

“Favor, Providence, and Kindness” (Ruth 2)

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At Christmas, we often hear about love, joy, and peace. Those are good things. And we're often encouraged to be generous. Black Friday and Cyber Monday were followed by Giving Tuesday, when people were encouraged to give to charities. Giving is a good thing.

But *why* should we give? *Why* should we be generous? *Why* should we love other people? *What* gives us the motivation to give and to love other people?

We're going to continue to look at the book of Ruth today, and as we do so, let's think about those questions.

If you weren't here with us last week, I talked about the first chapter of Ruth. If you weren't here, I would encourage you to go online and listen to last week's message.¹ I'll try to summarize it very quickly so we're all brought up to speed. The book of Ruth was written about three thousand years ago. It's about people going through a tough time roughly 3,200 years ago. It's set in a dark period of the history of Israel, the time “when the judges ruled” (Ruth 1:1), when there was no king in Israel, when “[e]veryone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). This was a time when Israel often turned away from worshiping God. God would then give them a punishment for their sin, to restrain their evil ways and to turn them back to him. He even used events like wars to do that. In this case, a famine struck the land of Israel, and one man, Elimelech, moved his family to Moab, a country to the east. There, the man died, leaving his wife and two sons. The two sons married women from Moab and lived there ten years. But then they died, too. That left Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Naomi, whose name means “pleasant,” claimed that God had made her life empty and miserable, which is why she wanted to be called Mara, which means “bitter.”

Naomi had heard “that the LORD had visited his people and given them food” (Ruth 1:6) in her homeland of Judah in Israel. So she decided to return. Ruth, her daughter-in-law, decided to go with her. She could have stayed in Moab with her parents and she could have remarried there, but it seems that she was concerned about Naomi's welfare and she had begun to trust the

¹ Available at <http://wbcommunity.org/ruth>.

LORD, the God of Israel. She said to Naomi, “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (v. 16).

We also saw, at the very end of chapter 1, that when Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, it just so happened to be the beginning of the barley harvest.

Now, let’s read Ruth 2. I’ll read the whole chapter, I’ll summarize what we’ve read, and then I’ll draw out the main points of the passage.

¹ Now Naomi had a relative of her husband’s, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. ² And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” ³ So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. ⁴ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered, “The LORD bless you.” ⁵ Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?” ⁶ And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. ⁷ She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.”

⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.” ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing 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?” ¹¹ But Boaz answered her, “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. ¹² The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!” ¹³ 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.”

¹⁴ And at mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine.” So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. ¹⁵ When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. ¹⁶ And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her.”

¹⁷ So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. ¹⁸ And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and

gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied. ¹⁹ And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man 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 worked today is Boaz.” ²⁰ And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.” ²¹ And Ruth the Moabite said, “Besides, he said to me, ‘You shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’ ” ²² And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, lest in another field you be assaulted.” ²³ So she kept close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.²

Naomi and Ruth returned to Naomi’s hometown, Bethlehem, but their future was still unsure. As widows, their lives weren’t secure. They needed food. They needed heirs to continue their family line. A lot of the book of Ruth is concerned with very basic things in life: food, land, and having descendants who will carry on the family name and the family legacy.

So, Ruth decides she is going to go to the fields to glean food. In the law that God gave to Israel, there are provisions for the poor. Land owners were supposed to leave a bit of their crops for those who were less fortunate. We read passages like this one, Leviticus 19:9–10:

⁹ “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Ruth hopes to find someone who will show her favor, someone who will allow her to get enough food for herself and also for Naomi. Ruth just happens to go to the field of Boaz, a man of good standing who just happens to be a relative of Elimelech, Naomi’s late husband. And Boaz lets Ruth glean a lot of barley. An ephah is about three-fifths of a bushel, which might have weighed 29 pounds. So, Ruth and Naomi had a lot of food.

In this passage, I want us to see three things: favor, providence, and kindness. They’re all related. You might say they are three different ways of looking at the same reality. First, let’s think about favor. That’s not a word we use often. We do use the word “favorite.” But favor is a

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

bit different. One definition is “an act of kindness beyond what is due or usual.”³ Ruth was looking for someone who would be kind to her, someone who would give her more than what she was due (v. 2). She was looking for someone who would allow her to glean in his field and to get enough food to take care of two people. And that’s what she found in Boaz. He allowed her to glean in the fields and to get water. When Ruth hears about this, she asks, in verse 10, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” In verse 13, she says, “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.”

