

Fatherless // “I am Adopted” // Ruth 2:1–23; James 1:27

At the end of today’s service; Q&A;

Special word to those serving in the Bay...

One of the biggest events we do around here every year is

SERVERDU (if you’ve been around here you’ve heard us refer to it in the past as “Week of Hope” but we got a letter from a lawyer representing someone in CO telling us to cease and desist the use of that name because they had trademarked it... I kid you not... so we asked them if “week of petty greed” was also taken, and they said it wasn’t, but we went with ServeRDU...) At any rate, the week formerly known as “Week of Hope” (now “ServeRDU”) is a week we set aside each July just to bless the city we live in...

You see, we believe that whenever the Gospel is preached it should be accompanied by physical signs that demonstrate the beauty and power of the Gospel. You see, the Gospel we preach is, in many ways, invisible... it talks about Christ’s ability to save the soul, forgive sins... so what you do is make that invisible message visible by blessing others with sacrificial love.

One of our key phrases around here about the church: *The church is God’s demonstration community.* In the church God demonstrates the beauty of His character and His love.

- So, we want to go out into the community during that week and demonstrate the marvelous, extravagant love God showed to us when he saved us.
- So we ask you, without apology, to take some time off from work during that week and show sacrificial love to our

community by participating in one of several dozen community projects going on (each of our campuses will have some of their own...)

This is not something we simply try to do once a year...

- I’ve told you before... I feel like for too many churches things like this are just an event... (they give poor people a Turkey at thanksgiving and then flip them the bird the rest of the year.)
- We don’t want this to be an event, we want this to be part of our church culture: we believe those you have received the generosity of the Gospel become the generosity of the Gospel.

Over the next few weeks we are going to be highlighting a new ministry developing at the church which we call “orphan care.” There are 5 focus areas in our city where we want to take the blessing of God... HOPUD. This is one of those areas.

- Now, not all of you are going to be directly involved in this one ministry, but I want you to pay attention to how I’m going to talk about this today, because we really want to see a culture of caring for the fatherless and the widow develop around our church, because this is, as I hope to show you, the heart of the Gospel.

Listen to what James says... **James 1:27: Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.** We’re going to focus on the 1st phrase...

Stop for minute and think about that. Why do you think James say this? It’s such a strong statement, isn’t it? Pure religion before God and the Father is this... In other words, if you’re not doing this, you may not have “pure” religion. *Corrupted.*

- In fact, in chapter 2 James is going to say that if you don’t do this... if you don’t actively care for the fatherless and the widow then your faith isn’t real.

- So, why? Why is this put up as a test for genuine faith?

Well, 1st, realize this (and it is very important): the point is not trying to develop some artificial, legalistic checklist that says, *“Do you have any direct involvement with ‘orphans and widows’? If so, you’re good; if not, you’re not a real Christian...”* Lots of people who are involved in orphan care do so for wrong motives; lots of people who love God aren’t involved directly with that ministry... ***The Gospel never gives you checklists like that, about anything.***

Rather, what this means is that someone who has experienced the transformation of the Gospel naturally gravitates toward loving those who are in need, whoever they are; and, if you don’t do *that*, if you are not leveraging your life and your talents and your resources to bless others with the Gospel, you might not (for all your religion and your Bible verses and your sanitized behavior...) you might not really be saved!

Listen:

No religion is genuine, no matter how many verses you know or how intensely you worship, that doesn’t lead you to love and sacrifice for those in need.

Or, let me say it this way...

You cannot say you are a disciple of Christ if you turn a deaf ear to the poor.

We have a lot of Christians here who think that they are Christians because they prayed a prayer... Lots of people in every religion pray... Praying a prayer doesn’t make you a disciple of Christ; following Jesus does, and Jesus poured out His life for others.

