

I. Introduction

- A. Our main topic today is GRACE. We are seeing how the Book of Ruth is really a textbook on grace. Grace is the Christian's secret weapon.
- B. Search the records of history. Cull through all the religions of all the world. Investigate every system of spirituality and philosophy and all thought. Not one of them teaches grace.
- C. Christians own grace.
- D. We own grace because God revealed his heart in writing--the Word of God--and the result is a testament of grace. No human mind would ever conceive of such a system as grace; it had to come from God.
 - 1. Grace is that quality in God by which he gives, at his own expense, and without regard to our merit, that which we need most deeply and long for most desperately.
 - 2. Grace is the compassionate heart of God.
 - 3. But Grace is NOT leniency. Leniency means that justice is overlooked. However, grace can only flow after justice is first satisfied.
 - 4. Grace is all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the Cross.

II. Title

- A. My talk today is part 6 in a series. The series is called:
 - 1. **Resting in the Love of God**
- B. And my talk today is called:
 - 1. **Hired Hand or Heir?**

III. Previously in Ruth...

- A. We met a woman named Naomi. After famine devastated her land, she journeyed with her husband and two sons to Moab. Some time later her husband died.
- B. She raised her sons all alone in a foreign land. They eventually married, and soon after, they too, also died.
- C. Naomi was heartbroken.
- D. One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, made a striking commitment of grace to Naomi. They returned to Judah together.
 - 1. Throughout chapter one, Naomi demonstrates bitterness.
 - 2. Ruth demonstrates grace.
- E. In chapter two, Ruth decides to go gleaning. Gleaning was a practice in ancient Israel. It was required by the laws of Moses. Any farmer had to allow widows, foreigners, and impoverished people onto the farm at the end of the day to pick over what was left after the paid harvesters went home.
- F. Ruth happened to go to the farm owned by Boaz, who by coincidence was a distant relative of her late husband.
- G. Ruth was not content with simple gleaning; she boldly asked for two special favors:
 - 1. First, she asked to glean on the heels of the reapers, something that wasn't allowed. Normally, the gleaners had to wait till the end of the day. Once the reapers went home, the gleaners could go out and harvest dropped grain. Ruth didn't want that. She wanted to be in the fields before the reapers went home. She wanted the first chance at the dropped grain... which by the way represents a bold and shameless pursuit of grace.
 - 2. Her second special favor was to be able to glean among the sheaves. That meant the place where the harvested bundles of grain were stored. Basically, the processing plant for harvested grain. That's off limits for gleaners. But that didn't stop Ruth. A bold, audacious, gutsy pursuit of grace.
- H. When she asked for these two favors, the boss wasn't around. The foreman couldn't authorize all that. So there she is, standing there by the little canopy for the workers, waiting.
- I. At long last the owner shows up. His name is Boaz. And we pick it up in Ruth 2:4.

IV. *Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!" Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, "Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves." So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.'" (Ruth 2:4-7)*

- A. So there you see Boaz, the one who owns the field.
- B. You see the foreman, who couldn't give special permission.
- C. And you see Ruth ask for super-gleaning privileges, on the heels of the reapers and among the sheaves.
- D. Now, Boaz speaks to Ruth.

V. *"Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.'" (Ruth 2:8-9)*

- A. Look at that. He just granted her first request: "go after them" (same Hebrew word, on their heels).
- B. But there's more. She not only gets early access privileges (grace), she also gets water privileges (let's just call that amazing grace).
- C. Ruth gets it. Look at what she says:

VI. *"So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found favor [grace] in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?'" (Ruth 2:10)*

- A. The reason I say that Ruth gets it is because she uses a very meaningful word.
- B. She says, "Why have I found favor in your sight?"
- C. That word, "favor" translates one of the two top words in the Bible (the Old Testament Hebrew) that means grace.
 - 1. Why have I found grace in your sight?

