HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

Faith for Redemption and Restoration

July 12, 2026 · Series: Small Stories, Big Faith · Luke Hughes-Bunger

Main Passage: Ruth 1-4, selected readings (ESV)

Big Idea: When loss makes life feel empty, God is able to bring His people home, redeem what has been broken, and fold outsiders into His promise.

Introduction

In September 2022, many in Hudson's Hope were reminded once again that coming home is not the same as everything being restored.

The Battleship Mountain wildfire forced people to leave quickly. Even when the town was safe enough to return, there was still smoke, ash, spoiled food, damaged crops, lingering anxiety, and real loss for some.

The return was mercy. But it was not yet the whole story.

That helps us enter the book of Ruth.

Naomi also comes home. But she does not come home restored. She left Bethlehem with a husband and two sons. She returns without them. She is grieving, vulnerable, and emptied.

If we only read Ruth 1, the story feels unresolved. There is a hint of hope, because Naomi and Ruth arrive at the beginning of barley harvest. But the full message of Ruth only lands when we see how chapter 4 answers the tragedies of chapter 1.

Ruth is a story of reversal. Famine is answered by harvest. Exile is answered by homecoming. Widowhood is answered by marriage. Death is answered by birth. Bitterness is answered by joy. Emptiness is answered by a child placed in Naomi's arms.

And behind all of it, the Lord is quietly working through ordinary faithfulness and costly redemption.

The Story Begins with Emptiness

Ruth 1:1-5, 16-22

Ruth begins "in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1). That was not a bright time in Israel's history. It was a season when everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Then famine comes to Bethlehem. This is painful irony, because Bethlehem means "house of bread." The house of bread has no bread.

Elimelech takes Naomi and their two sons to Moab. They are looking for life, but Naomi finds graves. Her husband dies. Her sons marry Moabite women. Then both sons die too.

Naomi is left without husband, without sons, without grandchildren, and without an obvious future.

So when Naomi says, "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20), we should not rush past her grief. She is not giving a polished testimony. She is speaking from the middle of sorrow.

Faith does not mean pretending emptiness is fullness. It does not mean calling bitter things sweet. It does not mean standing in the ashes and saying, "Everything is fine."

Naomi cannot yet see the whole story. But Scripture gives her space to grieve honestly.

At the same time, Ruth 1 gives us the first sign that Naomi's emptiness is not the whole story.

Ruth clings to her.

Ruth binds herself to Naomi, Naomi's people, and Naomi's God. She has no guarantee that this will work out well for her. She is a Moabite widow going to Bethlehem with an Israelite widow who has no resources to offer her.

But she comes anyway.

That is costly love. It is steadfast love. It is what the Old Testament often calls hesed: loyal, covenant-shaped kindness.

Sometimes mercy begins like that. Not everything fixed. Not every question answered. Just one faithful companion on the road home.

God Works Through Ordinary Faithfulness

Ruth 2:1-3:18

Ruth 2 begins with Ruth going out to glean. That sounds small, but it is not random. God had commanded His people to leave the edges of their fields for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner.

Israel's ordinary farming laws were designed to make room for vulnerable people.

Ruth goes to work. The text says she "happened" to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz (Ruth 2:3).

From Ruth's point of view, it may have looked like chance. But the narrator wants us to see providence (God's careful rule over ordinary details) in ordinary clothes.

No angel appears. No sea splits. No prophet thunders.

A hungry widow goes to work, and God guides her steps to the field of a man who fears the Lord.

Boaz sees Ruth. He has heard about her kindness to Naomi. He protects her, honours her, provides food for her, and tells his workers to leave extra grain behind.

When Ruth comes home with an unexpectedly large amount of barley, Naomi begins to see mercy. She says, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living

or the dead!" (Ruth 2:20).

That is a major change.

In chapter 1, Naomi says, "The LORD has brought me back empty." In chapter 2, she begins to see that the Lord has not abandoned her.

But notice how God shows His kindness: through gleaning, welcome, protection, food, and a man with power choosing to honour a vulnerable outsider.

Ordinary kindness matters.

Meals matter. Rides matter. Full freezers matter. Checking on neighbours matters. Making room for outsiders matters. Protecting vulnerable people matters.

The work that feels unspectacular may be one of the ways God's covenant kindness becomes visible.

The Lord Brings a Better Reversal Than Naomi Could See

Ruth 4:13-17

By the end of the book, Boaz redeems the land and marries Ruth. The Lord gives conception, and Ruth bears a son.

All the pain of chapter 1 is being answered.

Naomi, who said she went away full and came back empty, receives a child into her arms. The women of Bethlehem say that the Lord has not left her without a redeemer.

This does not mean Naomi's grief was fake. Elimelech really died. Mahlon and Chilion really died. Naomi really suffered. Ruth really walked into uncertainty.

Biblical hope does not erase suffering by pretending it was not real. Biblical hope says suffering is not sovereign. Loss does not get the final word. Death does not get the final word. Emptiness does not get the final word.

The Lord does.

Then Ruth gives one more surprise. The child's name is Obed. Obed becomes the father of Jesse. Jesse becomes the father of David.

This little family story is not only about one grieving widow being comforted. It is about the covenant promise of God moving forward. It is about the line of David. And for Christians, it is about the family line that leads to Jesus Christ.

Path to Christ

Ruth points us to Christ through reversal and redemption.

The Lord restores the empty. He protects the vulnerable. He welcomes the outsider. He preserves the line of promise. And He does it through a redeemer who comes near.

Boaz is a good redeemer, but he is not the final Redeemer.

Jesus is.

Jesus is the greater Son of David. He comes near to the empty, the guilty, the grieving, and the outsider. He does not merely risk inconvenience for His people. He gives Himself for us.

At the cross, Jesus enters our famine, exile, bitterness, and death. In His resurrection, He begins the great reversal: sin forgiven, death defeated, outsiders welcomed, the empty brought home.

Application and Conclusion

First, bring your sorrow honestly to the Lord. Naomi's words are not the whole truth, but they are honest words spoken before God. If life feels empty, you do not need to fake fullness.

Second, walk in the next act of faithfulness. Ruth does not know chapter 4 when she clings to Naomi. She does not know the genealogy when she goes to glean. She simply does the next faithful thing.

Third, receive and practice ordinary kindness. Ruth is full of meals, welcome, protection, family, and practical care. These are not small things. They are the human shape of God's mercy.

Finally, look to Christ, the true Redeemer.

Your present chapter is not the whole story. The Lord is faithful in the famine, on the road home, in the field, at the gate, in the birth of Obed, and in the coming of Christ.

He will be faithful until every grief of His people is finally answered in Him.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. What stands out to you from the opening memory of the 2022 evacuation and return home?
2. Why is "coming home" not always the same as full restoration?
3. What makes Ruth 1 such a painful beginning?
4. Why should we be careful not to correct Naomi's grief too quickly?
5. What does Ruth's loyalty show us about costly love?
6. How does God begin to show mercy before Naomi can see the whole story?
7. Why is Ruth "happening" to come to Boaz's field important?
8. What ordinary acts of kindness does Boaz show Ruth?
9. How does Ruth 4 reverse the tragedies of Ruth 1?
10. Why does the genealogy leading to David matter?
11. How does Boaz point beyond himself to Jesus?
12. What is one next act of faithfulness God may be calling you to take this week?