“Found favor” is an important phrase in the Bible. In Genesis, we’re told that Noah (6:8), Abraham (18:3), Lot (19:19), Jacob (33:8, 10, 15), and Joseph (39:4) “found favor.” These were people whose lives God spared, who were chosen by God. And if you look carefully at their lives, you see that none of them really deserved God’s favor, or God’s kindness. We usually call this grace. A common definition for grace is “unmerited favor.” We don’t merit or earn God’s kindness to us. He simply gives us good things because he wants to. Ruth knew she wasn’t entitled to help. But she was hoping that someone would show her favor. She was hoping for a gift.

As I said earlier, Ruth was in a precarious position. She didn’t have any family in Israel other than her mother-in-law. She didn’t have money or land of her own. She was a foreigner, which made her suspicious in the eyes of Israelites. If she was going to survive in this place, she would need to rely upon the kindness of strangers.

This message has a lot to do with Christmas. Consider this passage from Luke’s Gospel, when Mary finds out she is going to be the mother of Jesus:

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will

³ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:26–33).

Mary was chosen as the woman who would give birth to Jesus, the Son of God (that’s what “Son of the Most High” means). This is not a job that she earned. Nowhere in the Bible are we told that Mary wasn’t a sinner. In fact, later on, Jesus will say things that indicate that she had no particularly special status (see Mark 3:21, 31–35; Luke 8:18–21; 11:27–28). Mary herself says, “my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). So, she acknowledged that she needed salvation. And in Matthew 1:21, we’re told that Jesus came to “save his people from their sins.” Mary needed that salvation. She didn’t earn God’s favor. She didn’t deserve to have a special relationship with Jesus. We need that salvation. We haven’t earned God’s favor. We don’t deserve to have a special relationship with God or his Son. But God offers that to us. Those who have found favor with God do so on the basis of what they’ve done. They’ve found favor with God on the basis of what Jesus has done. He is the only one who has ever lived perfectly for God, and when you have a relationship with him, you are credited with his perfect status.

So, that’s favor. The second word I want to look at is providence. That’s a bit of an older-sounding word. One definition of that word is “divine guidance or care.”⁴ It refers to God’s providing for people. But it’s more than just providing. It refers to God’s care, his provision, and his protection. Sometimes, it refers to God’s plan, which encompasses every person and every situation. In the story of Ruth, it just so happened that Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest. It just so happened that Naomi’s dead husband had a relative named Boaz, who was a man of means. It just so happened that Ruth went to Boaz’s field. In verse 3, it says that Ruth “happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.” In the Hebrew, it literally says, “her chance chanced upon” the field. But surely the author of Ruth wants us to understand that ironically. This isn’t chance. This is God’s plan.

God isn’t mentioned much in this book and there are no miracles in the book. But that doesn’t mean God isn’t behind everything that is happening. God is always working, even when we can’t see it or understand it. We can understand that God is guiding Ruth to Boaz because, in the end, this will lead to Jesus. As I said last week, Ruth and Boaz are ancestors of Jesus. Also, the Bible tells us that God “works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:11).

⁴ *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

And there are many other verses and passages that indicate that God knows all things and works all things for his glory and for the good of his people (Rom. 8:28, for instance).⁵

In this story, God provides for Ruth and Naomi through Boaz. He provides Ruth with barley and water. He invites her to eat with his servants. And he even provides protection for her. We can see that her situation might be dangerous, because Boaz says in verse 9 that he told his male servants not to touch her, and in verse 22 Naomi mentions the possibility of assault. This could be assault that comes from robbery or it could be sexual assault. At any rate, Boaz provides for her.