So, the real question James is asking is this... and one some of you really need to consider... *“You say you are a Christian... but are you leveraging your life to bring salvation and peace to others in need...?”*

- You guys that are in college... What’s your primary goal... Are you in all of this to develop your talents for personal benefit... or is your primary goal leveraging your life for the prosperity of God’s kingdom?
- And you that are older in your career... what are you doing with the ways God has increased you? Are you using your career success just to get nicer and nicer stuff for yourself; or, are you using your increased capacity to give more, to serve more?
- Is your trajectory toward greater service, or nicer and nicer stuff?
- ***IOW: Are you chasing for the American dream or the Gospel dream?***
- Caring for the fatherless and widows is not a merit badge for some hyper-motivated super-Christians, but the mark of any and every true disciple...
- *Pure religion before God and the Father is this...*

Summit... I want us to really do something great for God in these areas...

- You know, I’m always saying, *“Let’s expect great things of God and then attempt great things for God.”* And a lot of times we apply that to expanding our facilities, planting campuses... planting 1000 churches in 40 years; sending out missionaries... those are important...
- but I want us to dream great, God-sized things in these areas too... as I’ve often told you... This is where God wants to do his biggest miracles. 37 out of 40 miracles in Acts happen outside the church, in the community... none of them had to do with a building (nothing wrong with that...).
- I don’t know the vision for all of these areas yet... I want us to discover them together. My hope is not that the church starts a bunch of ministries in these areas, but that I can release you to dream in these areas. Go and dream what God can do!

I want to show you why it is that pure religion serves the fatherless and widows... **and to do that, I want you to open your Bibles**, if you have them, and I hope you do, to the book of Ruth.

This is one of the greatest OT stories... I always say that about every story I teach... but this time I mean it... This is like the Hebrew version of the *Twilight* series... I'm going to come back to this book soon and do a whole series... but for today I'm just going to tease you...

- A friend who is very involved in orphan care says this passage has helped him as much as any other...

Ruth 2:1-23

Let me catch you up with what has happened in Ruth in chapter 1... (This would be like one of those little 3-minute reviews that used to happen at the beginning of each LOST episode) "previously, on Ruth..."

- The book of Ruth opens up with this Israelite guy, Elimelech, leaving Bethlehem with his family to go to Moab because there is a famine in Bethlehem and there's no food there...
 - ...which is ironic because Bethlehem means 'house of bread,'... but Bethlehem is under a curse because of their rebellion against God. They've rejected God as King and did what was right in their own eyes...
 - So this guy, Elimelech, whose name means, ironically "God is my King", takes his wife, Naomi, whose name means "pleasant," and their 2 sons and they go to Moab to try and find bread.
- Now, Moab is not a great place to raise a family. **Moab was the kid that was born when Lot, Abraham's cousin, got drunk and slept with his own daughter.** The child of that incestuous relationship was named "Moab," and his descendants were called Moabites... and they were as confused and perverse as their origins. They worship a false god called "Chemosh," they are violent... uncharitable. Constantly provoking Israel.

- In fact, their sins as a country were so bad that God had said, Deut 23:3, that no Moabite could enter the Assembly of the Lord down to the 10th generation.

- But this is where Elimelech and his family live now, and Elimelech's sons, whose names are "Mahlon," and "Chilion," (which may sound like some pretty cool Star Trek Cling-On-kind-of-names, but in Hebrew actually mean "sick" and "dying"... so don't name your kids that even if those names sound cool to you; it would be like naming your kids "hepatitis and gangrene"), they grow up in Moabite schools and marry 2 Moabite girls, named **Ruth and Orpah**.
 - Now, that is bad news. Unspeakably bad. In Scripture, Moabite girls are always big trouble. They wear halter tops and glass heels. They're always causing trouble for Israelite men.
 - For example, Numbers 25: a bunch of Moabite women seduce a bunch of Israelite men to have sex with them and worship Chemosh, and in punishment God killed 24,000 Israelite men.¹
 - And, now, Moab's sons have married 2 of them!
- Well, further tragedy hits Elimelech's house—he and his 2 sons die, we don't know how... but it's ironic, because remember he had moved to Moab for protection and now he and his 2 sons are dead. But he leaves behind Naomi and these 2 Moabite daughters-in-law.
- Well, after her husband and 2 sons are dead Naomi hears that God has blessed Bethlehem again; there is food there, and she wants to go home.
- So, she and her 2 daughters-in-law set off on a return to Bethlehem, but on the way it dawns on her that she really has nothing to offer them, she's lost everything, and so she urges

¹ Numbers 25:1-18

them to go back to Moab... because in Israel they are just going to be despised women in a strange land.

