grace, he continues to make you more like himself.

You see, you don't qualify for the meal by being a certain kind of people, right? I mean, think about the Last Supper. And, you know, we remember the Last Supper this morning.

Judas is at that table. Peter is at that table. Peter and Judas, who in a matter of hours will deny Jesus and betray Jesus.

But Jesus not once runs a purity screening test before he breaks bread with them. He hands it to men he knows are about to fail him spectacularly.

And this is what he says in Luke chapter 22. this is my body broken for you. Given. Right?

[19 : 44] This is my body which is given for you. Not earned, not qualified for, given.

And here's where it gets even more remarkable than Ruth's story. The meal that Jesus offers isn't just bread and wine at the table or in the field.

You know, every month we set a table which says in effect, come sinners, this feast is not for those who have arrived, it's for those who know they haven't arrived.

And that is the strangest, most countercultural table in the world, right? This is. Because every other table in your life operates on merit.

And this table operates on merit but not ours, on someone else's. The table in your friendship group might be for people who are interesting enough, helpful enough, put together enough.

[20 : 52] But this table, the Lord's table is set specifically and deliberately for people who know they don't deserve to be there. And of course, that's sometimes the problem, isn't it?

Because we think, like, if they knew what's really going on inside me this week, if they knew, they wouldn't want me at the table. like, I don't deserve to be at the table.

And Ruth was one of the most, Ruth has one of the most disqualifying qualifications in the field. And yet, she gets to sit beside the reapers and feeds until full.

And if Boaz did that for Ruth, do you really think Jesus, who died to set this table, is going to turn you away from not having your act together yet.

It's a table, not a test. Which leads to the third thing. A spiral, not a staircase.

[22:10] A spiral, not a staircase. I was randomly reminded of this. I don't know why. I think I was watching some hill climbing.

Or maybe it was the cheese rolling. Some of you are looking like absolutely mystified. All right, I'll fill you in. Every year, I think it's yearly, there's some crazy people, my future son-in-law is one of them, who take a big wedge of cheese, I don't know, is it called a round of cheese, because it's round?

Go with that. And they throw it down a hill. And then hundreds of people decide they will run after it. And it's proper steep.

Like, people break stuff. Like, I mean, bones, right? And they tumble, and it's hilarious to watch through kind of like, they do that.

And I think, but there's more sensible people who drive cars up and see how far they get up a hill, hill climbing, right? That's not the way to climb a hill, honestly.

[23:22] If you've ever driven around the Alps or some mountains, they don't do that there. They go round, don't they? Right? And we were just talking about this week as we were off to the Alps in the summer, and someone said, do we have to go up one of those roads?

I'm like, there is an alternative, but you won't like that either. And so, look, I think the Christian life is a spiral and it's not a staircase.

It's not one of those. It's one of those. And look, here's what I mean. The question that normally comes from this sort of thing about coming to the Lord and being invited to the table before we are improved.

It is that if you're a thinking person, you're probably wrestling with this even right now, and it's this, if grace comes first, if we're invited before we're improved, welcome to the table before we're clean, then does anything actually change?

And how does it change? Or is this just permission, like a permission slip to stay exactly as messy as we were before forever?

[24:40] And I think like this is one of the most, the single most important theological questions in the Christian life. Like if you haven't wrestled with this question, I'm sorry, but you're probably going to now start wrestling with it, if you haven't thought about it now.

Most of us get this wrong in one of two directions, right? So some of us think, grace, get you to the door, but then the real work starts, and now it's up to me to clean myself up, staircase style.

I've got to go up the hill. One step, then the next step, then the next step, and steadily upward, more disciplined every year, and until eventually I arrive at maturity.

But that's exhausting, and it never works. It's also not what the Bible teaches, and if that's been your model, you're probably quite tired of it.

I think sometimes we perpetuate that. We have these great annual conventions or festivals or whatever, and they encourage us, oh, this year you're going to dedicate your life again to Christ, right?