God provides for his people. That's certainly true in the Christmas story. It just so happened that Caesar Augustus ordered a census (Luke 2:1). It just so happened that Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, was from the tribe of Judah and was from the line of David (Luke 2:4). It so happened that he had to return to Bethlehem, which is where, hundreds of years earlier, it was prophesied that "the ruler in Israel" would be born (Mic. 5:2). God provided for Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus. He protected them from the evil King Herod by warning them of Herod's plans to kill the children in Bethlehem. God kept them safe in Egypt until Herod died (see Matthew 2).

And God provides for us today. It's no accident that we're living in this time and place (Acts 17:26). It's no accident that we grew up in the families we grew up in, and that we have the physical characteristics that we have. And God has met our daily needs. In Ruth, he provided people with bread and drink. These are the basics of life. Without bread and water, or similar equivalents, we would die. But physical food and drink point to greater realities. We can have all the basic needs of life met and still yearn for more. We could have all the pleasures that this life can give, all the riches we can imagine, and all the power that one human being could have, and we would still feel empty. But Jesus offers spiritual food. In John's Gospel, in chapter 6, he says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27). (Jesus sometimes refers to himself as "the Son of Man.") Then he says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (v. 35).⁶ Jesus gives us food that feeds not just our bodies, but our souls as well. He is the spiritual food that doesn't just give us this life, but eternal life. And he offers that to everyone who would trust in him. Ruth ate with Boaz and she was satisfied.

⁵ See Prov. 16:1, 4, 9, 33.

⁶ See also John 4:13-14.

When we come and eat with Jesus, metaphorically speaking, our souls find satisfaction. We find rest.

The last word I want us to consider is kindness. Boaz was obviously kind to Ruth. She says, in verse 13, “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.” And in verse 20, Naomi says, “May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” It’s not clear whether Naomi is referring to Boaz’s kindness or God’s kindness. But, really, it’s one and the same. God showed kindness to Ruth and Naomi through Boaz. Boaz went out of his way to take care of a vulnerable widow who was a foreigner. He didn’t just give her a little bit of food. He gave her a lot. And he provided water and security. He invited Ruth to eat with him. He treated her as if she were one of his own.

Why would Boaz do this? Why did he show favor to Ruth? Why did he provide for her? Why was he kind?

I suppose you could say he was kind to a foreigner because there are commands in the law to do so. There are also commands to take care of orphans and widows. For example, Exodus 22:21–22 says:

²¹ “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.⁷

We see there the reason why Israel shouldn’t oppress foreigners who joined them and put their trust in the God of Israel. They once lived in a foreign land, Egypt. They know what it was like to be in a strange place. They know what it’s like to be oppressed. Therefore, they should treat others the way they want to be treated.

Those commands may have been foremost in Boaz’s mind. But perhaps he also realized that Ruth and Naomi were also made in the image of God. They were created to reflect who God is, to worship God, to love him, and to respond to him the way that loving children respond to a good father. Perhaps he knew that they were worth treating with respect simply because they were human beings, created by the God whom he worshiped. After all, it seems he treated his workers very well. He blessed them, and they blessed him in return (v. 4).

⁷ See also Exod. 23:9; Lev. 19:33–34; Deut. 10:17–19.

That's really the reason why we should love each other. And the standard we use for our moral choices is ultimately God. He is the measure of goodness. He is how we understand what real love is like. And we follow the broad principles of ethics that are found in the Bible. We also follow the specific commands that are given to us by Jesus, whether through his own lips or from the mouths of his apostles. We follow God's commands because he is not only the maker of moral laws, but the one who designed life. He knows best. So his commandments line up with the way he designed us, just the way an owner's manual of a machine lines up with the reality of how that machine was made and how it should function.

I want us to see that this is very different from the other story that is commonly told about the world. This is the story that there is no God. This is the story that says there is nothing supernatural and that there is no inherent meaning or purpose in life. We are here by chance, and we have all evolved from a common ancestor. In this story, it's very hard to argue that there is an objective moral law. It's hard to argue that there are objective moral duties. In other words, it's very hard to say that we must love everyone else. It's very hard to say that we ought to be kind to everyone.