- D. Nobody owes anything to Ruth, and she knows it. She has no rights to anybody's kindness.
- E. Grace is shown only to those who acknowledge themselves to have no rights to it.
 - 1. **PRINCIPLE: Under Grace, God can never be in anybody's debt. Grace means God doesn't owe you. If God gave you something good because you deserved it, it would be called a PAYCHECK, not a BLESSING.**
 - 2. "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." (Romans 4:4)
- F. And I am here to tell you today that God is not a business owner handing out paychecks based on job performance.
- G. And this is exactly what this place in the Bible is all about.
- H. Ruth wrote Ruth to make you think of what you think when you think about God and your blessings from him.
 - 1. It's absolutely brilliant writing here.
- I. When you think about God, and when you think about the good blessings God has for you in your life, how hard do you have to work for it? How demanding is God?
- J. Listen to your own self-talk when it comes to God:
 - 1. **My life isn't worth blessing.**
 - 2. **I've blown it, and that disqualifies me from God's blessing.**
 - 3. **I'm not religious enough, not holy enough, not loving enough.**
 - 4. **I'm too messed up, too broken, too addicted, too selfish.**
 - 5. **I've got to clean up my act before God can bless me.**
 - 6. **I'm not good enough.**
 - 7. **I don't pray enough.**
 - 8. **I'm not sober enough.**
 - 9. **I hardly ever go to church.**
 - 10. **I hardly ever read my Bible.**
 - a) No blessing for me.
- K. In every single one of those statements, you've transformed God into a compliance officer, and his blessings into paychecks.
- L. And when Boaz gives this initial grace to Ruth, she gets it. She knows it's grace, and she literally says so.
- M. But in the very next section, it looks like everything goes off the rails. Ruth asks, why so much grace for me?
 - 1. Here's the answer from Boaz:
- VII. *"And Boaz answered and said to her, 'It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.'"* (Ruth 2:11-12)
 - A. What is going on here? Did you see what just happened? This is crazy!
 - B. It's entirely unexpected.
 - 1. Boaz shows grace. Ruth literally calls it grace.
 - 2. And then Boaz pulls the rug out from underneath grace.
 - C. Do you see how Boaz switches from talking about grace to talking about a paycheck?
 - 1. **May the Lord REPAY your WORK. May the Lord give you a FULL REWARD.**
 - D. I'm going to give this kind of thinking a name. I'm going to call it **TRANSACTIONAL LANGUAGE**.
 - E. It seems as if Boaz is setting up a paycheck system. A merit system. Ruth says grace, and Boaz says paycheck.
 - 1. Because after all, you are worthy, right Ruth?
 - 2. You are an awesome person. You are remarkable.
 - 3. You did make a remarkable sacrifice. Look at all you did for your mother-in-law! Look at you! Look at what you did, what you gave up, the price you paid!
 - 4. If anybody's worthy you are. If anybody wins the transactional game it's you Ruth. You're amazing!
 - F. Let me tell you what's happening here.
 - G. This is a test. This is THE test.
 - H. It is the test we all have to pass, one way or another.
 - I. The test is always the same. It is to shift your relationship with God from the ground of grace to the ground of transaction.
 - 1. God if you do this, I'll do that. If I give you this, you give me that. I did this, so you owe me that.
 - J. Why does Boaz do this? Why this test?
 - K. The test is necessary because of how deeply ingrained transactional thinking is in our psychology. We're hardwired for reciprocity and fairness. But this same wiring creates a massive barrier to receiving grace.
 - L. This test might reveal something crucial about your own soul:
 - 1. For a lot of people, their default response to kindness is to try to earn it retroactively or to pay it back.
 - 2. So many people are programmed to be uncomfortable with pure gift... pure grace. Is that you?
 - M. A lot of people are insecure about being loved. About receiving unearned love. Maybe that's you.
 - 1. It could be that you would rather be in a relationship where you've "earned" affection through performance, rather than simply being loved by someone who just wants to love you.
 - 2. It could be that you would rather not be loved at all than give up trying to earn love in your primary relationships.
 - 3. You've had love withheld. You've had to earn it, deserve it, prove your worth.
 - 4. And that means you've been wounded. You're hurt. You're the walking wounded. Rejection is big for you. Abandonment. Perfectionism. Avoidance.
 - 5. I'm not judging you. My heart is with you. You make sense to me. I feel really tender toward you.