[26:07] And you go 20 years in a row, and every year you're dedicating your life back to Christ, right? Why? Because you know that you came to the festival at the bottom of the hill, and it was such a great festival, now you're at the top of the hill, and you're like, yeah, I'm ready.

And then the next day you're back down to the bottom of the hill again. That's not freedom, is it?

Now, of course, others think that since grace covers everything, nothing needs to change at all.

Like, I'm accepted as I am, so I'll just stay as I am. Although that's not freedom either. That's just a different kind of despair. Because deep down, you know that a life untouched by love is not actually a loved life.

But here's the biblical pattern, and it's neither of these. The process of becoming more Christ-like is called sanctification. That's the technical term, right?

And it doesn't work like a staircase, where you climb up by your own effort towards God. It's more like a spiral. It's more the Holy Spirit moves in, takes up actual residence in you, and then from the inside begins to change you.

[27:31] Not clean up, then the Spirit moves in. Instead, Spirit moves in, and that's when He starts cleaning. I mean, look, Ezekiel 36, we've looked at this a few verses before, where God says, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you, I will remove the heart of stone and flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and then as a result of all of that, look what He says, and then cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

It's not the other way around, is it? He doesn't say, I want you to obey my rules and keep my statues and walk in them, and then we'll talk about whether I'll give you a new heart. as if our actions of walking with God or walking with those rules is going to create a new heart. That's the order, right? New heart, new spirit first, walking in obedience second. Paul said the same thing to the church of Philippi in Philippians chapter 2. He says, for it is God who works in you. Who is it? More effort, more discipline, more rules? No. I'm not denouncing effort and rules. We need effort. Okay? But Paul says, it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

God doesn't wait outside cheering you on while you climb. He moves in. And look, here's why I call it a spiral instead of a staircase.

[29:01] I think this matters practically probably more than almost anything else I'll say today. A staircase is linear. Right? And you go up. Okay?

But if you ever slip, you fall backwards. And eventually if you keep slipping, you fall backwards, you're in a heap out the bottom and you need to start all over again. And that's demoralizing and it's discouraging.

So you face the same issues, the same temptations, the same insecurities, the same sin patterns and you have to completely overcome them to make any kind of progress.

Like you're on the fourth step, you want to get to the fifth step, but you need to overcome X, Y, Z. But a spiral is different. A spiral also brings you back round, but it brings you back round again and again and again and again to the same issues, the same issues that you thought you dealt with last week, last month, last year, two years ago, ten years ago.

And each time you come back round to it, if you're walking in the spirit, you're actually a little higher up than you were the last time. Same issue, different altitude.

[30:20] And that is enormously freeing because it means that when you find yourself like three years into following Jesus, you're still wrestling with the very same anger or the very same lust or the very same anxiety you are wrestling with on day one.

Listen, that is not proof that the gospel isn't working. I don't know how many times I talk to people and they say, I've sinned again, clearly I'm not a Christian.

I've sinned again, clearly the Holy Spirit is not working in me. I've sinned again, clearly the gospel isn't doing its work. My response, that might just be a spiral.

It's God doing a deeper work. It's not you back at square one, you're at the same angle, but you're further up.

And look, this is the reason people give up on the Christian life. Because every time they sin, they think they're back to the bottom of the stairs. Like we think, I've been a Christian for 10 years, why am I still struggling with this?

[31:28] I thought I'd dealt with this. Why am I back here again? Why am I still fighting this temptation or doing this or thinking this way? And sometimes we assume that sanctification should look like a straight line.

Like every year, it should equal more faith, less sin, more victory, less struggle, more maturity. Now, I won't take a show of hands this morning, but that's not reality, is it?

We shouldn't confuse repetition with regression. Sometimes God takes you around the same mountain again because he's doing a deeper work.

And I think Ruth pictures this for us in a small way. She doesn't arrive at Boaz's field having already become an Israelite in her heart. Fully sanctified, faithfully mature, ready to be the grandmother of King David, ready to be the distant relative of Jesus.

She's not like there. Chapter 1 shows, actually, if you look at her life, chapter 1 shows real faith already.