Now, before I continue, I want to say that I'm not against science. And I'm not against talking about evolution. If evolution means simply "change over time," then it's certainly true. There certainly is small scale evolution, such as when we see changes within a species. (Think of Darwin's finches.) But there are scientific problems with the large-scale, full-blown Darwinian theory of evolution. Such a theory moves beyond the evidence and becomes an ideology, a narrative about all of reality that is very much opposite the Christian view of the universe. I don't have time to get into the scientific problems with that large-scale theory of evolution, but if you want to learn more about it, you can visit our website, and find the "Articles" section under the "Media" tab. There, you'll find a review of two competing books about the subject.⁸

But I want us to think about the consequences of this worldview, and how very different it is from Christianity, and how, ultimately, it can't account for why we should love each other and treat each other with kindness.

If there is no God, there is no moral law giver, and thus no moral law. Some people assert that there is a moral law, that it's a brute fact. But it's hard to see how that is so. And not only do

⁸ Brian Watson, "Two Views on Evolution," <http://wbcommunity.org/two-views-evolution>.

we need a moral law giver, we need someone to whom we are responsible, someone whom we are obligated to obey.

Some atheists realize this problem. They agree there is no real moral law, but our sense of morality is a byproduct of evolution. It has helped us survive. The argument goes something like this: In Darwinian evolution, everything that has emerged is the result of a mutation in an organism, somewhere along the way. For each mutation to be passed down to future generations, it must have some advantage. It must help that organism survive and procreate. And then the mutation is passed on to more organisms, who eventually out-populate the ones who didn't have that advantage. That's how natural selection works. It's survival of the fittest.

Now, it is proposed that somewhere along the way, we developed a mutation in our genes that causes us to be altruistic. In other words, something in our genes causes us to love others, to sacrifice for others. And this mutation proved to be useful. You might imagine a village in which there was a good hunter who had a surplus of meat, and some weak villagers who were poor hunters and had little to eat. The good hunter shared his bounty with his fellow villagers, and they were able to help him survive. And all of this was driven by genetic mutations, not obedience to some transcendent moral law.

Fine. But what happens when there's one last bit of meat? Does the strong hunter share that with the weak hunters? What if the weak hunters were attacked by a bear? Would the strong hunter sacrifice his own safety to rescue the weak hunters? It's hard to believe that this would happen. There are many times when helping others can put us in harm's way. Also, we have no evidence of any altruism gene. This is just a theory, not backed by evidence.

But if it were true, then all of what we suppose is love and kindness and self-sacrifice is just a byproduct of our genes. It's all really the result of some "selfish gene," to borrow the title of a Richard Dawkins book.⁹ It's not really love. It's just another form of selfishness. It's treating others according to the way they can help you. It's helping others survive because they may help you survive. It's not treating other people as specially created beings, people who are worthy of love regardless of what they can or cannot do for you.

And any other theory of morality, love, and human rights apart from the story of a loving God who lovingly made human beings in his image has real problems. These stories cannot account for a universal "ought," a moral code that exists in all times and all places. These stories

⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

state that things go better when we treat each other well. That's what utilitarianism says. We should act in such a way that brings maximum pleasure to the largest number of people. But there's a problem with that theory, because it's hard to know in advance what will bring maximum good or happiness to most people. Sometimes we only know the consequences of our decisions in hindsight. Also, it still doesn't account for a moral law that shouldn't be violated. And what if treating a small minority group poorly results in maximum pleasure for the large majority?¹⁰ What if killing off the disabled and the weak helps everyone else out?

All of that is very abstract, I realize. To bring it home, I'll give you two examples of what Darwinian morality might look like. This week I happened to watch the first episode of a new Netflix series called *Black Mirror*. From what I can tell, the series is kind of like a modern-day *Twilight Zone*. The first episode, called "Nosedive," is about a not too-distant dystopian future, in which everyone is rated on a five-star scale. And everyone can rate you and see your rating. The story follows a young woman named Lacie. Her rating at the beginning is 4.2 stars. And in this world she lives in, everyone gets to rate her, and she gets to rate everyone. When she buys coffee at a local coffee shop, she immediately rates the barista on her phone, and he rates her. She rates and is rated at work. When she shares an elevator with a woman who works for a different company, they rate each other.