- So, **Orpah** chooses to return home; she's going to go back to the worship of Chemosh, because even though she looks on the outside like she was a Christian and talked like she was a worshipper of God, on the inside she's really a pagan... so we could also call her **Oprah**, because she's a faker who sometimes uses Christian language even though she has a pagan heart. So Orpah, or Oprah, goes back...
- **Ruth**, however, has a genuine conversion experience and says to Naomi, "No, I want to go with you... your people will be my people; and your God will be my God." (1:16)
- So when Naomi returns to Bethlehem, everybody wants to know what's been going on with her and what's new... and evidently she gets tired of explaining it so she just changes her name from Naomi (which meant "Pleasant," if you recall) to "Mara" (1:20) which means "*bitter old hag*" ... (which pretty well translates as, "*Don't ask. You don't want to know and I don't want feel like telling you anyway.*")
- So Ruth 2 opens with Naomi back in Bethlehem, but now as "Mara, the poor bitter old hag mother-in-law formerly known as Pleasant."

Well, because they are dirt poor, Ruth, the daughter-in-law, suggests she go to the field to beg some grain.

- You see, it was a custom in Israel that when you harvested a field that you not be very thorough in how you are harvesting all the crops, leaving some so that the poor and needy could come and glean it.

Ruth 2:3³ 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.

- A couple of things here...

- **First, you, the reader, realize, of course, that Elimelech is a relative of theirs**, which is a signal for a Jewish audience that a romance is being set up.
 - I realize that in today's culture when you say that "so and so is your cousin" that doesn't immediately set up a romance... unless you're from where Pastor Danny is from in Tennessee, maybe... but for them it did.
- **Second, there's supposed to be a lot of irony in that phrase "she happened."**
 - She "just so happened to come to the field of Boaz, of the clan..." Scholars say that we lose so much reading this story in English, because the language here is so dramatic. She "*just so happened*" to stumble into this guy's field... it's like a coincidence that doesn't "just happen."
 - Guys, it's kind of like when you're watching one of those chic-flicks with your wife and you there is some plot turn and you're like, "*Come on! That never happens? This is so absurd! Who comes up with this garbage?*" And you turn to your wife and you're about to point out the absolute absurdity of the plot; and you turn and open her mouth and she's... blinking her eyes. And you think, "You know, maybe now is not the *best* time to point this out. Probably better wait until tomorrow..."
- That's kind of what is happening here... except you realize that it's not absurd because it's not just chance... You, the reader, see that God is sovereignly weaving this whole story together.
 - God, you see, has 2 ways of working on earth: sometimes it is through His **visible hand** of miracle; and sometimes through His **invisible hand** of providence...
 - Not happenstance or circumstance or any kind of chance; it's *providence*.

Vs. 4: ⁴ **And behold, Boaz** More dramatic language... “and behold Boaz,” cue the dramatic music... Rocky theme song; “Behold Boaz... **came from Bethlehem...**

- He’s the knight in shining armor.
- His name, “Boaz”... Cool name, right? “Bo.” In Hebrew it means strength.
- He’s a man’s man; a dude’s dude (strong and gruff and powerful... As a friend of mine says, “He doesn’t own a sweatervest; he doesn’t drink wine spritzers or decaf or anything with “frappe” in the name; he’s never listened to a Mariah Carey album; doesn’t get into the Bachelor. He’s never ridden in a Volkswagen Cabriolet... that kind of guy... though, I will note, I’m sure he has put down a downpayment on a mini-van because he wants a family someday and that’s sexy...)
- And he’s accomplished in business! He owns all these fields. So here he is... he comes cruising in his Cadillac Escalade with spinners... he gets out and he’s got on \$300 Oakley sunglasses. **And he said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered, “The LORD bless you.”** He’s got a great relationship with his employees... everybody loves this guy! He greets his workers with “the Lord be with you,” and they all respond in unison, “No, the Lord bless *you!*”
 - How many of you... you’re sitting in your cubicle and your boss walks in and says, “the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all,” and you all pop up out of your cubicles like moles and say, “the grace of the Lord be with you...”? You’re like, “I pop up something else when my boss walks in...”