- N. A lot of this goes back to childhood attachments. Children who grow up with inconsistent love learn to perform for affection. You're programmed that way... somehow the message came to you...
 - 1. I'll love you when you make me proud.
 - 2. I'll love you when you get good grades.
 - 3. I'll pay attention to you when you achieve.
 - 4. I'll lavish good stuff on you when you let me hurt you and keep the secret.
 - 5. I'll leave you alone if you just stay invisible and quiet.
- O. You're programmed that way... and if you're programmed to make love transactional with everybody else...
- P. So you figure it must be like that with God. You transpose the whole performance based template to God.
 - 1. God loves me when I perform... religion, prayer, good works, a better life...
- Q. Our whole culture is this way. People's worth is constantly being qualified... how many followers, likes, income, job title, grade points, swipes. So this is where you carry around:
 - 1. **Fear: "If I don't measure up, I'll be abandoned"**
 - 2. **Shame: "There's something fundamentally unacceptable about me"**
 - 3. **Exhaustion: "I can never rest because my worth requires constant proving"**
 - 4. **Comparison: "My value exists only in relation to others' achievements"**
 - 5. **Worry: "What if I don't, they don't, the world didn't, or God won't?"**
 - 6. **Despair: "No matter what I do, it's never enough"**
- R. So why does Boaz push to see how grace-based Ruth will be?
- S. Because of this principle:
 - 1. **PRINCIPLE: Under Grace, human psychology undergoes a complete paradigm shift.... And in that paradigm shift God is neither repaying your work nor rewarding your performance. He's giving you GRACE because that's just how his heart is wired to love you.**
- T. Does Ruth pass the test?
- U. Boaz says... let's be transactional.
- V. Ruth says...
- VIII. *Then she said, "Let me find FAVOR [GRACE, "hen"] in your sight, my lord; for you have COMFORTED [MERCY, "racham"] me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants." (Ruth 2:13)*
 - A. This is the core of my message today.
 - B. Ruth does not accept the transactional approach. No, she says, it's grace. It's mercy. Let's keep it that way. And she uses two more theological vocabulary words in the rich thesaurus of grace.
 - C. If you have Jesus as your Savior, God is not your employer and you are not his hired hand.
 - 1. God is your Father, and you are his heir.
 - 2. God is your Dad, and you are his beloved daughter or son.
 - 3. God is your Abba (Father), and his love is your birthright.
 - 4. God is your Comforter, and his blessing is coming your way every moment of every day, deserve it or not, believe it or not, notice it or not, enjoy it or not.
 - 5. Every day in every way you can say I'm richly blessed, highly favored, deeply loved.
 - a) **PRINCIPLE: Under Grace, the deepest question of human psychology is will you approach God as a hired hand or will you approach him as an heir? Faith is consenting to be loved by God.**
 - D. Notice Ruth's language... I'm not a hired hand, but you're paying me anyway like I'm doing work for you!
 - 1. Ruth says, You have comforted me. Literally, you are speaking to my heart. Not to my spreadsheets, calculations, or the forms I've filled out. Not to the list of failures. Not to the list of accomplishments. You're speaking to my heart.
 - E. Boaz says, "Let make this transactional."
 - 1. Christian... never let any preacher, any sermon, any book, or any encounter turn your relationship with God transactional.
 - F. Boaz says, "Let's make this transactional."
 - G. Ruth says, "Let's just keep this grace."
 - H. Bam, fireworks... test is passed with flying colors, and then this happens:
- IX. *"Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, 'Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain ["caramel corn"] to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back." (Ruth 2:14)*
 - A. Boaz says, you want grace? Okay. Here's more grace.
 - 1. You don't work for me, but I'll feed you like you do.
 - 2. You don't make money for me, but I'll provide for you like you do.
 - 3. You don't have any claim on me, but I'll give you leftovers...
 - B. But wait, he's just getting started:
- X. *"And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.'" (Ruth 2:15)*
 - A. Do you see what that is?
 - B. Remember Ruth made 2 outside the box requests??
 - C. That's the second request... Lunch is over, the reapers get up to go, and Ruth gets up to go with them. That's the first request, on the heels of the reapers.
 - D. And then he says "among the sheaves." That's the second request! Over there in the storage area.
 - 1. Guys, when she goes there, into that place that's off limits, don't stop her. Let her go!!"

