

Ruth 2:17-23

Hope is Found in Kindness

I. Introduction

- A. Ruth had gleaned in the fields all day long and in the process gathered an enormous amount of barley. An “ephah” of barley was approximately 20-40 dry quarts.** This was equal to what a female worker in the region would make in salary over a four week period! She had gathered a month’s worth of Barley for she and Naomi.
- B. God had blessed her *abundantly through* the kind generosity of Boaz.** She was not just provided for but richly provided for by this God through this man. And not just for a day! **She had been invited to come back and work everyday in his fields through the end of the barley harvest.**
- C. Ruth had chosen a life of faith and dependency upon God. She placed her trust in God for her welfare both in the present and future. And God had come through for her.**
- D. God always comes through...every time and without question. In the process of His provision something wonderful happens to both women...a realization and restoration of hope...**

II. Hope

- A. **Hope — The expectation of good things.**
- B. **G K Chesterton — Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all...As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength.**
- C. **There are people all around us, everyday and everywhere we go, who can best be described as hopeless.** It's not just their circumstances that make them so...it is the condition of their heart. They live life without any expectations of anything good ever happening to them. They are dead inside.
- D. **The reason people find themselves in such a state vary. It may be their marriage, finances, health, children, job...But whatever the reason they are dead inside. They live in the constant pain and agony of a heart filled with hopelessness.**
- E. Naomi certainly fits this description. She is completely hopeless. Ruth on the other had found hope...She had expectations for a future. **She found this hope in the character and promises of God.**
- F. **In Boaz Ruth sees her hopes realized and Naomi sees her hope reborn.** Hope is realized and born in the hearts of these two women through the kindness shown to Ruth in a Barley field.

G. Sometimes men are awakened out of mere existence through the breath of kindness. Henry M. Stanley's early life is a story that moves the hardest heart. Never knowing his father, disowned by his mother, in the Asaph workhouse (In England and Wales a workhouse, colloquially known as a spike, was a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment) surrounded by misery and cruelty, he used to hear the lesson read from John 4:4, 7: "Little children, . . . love one another," and wondered what it meant. His childish heart was ready and yearning for love, but none gave love to him; and he began to think the sweetest parts of the Bible were wholly inapplicable to actual life. He had come, even at early years, to disbelieve in love. Then one day the fugitive boy who had run away from the ship at New Orleans stood in front of a kind, grave gentleman who had taken him into his store and then into his home. The man took a basin of water, made the sign of the cross on his brow, gave him his own name, Henry M. Stanley, and then took him in his arms and kissed him. His senses whirled about him, and tears, which no amount of cruelty could ever have forced from him, poured in a torrent under the influence of that simple embrace. "The golden period of my life began from that supreme moment."

- H. Isn't it amazing to think how one simple act of kindness can turn someone's world upside down. One decision we make which changes not only the way one feels in the moment but how they see the rest of their life.
- I. Naomi knew the amount of barley Ruth had brought home could never have been the simple result of hard work. There was just too much of it! A month's wages worth of barley in one day! Impossible!
- J. Once she heard the story of Boaz and his kindness demonstrated her heart was revived. You can just feel the hope return to her and the color come back to her face...You can feel the smile on her face and joy in her heart come through the pages of the text.**
- K. She and Ruth had been shown kindness...her bitterness was met with the compassion, care, sympathy and love. An unexpected course which forever changed the way Naomi would look at her life. Her faith was restored.**

I. Kindness

- A. Naomi says, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.” Boaz has shown kindness to Ruth, Naomi as well as to their departed husbands.
- B. Kindness — sympathetic or helpful nature...to be favorably inclined.**
- C. Mother asked her six-year-old what loving-kindness meant. "Well," he said, "when I ask you for a piece of bread and butter and you give it to me, that's kindness, but *when you put jam on it, that's loving-kindness.*” Certainly Ruth and Naomi had felt they had been shown “loving-kindness.”**
- D. Kindness is a choice not a feeling. Unfortunately we often wait on a feeling before expressing it. Regardless of how we feel in any given moment, we all have the opportunity to look at another human being with favor and be of help to them. To care for a need, not because the person deserves or even asks for our help but simply because we have chosen to do so.**
- E. Christians have a particular opportunity and unique capacity for kindness because of our relationship with God...Because of His Spirit which indwells us.**
- F. Galatians 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness”**

- G. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit which means it is something God is producing through us.**
- H. Remember what Jesus said in John 15:4-5, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; ^ayou are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that ^bbears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**
- I. As we abide** — Experience a love relationship with Jesus...His Spirit works in and through us to do His will. He produces His character and works through us.
- J. Philippians 2:13, “It is Christ who works in you to will and to act according to His good pleasure.”**
- K. Boaz was a man who had a relationship with God. And out of this relationship God produced good character and a will to be kind. This willingness turned into action when given the opportunity.**
- L. Boaz was one of the “redeemers” of the women. This meant he was a close family member and was supposed to help those in need. But, not every “redeemer” did so.** As we will see later in the book, there was a redeemer closer in relation to the two women and he is nowhere to be found.

M. Boaz was walking with God and the fruit of His relationship with God produced fruit...character and action...a sympathetic disposition toward these women which resulted in help given them.

I. Conclusion

- A. **Do you have a willingness to be kind? Is your character predisposed to be sympathetic toward those in need? Are you a person who shows favor to the hurting? Are you on the lookout for such folks so you might help them?**
- B. **If the answer is no you have an “abiding problem.”** The reason you struggle to be kind is because you are struggling to experience Jesus the way God intends for you to experience Him.
- C. **Ask Jesus to help you love Him with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. Ask Him to help you rest and “abide.” Help you relax, believer, have faith and enjoy relationship with Him.**
- D. I believe one of the great tragedies of Christianity is the number of genuine believers who place faith in Christ for their salvation and lack faith for the living of their Christian life. That is...They have faith for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life but refuse to live the rest of their life thereafter by faith in Christ.

- E. These folks constantly try to produce fruit in themselves... make themselves joyful, good, faithful and kind. All the while Jesus says, "Come over here, sit down and rest with Me. Spend some time with Me." When we do so, the experience of having been with Him will change you.**
- F. A story is told of an exploring party in Africa which had employed a group of native carriers to go with them into the interior. Being in a hurry to reach their objective, the party was pushed relentlessly for several days. Finally the natives just sat down and would go no farther. Asked what was the matter, the superstitious natives replied, "We are waiting for our souls to catch up with our bodies." A lot of Christians who have run away from God in their hurry and rush for worldly things need to stop and catch up on spiritual things.**
- G. Some of us need to stop running so hard...stop living life so hard and catch up on Spiritual things...Catch up with Jesus...The time spent will change us.**
- H. Stop striving and start resting...Stop struggling to be and by faith realize you are...so that you might then become.**
- I. If you have placed your faith in Christ then you are a Christian...rest in your faith...enjoy your life in Christ and let Him produce spiritual fruit in and through your life.**

- J. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit...a fruit we see in the life of Boaz...because of his walk with God. Something God desires to produce through each and every one of us.**
- K. Look around, see where God is at work...see the opportunity to show favor and help those around you and watch how God changes lives through you.
- L. Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry...all acts of kindness...but His purpose was to preach the Kingdom of God...salvation was here...the Savior had come.
- M. Ultimately the greatest kindness we could ever show anyone is to share Christ with them.**