⁵ **Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers** (the one nerd with the clipboard who graduated from college), **“Whose young woman is this?”** Now, that’s Hebrew for, “Whoa, check her out!”

....

- *Actually, I don’t want to turn this part into a joke...* because this question is the fundamental question of the whole book. **Whose woman is this? Who does she belong to?** Is she a Moabite? A stranger? Damaged goods? A homeless girl? Does she belong to the trash heap?
- Ruth here is a paradox, because clearly there is something Boaz finds attractive about her, but there’s nothing about her that should:
 - She’s got a bad family background. She’s a Moabite. Doesn’t seem to have a father.
 - She’s got a bad past... she’s not a virgin.
 - She’s poor.
 - And you know, here in chapter 2, there’s no way she looks her best... she’s rummaging through the weeds looking for food; her hair’s up in a pony tail; her 1 dress is all dirty and torn; her face is all oily and grimy; this is not her best “hottie-moment.” Right?
 - Most girls, when they know they are going to be meeting a significant guy, they disappear for like 4 hours and they’re upstairs in their bathrooms and there is sandblasting and spray-painting going on... **When you meet Mr. Perfect, you don’t want to be all pitted-out, dumpster-diving for food.**
- The point: Ruth is not the kind of girl you are attracted to; certainly not the kind you’d marry.
- But Boaz, you see, has a different spirit about him... where others see a reject, he sees a child of God; where others see distortion and ruin, he sees beauty.

So, he asks who she belongs to, and they tell him, and he says to her, vs. 8: ⁸ **“Now, listen, my daughter,** that’s Hebrew for **“Who’s Your Daddy?”** **...do not go to glean in another field or leave this one**

- “Don’t be going down to Reuben’s field... I got me a nice, big field right, here...”

- It's kind of a strange pick-up line but evidently it worked, in fact, it worked better than any pick-up line I've ever used...¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground... (I've tried a lot of pick-up lines in my day, none of them ever got me that reaction right there...)

He goes on...⁹ Have I not charged the young men not to touch you?

- He's like: "Hey guys... you know that new girl down gleaning in the field...the trashy Moabite girl that is kind-of hot but sort-of funkified, down there messing around in our dumpster?" "Yeah, bro..." He's like, "Yeah... don't touch her. I mean it. Seriously. I got a big field, and they would never find your body. I'm just saying... And I am Old Testament, baby, so I can get away with stuff like that."

And then he says to her... And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."

- You see, as a Moabite woman, she was expected to serve Jewish men like a slave whenever she was around. She was to get them water.
- But here he is saying, "You don't have to be our servant. We'll serve you."
- He's honoring her. Not only is he showing interest; he's showing honor.

¹⁴ And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine."

- I love this... an OT first date: little bread; little oil and vinegar to dip it in... Tell you what this reminds me of... You know when you go to Carrabbas or Maggiano's and they bring you their bread and the oil and vinegar and before you even look at the menu you've consumed like 9000 calories... those are Veronica and my favorite places... sometimes by the time the waiter shows up to ask us for our order we're like, "You know, we're just not that hungry anymore. We're just going to pay for our waters and be on our way..."

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 stop or criticize her."¹⁶ And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean... throw some extra on the ground for 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.

- An ephah is a big thick pile of wheat...This is no dainty little prissy cheerleader... this girl carried some loaded guns...

Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned...¹⁹ And said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked?" Naomi is so excited she is stumbling over her words, asks the same thing 2x... where did you... how did...? What the...?

Blessed be the man who took notice of you."

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, (and here again, the drama... because Ruth doesn't know the connection of Boaz to her relatives, but Naomi does...) "The man's name with whom I worked today is ...and in the way the sentence is set up in Hebrew, the name Boaz is left until the last word in the sentence... The audience anticipation is building because you know this guy is a relative and a good romantic match so you're watching Naomi's eyes as Ruth builds up to the last word in the sentence when she says... "His name is... BOAZ!" Cue the soaring classical music and the flock of doves taking off in the background...