[32:45] She says, your people shall be my people, your God, my God, but she's still gleaning like someone who has nothing. Her transformation across the book is not instant.

It unfolds. It goes in a spiral. And I want you to see verse 12 of this chapter.

Boaz actually prays over her. So, would you notice that we've got the bread and the wine, and now we've got the blessing, exactly the same as we see in the upper room, right?

So, the Lord, he says, repay you for what you have done, a full reward will be given to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. Look, that's not a completed transaction, is it?

There's a prayer for an ongoing work. And the practical application, and look, you might want to write this down, is that we need to stop measuring our Christian life by comparing this year's version of you to some imaginary finished product.

[33:53] which means we stop asking, have I arrived? Spiritually, mature. Instead, we're asking, how am I responding today to Jesus?

Am I responding differently to Jesus today? Do I repent more quickly? Do I hide less? Do I ask for help sooner?

Do I return to Jesus faster? Do I forgive more readily? Because that's where growth is, isn't it?

That's the spirit at work.

Not by you kind of white knuckling your way up to the staircase, hoping you don't slip down, almost near the top, looking back and thinking that's a pretty big way to fall.

But by him living in you and turning you again and again gently upward, looking to Jesus, the founder, the author of our faith.

[34:59] Now finally, look at the fourth thing. The fourth thing is more than leftovers. Verse 14, she ate and she was satisfied and she had some left over and when she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young man saying, let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her.

And then verse 16, Boaz isn't finished. He says, and also put out some of the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her. So he deliberately, secretly has grain dropped in the field, right?

Over and above what the law required. Over and above what she asked for, over and above what she needed. And of course, this is the theme that runs through the entire Bible, isn't it?

That God's grace is never barely enough. You know, the manna in the wilderness, when gathered rightly, it was always exactly enough with nothing to spare and nothing lacking.

A different kind of abundance, sufficiency without anxiety, if you like. Jesus' first recorded miracle in John chapter 2, do you remember?

[36:22] There he is in Cana, and Jesus doesn't just produce a modest top-up of the wine. He produces the best wine at a wedding where all the good wine had already run out.

You remember the feeding of the 5,000? He takes those loaves and fishes and from it, 12 baskets were left over.

Every single time God provides in Scripture, there is a pattern of more than enough. And the gospel promise is that Christ is enough and his grace is sufficient.

There's no shortage of grace for the person who comes to Jesus. God's He says, God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were, but as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.

See, the remarkable thing isn't that Boaz gave Ruth a meal. I mean, it is a wonderful thing, but that's not the most wonderful thing.

[37:41] It's not that Boaz was a wonderful man, but Boaz is not the savior here. He's pointed to someone greater. Like, Boaz feeds Ruth, but what did Jesus say repeatedly?

He says, I'm not just going to give you food, I am your food. I am the bread of life, he says. And where Ruth is welcomed because Boaz is abundant, we are welcomed because Jesus emptied himself.

Boaz can invite Ruth to his table, but Jesus is rejected so that we might be welcomed. Jesus is treated as an outsider so that we might become sons and daughters, that we might sit with the reapers.

Jesus is driven away so that we might be brought near. See, the cross is a place where Jesus receives everything that we deserve. And the gospel is the announcement that we receive everything that he has earned, not that we have earned anything.

That's grace. And that's why this table matters. We don't come because we have arrived. We come because we're hungry, spiritually hungry.

[38:56] We don't come because we're strong. We come because we are weak. We don't come because we are clean. We come because we need cleansing. We don't come because we have completed the journey.

We come because we're still on it. And so the remarkable thing here isn't that Boaz gave Ruth a meal. The remarkable thing is that Jesus gives us himself.

Jesus had his last meal with his disciples, does something Boaz never did and could ever do. He doesn't just pass around bread that represents provision.

Listen to what he says in Luke chapter 22. it says that he took bread and when he had blessed it, when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them and then he says, this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. So he doesn't give a portion of his harvest. This is really important. He doesn't just give us a portion. He gives us himself.