In fact, in this fictitious world, everything is based on ratings. If you have a high rating, you get better service, in one case you get a cheaper rent, and you get access to certain parts of society. If you have a low rating, you are ostracized. Everyone is always rating and being rated, and every move that a person makes is calculated to maintain or improve his or her rating. People are only useful insofar as they can enhance your social status. When Lacie tries desperately to improve her rating, things fall apart, and her rating starts falling rapidly. This story illustrates what social Darwinism looks like.

Here's another, more serious illustration. It is well known that Adolf Hitler and other Nazis believed in Darwinian theory. They believed in eugenics, the pseudoscience that says that some races (that was their thought, when in reality there is only one human race) are inherently

¹⁰ As Christian Smith puts it, "In fact, if feeding members of a minority religious group to lions for the stadium entertainment of the masses would increase the overall bottom-line happiness of the collective, then doing so would be moral in utilitarian terms—the increased happiness of the masses would simply outweigh the lost happiness of those fed to the lions." Smith, "Does Naturalism Warrant a Moral Belief in Universal Benevolence and Human Rights?" in Jeffrey Schloss and Michael J. Murray, eds., *The Believing Primate: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Reflections on the Origin of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 311.

better than others, and that human evolution can be improved through controlled breeding. They believed that Jewish people were inherently inferior. And that's why they could justify killing millions of them. I recently started reading a book called *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. Frankl was an Austrian psychologist and a Jew who survived the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau. In the book, he writes about how he and his fellow prisoners were barely kept alive on a bare minimum of food and they were, in some cases, worked to death. They subsisted on 10 ½ ounces of bread and 1 ¾ pints of thin soup each day. The soup was so thick that they were lucky if they had a few peas in their bowl. When a prisoner became sick and couldn't work, he was likely killed.¹¹

Now, we look back and say, "Well, obviously, Hitler was evil." And he was. But he was also acting in accordance with his worldview. In his mind, Jews were less fit. Therefore, he treated them as animals, those unworthy of love and kindness. They did not find favor in his eyes. And, like it or not, he was acting out of a Darwinian framework.

But Christianity is entirely different. We are supposed to love our neighbors and even our enemies because they have been created by God. And we have an obligation not only to them, but also to God.

I take time to point this out because some people assume that Christianity isn't true, that it's just a nice story that makes us feel better. Or they assume that Christianity is one of several legitimate religions, all of which lead to God. But that's not true. Christianity has always claimed to be the one true story of God, the world, and everything in it. And I try to show why it's true and why it's a better story than the competing narratives that are out there. I think we know that we are not simply animals. We know we should treat other people not as animals to be compete with, but people to love. We know there are real, objective rights and wrongs. And all of this supports the truth of Christianity.

Christianity has the benefit of not only being the true story, but also being a more beautiful story. If it were merely a beautiful story, I don't think I could believe it. I couldn't will myself to believe something that isn't true. If it were a true story but not beautiful, I would believe it, but I wouldn't want to. I could understand it's true, and I might follow Jesus, but I

¹¹ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946; Boston: Beacon Press, 2006). For more information on Darwinism and Hitler, see Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

would do so kicking and screaming. But if Christianity is both true and beautiful, not only do I have to believe in it, because it's right, but I want to believe in it, because it's beautiful.

What can be more beautiful than this? The reason we know that God is love is that he first loved us (1 John 4:7–21). We know that he loved us because he gave his only Son, who came to teach us, to live the life that we don't and can't live, and to die in our place so that we don't have to pay the penalty for our rebellion against God. Jesus gave himself willing. We already sang about this. We sang, "Thou Who Wast Rich." That comes from 2 Corinthians 8:9, which says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Jesus spent himself so that he could buy us.

So, what is our motivation to be generous? God gave his most precious treasure, his Son. What is our motivation to love others? God loved us, even while we were his enemies (Rom. 5:8). Ruth sacrificed for Naomi, but Jesus laid down his very life for us. Boaz was generous to Ruth, but God gave us everything when he gave us his Son. That is always the motivation for our love and kindness.

Is this motivation enough for you to love others? Is it motivation enough for you to love God? Is it motivation enough for you to trust him? Ruth came to trust the God of Israel. She came under the protection of his wings. Will you trust him, too?