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!"

And Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."

Well, this begins a pretty interesting little romance which, unfortunately, we are not really going to have time to really get into today... But I'll sum it up:

- In chapter 3, Boaz starts to drag his feet a little bit which leads to a pretty shady night on the threshing floor. It's a great chapter, but, girls, you should never imitate Ruth in what she did. And, guys, if you try to do what Ruth did you will go to jail.
- But then in chapter 4, Boaz marries her... but 1st he has to redeem her, a Jewish custom when your husband has died; which involves showing that **he has (a) the right to redeem her** (which means he has to be a relative, from her clan) and **(b) the desire to do so.**
- **The right and the desire...** and he has both of them so they live happily forever after.

Here's the point: What we see in Boaz and Ruth is not just a cool story of romance... the reason it is here in the Bible is that this is a horizontal reflection of a vertical relationship.

Let me ask this: Who are we like in this story? Ruth; or Boaz?

- *Ruth*: Like Ruth, we were the outcast; we were the despised; we were the children of disobedience.
- Elimelech's family is us. Just like Elimelech, we were driven out of the land of blessing because of our disobedience. And just like Elimelech, we died in our sins.
- And like Ruth, we have been left poor, defiled, disgraced, and starving.

Point #1: (1) We are not Boaz in this story, we are Ruth.

- Jesus is Boaz; Like Boaz, Jesus has **(a) the right to redeem us** because he took upon Himself our flesh, becoming human, and living the life we were supposed to have lived, a life of perfect obedience, so that when he died on a cross he was dying the death we should have died, in our place. He has **(b) the desire to redeem us, which he showed us not by leaving a little extra barley on the ground for us, but by giving up his**

own body to excruciating torture on the cross so He could be to us the bread of life...

In fact, let me show you how the book of Ruth ends... **Ruth 4:21**
"...and Boaz and Ruth had a son, whose name was Obed; and Obed had a son, whose name was Jesse; and Jesse had a son, whose name was (again, the drama...) David."

- Scholars tell us that this was written after David became king, showing us the nature of David's kingdom... who was a picture to us of our Messiah.
- You see, we know from the Matthew 1 that one of David's sons would have a son, who would have a son who would have a son... who would, in time, give birth to another son, Matthew 1, who would have a daughter named Mary who would be the mother of Jesus.

Boaz is the forefather of Jesus Christ... who, like Boaz, takes the despised, defiled Ruth, unites with her and gives her immeasurable blessing and unconditional love.

When presenting the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Matthew shows you that when Jesus Christ was born on earth, he had the blood of Ruth, a Moabite, second-hand, homeless girl, flowing in Him. He had my blood, because...

I AM Ruth.

God's love for us, like Boaz's for Ruth, in an enigma: The Gospel is that we are more wicked and defiled than we ever probably imagined (you think you're screwed up? You're probably more screwed up than you think you know... you have no idea, because in addition to having messed up relationships you are condemned before God); but though you are more wicked and defiled than you ever dreamed or imagined; you are at the same time, because of what Christ has done to redeem you, more loved and accepted by God than you ever dared to hope.

This means something very, very important, as we think about ministering to others. We are not powerful, wealthy, middle-class Saviors. We are not Boaz. We are not the Savior; we are the saved.

In the homeless, the orphan, the prisoner, the abandoned mother, or the dropout, I don't see someone I need to rescue; I see myself: I was the orphan; I was the prisoner... I was the abandoned... I was the dropout. **I was RUTH.** *And the same Jesus who loved me and sought me when I was a stranger and saved me can save them.* I am not their Savior; I am their equal.