- E. Who do you think is better...
 - 1. Boaz as a friend to Ruth... OR... God as a Father to you?
- F. And the fact that you don't have an easy answer to that question is the biggest gaping wound in your heart.
 - 1. **PRINCIPLE: Under Grace, God is not only calling you just to a teaching and a truth, but to a restored soul because grace comes to life at the intersection when THEOLOGY meets PSYCHOLOGY.**
- G. God wants to bring you there. I'm preaching to bring you there. Our whole church is organized around bringing you there. If you think grace is the main thing, you're in the right place.
- H. Ruth is there, and Boaz knows it.
- I. So he grants her second request, but wait, he's just getting started.
- XI. *"Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."* (Ruth 2:16)
 - A. Grace.
 - B. Amazing grace.
 - C. Super Grace.
 - 1. What if God wants to love you like this today, but you won't let him?
 - 2. What if God wants to love you like this today, but you don't believe him?
 - 3. What if God wants to love you like this today, but a lifetime of programming convinces you it could never be?
 - 4. What if God wants to love you like this today, but everything inside you says even if it's like this for others it could never be like this for you?
 - D. I want to finish this part of the story and then I want to talk to you.
 - 1. The last part of this section says:
- XII. *"So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley."* (Ruth 2:17)
 - A. Want to know how much an ephah is? I'll tell you in a minute.
 - B. First, I want to get personal.
- XIII. Hired Hand or Heir?
 - A. I want to speak to your heart today.
 - 1. To the child inside you who learned love must be earned.
 - 2. To the religious kid inside you who's been taught that God's love is conditional.
 - 3. To the perfectionist inside you who never gets it right.
 - 4. To the abandoned one who's hardened your heart against further rejection and so you've hardened your heart to love.
 - 5. To the invisible child who can't believe that you have a father who sees you, and he sees you with affection and joy.
 - 6. To the caretaker whose worth became tied to what you give before you ever had a chance to receive.
 - 7. To the approval seeker desperate for validation who's convinced that love must be continually re-earned.
 - 8. To the control freak terrified of operating without a safety net.
 - 9. To the scapegoat who's absorbed the family blame and is convinced you're the problem.
 - 10. To the broken one who's carrying wounds so deep they're what defines you...
 - B. Hear me...
 - 1. There was a Friday when darkness covered the earth, when the Son of God hung dying on a cross.
 - 2. With every drop of blood, with every painful breath, Jesus was saying, this is how much I love you, just as you are today.
 - 3. On that cross every transaction ever demanded of you was absorbed into Jesus.
 - a) Every time you were told, "earn it."
 - b) Every moment you felt "not enough."
 - c) Every voice that whispered "try harder."
 - (1) He absorbed it all so that you could find the rest you've been searching for all life long.
 - (2) Not resting in your success, but resting your heart in the Love of God.
 - C. The nails that pierced his hands, signed your adoption papers.
 - D. The crown that bloodied his brow, authorized your birthright.
 - E. The death he died washed you white as snow.
 - F. And the resurrection he gained gave you a victory that shut up that accuser of a devil once for all...
 - 1. Christ your Champion, seeing your craziness, gathered up into one every conceivable enemy of your soul... into one crazy, sizzling, snapping, sparking, crackling ball of hypothetical potentiality, and hurled that ball so far across the universe that it shattered into a billion pieces and burned up into abject nothingness for ever and ever more.
 - G. **PRINCIPLE: Under Grace Jesus did not suffer and die and rise again to give you a job description. He did it all to embrace you into a family... the ideal, most wondrous family a kid could ever know.**
 - H. You can be safe here. You can let down your guard. The age of striving is over. Rest in his love.
 - I. What if all life long you've been approaching God with your resume, when all he's looking at is your birth certificate... your born again certificate signed in the blood of Jesus, and he is forever and immeasurably good with that.
 - J. When the prodigal son headed back home, he rehearsed a speech... Father make me as one of your hired hands.
 - K. But he never got that line out. His dad interrupted him.
 - 1. Because his dad always knew exactly who he was, even if his child forgot... you're my child and you're my heir.
 - L. I pray you believe it. I pray you see it and feel it. I pray you enjoy it.
 - M. And I pray your whole psychology gets oriented around it.
 - N. One last thing... an ephah of barley is enough to feed a regiment of fighting men.
 - O. Because that's the kind of grace your dad has for you. Let me pray that into your life right now.