[40 : 03] his body broken, his blood poured out. In John chapter 6 verse 35, he says, whoever comes to me, Jesus says, shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall not thirst.

And look, think about the leftovers again because Jesus does this too but bigger, right? The leftovers. And you might think, oh, just a small bit of bread like a little cup.

Like, how is there going to be leftovers from that? Spiritually, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 7, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.

I mean, talk about leftovers. Not measured out carefully, poured out leftovers. leftovers. And John says in John chapter 1, from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace, layers of grace. Here's my prayer for us today. You're not waiting to be improved before you're invited. invited. You were invited first so that the invitation itself could begin the changing.

[41 : 32] You're not sitting at a test table where your performance is being scored. You are sitting at a grace table set by a redeemer who gave not a meal but himself.

You're not climbing a staircase, gritting your teeth hoping you don't slip. You're not being carried by around a spiral by the spirit who lives in you and brings you back again and again a little bit higher each time to the very same struggle until one day the circle closes in your made whole.

And you're not sent out with just enough. You're sent out with leftovers. And this morning we don't just get to hear that. We get to do it.

We get to come to a table. And so in a moment we're going to sing and we're going to share the Lord's table together. But before we do that I want us to really think about exactly what kind of table this is.

This is not a table for people who have finally gotten their act together this week. Like there would be the same amount of cups, same amount of bread left on the table if that were the case, right?

[42 : 56] This is not a table you earn a seat at by having quiet time seven days running. This is not a table where you have earned your seat by finally beating the sin that you've been wrestling with or by feeling sufficiently sorry or sufficiently spiritual or sufficiently ready.

if that were the entry requirement none of us not one person in this room certainly not the one preaching would ever be seated.

The act of coming is an act of faith. It's an act of repentance. This is Ruth's table. you come with dust of the field still on your feet.

You come with a complicated history. Things about yourself that you think would disqualify you if people knew. And you come maybe having spent this whole week gleaning, scraping by unsure if you belong, unsure if grace has any room left for someone like you.

And the word from this table this morning is the same word Boaz spoke over Ruth. Come here, sit beside the reapers, eat until you're satisfied, there will be leftovers.

[44 : 24] Because the bread you're about to receive is not a symbol of a meal Boaz gave. It is the body of Jesus given for you. the cup is not grain, not wine poured out to celebrate a harvest.

It is blood poured out so that the invitation to this table would never again depend on whether you've cleaned yourself up or not first.

So Joe and Jenny are going to come and lead us and as we do, as we sing, let your heart do business with God. If there's shame keeping you from this table, bring it to him instead of hiding it from him.

If there's someone this week you've been withholding grace from until they qualify, let this table search that out too. And then let's come not because you've earned it, but because it was never that kind of table in the first place.

Let's pray. Father, we come before you this morning not because we've improved ourselves, but because you've invited us. Thank you that your grace meets us before we are finished.

[45:42] Thank you that in Christ we come to a table and not a test. That we are welcome not because we have proved ourselves worthy, but because Jesus is gracious.

Teach us to remember that sanctification is often, Lord, a spiral and not a staircase. grace. When we feel as though we are returning to the same struggle, remind us that your spirit is still at work, taking us deeper into dependence with you.

And Father, thank you that you don't give us merely leftovers. You are generous in grace, abundant in mercy and lavish in love. You've not given us leftovers, you've given us yourself.

love. And so Father, by faith and in repentance, we acknowledge the invitation and we respond.

And maybe for some it's the first time responding to that invitation of grace. God, we come before you again, Lord, we come before you again, Lord, and we say, forgive us of our sins.

[46:59] There are many. thank you for dying on the cross for us. Thank you for the body that was broken.

Thank you for the blood that was shed. And we come now in remembrance of that and we say thank you. Thank you for the work that you continue to do in our lives.

Help us to continue and daily respond to you. walking with you, putting our faith and trust in you.

Lord, thank you.

Thank you for that invitation that says come sit with the reapers. Come be full. Come leave with more than enough.

Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.