Listen, and get this clearly: ***We are not the answer for the adoption problem, or the homeless problem, or the prisoner problem... the cross is.***

(2) Those who have been redeemed become redeemers themselves

- Having experienced the redemption of Christ, you cannot help but love others like you have been loved and to try and do for them what has been for you.
- *A question I often ask you to consider: **Where would you personally be without Christ?*** Where would you be had He not come to redeem you? Consider this: Exactly where the HOPUD are, in our city, without you... Jesus died for them, yes, but it doesn't do them any good until we take it to them...
- This is why James says *"Pure religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction..."* ... because when you have experienced the Gospel you have a heart that goes after the fatherless and the widow because you understand you were the fatherless and the widow...
- **Story:** Child born with *spina bifida*... do we really want our lives to be like this?
 - Couple were greatly troubled... didn't know what to do. The next morning the woman woke up and told her husband that that night she'd had a dream... And she said in her dream she was observing a stadium full of

thousands of people... and they were bringing out children one by one... beautiful children, and they would say, "Who wants this one? And people would volunteer to come forward and take the child..." She said, "Then, they brought a child that was ugly, deformed, and scarred... looked like it would never have a hope of a good life, at all. And the question was asked to the stadium, "And who wants this one?" and, she said, the whole crowd grew very silent. No one wanted the deformed child. And she said, then, standing up from the front row, Jesus walked forward and said, "I want this one. I'll take her." And the woman said, "Then, in my dream, I was taken closer to the child and I saw that that deformed child... the child that no one seemed to want, was me."

- And then she said to her husband, "I knew instantly that that is the question being asked of us here... 'Who wants this one?'" And then she said to her husband: *"Jesus wants this one. And I want this one, too."* And they took the baby and raised and loved it... so, for however long it breathed on earth, it could sense the love and compassion of the Heavenly Father.
- Listen, this kind of lifestyle is not easy. Whether adoption, caring for foster kids... or any kind of real ministry... it is tough.
 - ***Taking a child with fetal alcohol syndrome is probably not nearly as glamorous as some make it look like on TV...*** it's tough and may inconvenience your life, but that's not really anything compared to what it was like for Jesus to take us, who had the corruption and poison of sin flowing through our bodies, and bring us into His family. ***"He took my sin and my sorrows, and He made them His very own; He bore my burden to Calvary, and suffered and died alone!"***

Jesus love for us was marvelous; our love for others should be marvelous, too.

Summit, I want us to dream about showing this kind of marvelous love to our community. When you look back through history, this is what evangelical churches have always been known for!

- Early church: Baby runs
- We have records where critics of the church remarked with bewilderment, *“How they love each other!”* We have that famous letter of Emperor Julian, who was lamenting the explosive growth of the early church, said: *“How can we stop these Galileans, they take care not only of their own poor, but ours as well?”*
- *The Apology of Aristedes*, written to the Roman Emperor Hadrian explaining why the church was growing so fast: *“What can I say about the Christians! They love one another; the widow’s needs are not ignored and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence.”*

Pure religion before God and the Father is this... to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. To show marvelous love because you have been marvelously loved... it makes a skeptical world (RDU!) sit up and take notice.

My friend **Russ Moore** says:

“Think of how revolutionary it is for a Christian to adopt a young boy with a cleft palate from a region of India where most people see him as “defective.” Think of how odd it must seem to American secularists to see Christians adopting a baby whose body trembles with an addiction to the cocaine her mother sent through her bloodstream before birth. Think of the kind of credibility such action lends to the proclamation of our gospel... What if we as Christians were known, once again, as the people who take in orphans and make of them beloved

sons and daughters?” (*Adopted for Life*, Russ Moore, pp. 79, 20)

There are over 100 kids in Durham awaiting foster care... about 200 in Wake County... We need about 100 families in Durham and 200 in Wake...

- Why can’t the evangelical churches in Durham take care of these kids? Isn’t this what James 1:27 means? To take care of them? Why couldn’t we go to the city and say, *“We’ll take them! I’ll take them! I’ll love them!”*
- *KidsPeace*, a group that works with kids that come out of some pretty horrific circumstances, needs 50 homes for kids in this are right now. Why can’t the body of Christ in Durham and Raleigh do that?
- Listen, you want to impact the 5 biggest areas of need? Adopt a child who will otherwise grow up in a fatherless environment. Fatherlessness is the #1 contributor to homelessness, poverty, unwed pregnancy; crime, suicide. You could impact all 5 areas just by getting involved in this 1...
- You want to be involved in world missions? Adopt a kid from Rwanda who lost his family in genocide!

Let me be clear: I want to challenge some of our families... and singles... and older couples whose kids may have moved out... Maybe this could be you. **James 1:27**. Maybe you never thought it could be... but what are you doing now in life? While we are here on earth... every second of it is to be used loving those in need. You can retire in heaven... that’s what it is... ultimate retirement...

I want you to pray about it... we have a table at all of our campuses, today... stop by, just familiarize yourself with what is out there; and we’re also going to have an informational meeting about domestic and international adoption as well as foster care right after church at all of our campuses in 2 weeks.

Before I go, let me give two disclaimers:

Prayer and then video

(1) *This is not a hobby (not a feel good response to an emotional topic); this is a ministry and a calling.*

- A lot of people have these romanticized ideas of adoption... Angelina Jolie and Madonna do it... listen, if this is about a photo-op for you... something to make your family picture in your Christmas card interesting... that will wear out quickly.
 - The last thing the kid needs is somebody else acting interested for a while, getting bored, and moving on.
- I can't even promise you it will work out well! People see the movie *Blindside* and think: Take in a homeless kid; give him a bed; give him a little bit of love and the right resources; he'll probably turn into a professional athlete and they'll make a movie about you.
 - I can't even promise you that the kid you love will turn out right! I can't promise my own children...
 - But, you see, showing love to others is not conditioned on how they respond. We show love for others because of the extravagant love Jesus showed to us. He loved us when we had no thought, at all, of him.

(2) *This is not for everyone*

- I don't want to let any of you off the hook that God is working in... but I want to take out any artificial angst as if God said this to everyone... he doesn't, but he is saying it to some of you.
- *And let me say the obvious thing...* I, personally, haven't adopted.
 - Interesting... Two of the things that move my heart the most, God has said no to me on...
 - Missions... I beat you up about it...
 - April 28
- It's not for everyone. But, it is for some of you.... I have prayed God would raise up families, lots of you, for whom this would become how you experience and live out the Gospel.

BULLPEN:

- Hosea; Ruth; Exodus; Good Samaritan;
- Adoption is not just about nurture, but about rescue
- My family background is one of adoption

Adoption is one of the most common metaphors for how God took us in... we were the fatherless and the widow

Not surprisingly, this has always been characteristic of the church (in recent times, the church has become more focused on negative aspects (against abortion), and we should, but it should be in the context of overpowering love for both unwed mothers and fatherless children)

- What we see in Boaz and Ruth is a horizontal depiction of a vertical relationship.
- God cares for the people that are in need, and his people are to be a reflection of that. His people love to show the care that He has for those in need by taking care of the orphans. This woman who was an outcast, the man of God – Boaz – let her eat until she had her fill. This is what the people of God are supposed to do.

Recognizing how God has saved us

- Middle class America is not the answer for the suffering 3rd world; the cross is the answer for suffering. True, malaria and malnutrition kill, but so does materialism.
- Revelation 3: “Poor, wretched, blind and naked.”
- Before we can proclaim the cross we must see ourselves in the cross.

- Church: “We’re not the answer for anybody.”
- My prayer is that in being involved in the HOPUD, we will learn more about our own need of the cross.

Not for strategic nature

- Mary anointing Jesus’ body for burial. I would have told her, “Don’t worry about it.”
- Jesus: Little child is kingdom. Everyone overlooked it!
- We don’t serve to convert; we serve because we are converted.”

I want us to dream great things for God in this...

By ministering to orphans, you cure a number of social ills.

- Stats about orphans and the other 5 areas

...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.”

- God cares for the people that are in need, and his people are to be a reflection of that. His people love to show the care that He has for those in need by taking care of the orphans. This woman who was an outcast, the man of God – Boaz – let her eat until she had her fill. This is what the people of God are supposed to do.
- “Rich white savior”

- We are not the cure for the adoption problem; the cross is