

## ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING



**10.30 am 14<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

**Bridget Gurney leading and Rev. Dr. Zoltan Biro preaching**

***Your God is my God! - Who is Naomi's God?***

### **Prayer Time**

### **Call to Worship**

We come to worship and to learn from you. We lift our hearts and hands to you, and praise your holy name. You are the only Holy One, You are supreme.

**Come Lord and presence yourself with us.**

### **Song MP 1040**

Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
Come  
One day every tongue will confess You are God  
One day every knee will bow  
Still the greatest treasure remains for those  
Who gladly choose You now  
Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
Come

*Brian Doerksen*

## Family Time

**Song MP 185** *During the singing of this hymn our financial gifts will be taken*

God is good  
We sing and shout it  
God is good  
We celebrate  
God is good  
No more we doubt it  
God is good  
We know it's true

And when I think of His love for me  
My heart fills with praise and I feel like dancing  
For in His heart there is room for me  
And I run with arms open wide

God is good  
We sing and shout it  
God is good  
We celebrate  
God is good  
No more we doubt it  
God is good  
We know it's true  
*Graham Kendrick*

Young people leave for their groups

## Prayers

**Song BPW 589**

Father God in heaven,  
Lord most high:  
hear your children's prayer,  
Lord most high:  
hallowed be your name,  
Lord most high-  
O Lord, hear our prayer

May your kingdom come  
here on earth;  
may your will be done  
here on earth,  
as it is in heaven so on earth-  
O Lord, hear our prayer

Give us daily bread  
day by day,  
and forgive our sins  
day by day,

as we too forgive  
day by day-  
O Lord, hear our prayer.

Lead us in your way,  
make us strong;  
when temptations come  
make us strong;  
save us from all sin,  
keep us strong-  
O Lord, hear our prayer.

All things come from you,  
all are yours-  
kingdom, glory, power,  
all are yours;  
take our lives and gifts,  
all are yours-  
O Lord, hear our prayer.

JAMES E. SEDDON (1915-83) CCL Licence Number: 1763

### **Bible Reading Ruth 1: 1-22**

#### **Song BPW 105**

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
speak your word to me;  
help me now to listen  
in expectancy.

Speak, O gracious Master,  
in this quiet hour;  
let me see your face, Lord,  
feel your touch of power.

3 For the words you give me,  
they are life indeed;  
living bread from heaven,  
now my spirit feed.

Speak, your servant listens—  
I await your word;  
let me know your presence,  
let your voice be heard!

Fill me with the knowledge  
of your glorious will;  
all your own good pleasure  
in my life fulfil.

*EMILY M. CRAWFORD (1864-1927) / © Jubilate Hymns / CCL Licence Number: 1763*

### **Sermon**

Your God is my God! - Who is Naomi's God? - Ruth 1:1-22

By any standards the Book of Ruth is a classic short story. It has been called the best short stories ever written. Come on... Who doesn't love a good story? "Once upon a time" and "They all lived happily ever after" are phrases cherished by many not only the children.

Today, we will be looking at the background of this wonderful book and what it might mean to us as we are studying during this harvest season.

The start of any book is extremely important. It sets the context and the tone of the story. The author of this book is an amazing writer. The whole introduction is only 19 carefully selected Hebrew words and it gives us all we need to know to understand the story,

"In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab."

What does this tells us:

Firstly, the story is set during the time when the Judges ruled Israel. This was a time between the initial conquest of Israel during the leadership of Joshua and the establishment of the Monarchy under the disastrous rule of Saul.

The time of Judges was an increasingly chaotic time in Israel's history. The lack of unity between the 12 tribes of Israel, made them vulnerable, various external enemies attacked them and took away their possessions, their food, and also their women. It was a brutal and dangerous time to live in. At times the people completely forgot God's Law. The Book of Judges ends with a civil war where the tribe of Benjamin is nearly extinguished, and the last verse is: "There was no king in Israel at that time. All the people did just as they pleased."

The fact that there is famine during political instability and conflict never changes during history, look at Ukraine, Sudan and Palestine... conflict always brings famine. No wonder that the family of Elimelek tries to find refuge in Moab.

Secondly, it **was** the time when the Judges ruled... The writer refers to the time of Judges as a time in the distant past. Which makes dating the time of writing and the purpose of the book difficult. If it was written during the reign of David it can be interpreted as a book giving the background story and validity to the Rule of David. However, if it was written later at the time when Israel was occupied by Babylon it can be seen as a book of hope, because it reminds us of God's love, faithfulness and redemption.

Now the context of a sentence often determines, how we interpret a something...

Due to the colour of the coat the kernel/colonel was easy to spot.

So we knew, that if he was here, his men were nearby

OR

It was a genetically modified blue corn species.

The place of Ruth in the Christian bible is between Judges and Samuel and leads us to think that it was written at an earlier date... The placement plays trick with our mind. But in the Hebrew Bible it is part of the "Writings" which also includes Psalms, Proverbs, Songs of Songs, Ester, Job and others. These books are inspirational books, they are not Laws and they are not Prophecies, but they often have deeper meanings.

Now if the book is written to tell us an important message, what that message might be? So, the main question when we read the book of Ruth is: "Which of the characters in the book mirror the people of God?"

To answer this question, the writer gives some hints.

Throughout the book there are certain words repeated over and over again, but none repeated more than "redemption" or "redeemer". In this book which is only 85 verses long redemption appears 23 times... On average every 3.5 verses.

Now at superficial level, we may think that in this story redemption is simply the restoration of property to their original owners and the restoration of a broken family branch. However, the final scene in the book hints to something much deeper.

Spoiler alert!

<sup>16</sup>The women said to Naomi, "**Praise the LORD! He has given** you a grandson today to take care of you. May the boy become famous in Israel! <sup>15</sup>Your daughter-in-law loves you, and has done more for you than seven sons. And now she has given you a grandson, **who will bring new life** to you and give you security in your old age." <sup>16</sup>Naomi took the child, held him close, and took care of him.

<sup>17</sup>The women of the neighbourhood **named the boy Obed**. They told everyone, "A son has been born to Naomi!"

1. The boy was given by God.
2. The boy will bring new life (the word used here [nephes] refers to our inner being, our Soul). It speaks of a renewal of self
3. His name was Obed, meaning "Servant of God".

Can you see: there is a clear parallel between the redemption story of Ruth and God's redemption story of humanity...

Boaz is the ultimate redeemer representing God.

Obed, the child represents the Jesus

Ruth is the vessel of redemption. Just like in the Christmas story Mary was. They both were obedient and were willing to sacrifice their security to deliver redemption beyond themselves.

So, this leaves Naomi, who by the end of the story is redeemed, renewed and got hope and security. Naomi represents all of us. Without God's renewal we all are broken, bitter, angry, unhappy, hopeless.... But through Jesus God provided us a way to be restored and renewed.

Looking at the Book of Ruth from this perspective our focus is directed towards the faithfulness of God. Redemption is based on God's Grace, not on our efforts. Naomi was redeemed not because of her exemplary behaviour, but because of God's mercy.

Our social media message for this week is this:

God chooses to redeem those who seem to have done little to deserve redemption.

God chooses to use those who seem unqualified according to human standards to carry out God's purpose in the world.

This is God's grace in action!

So let me finish with 3 action points:

- **Trust in God's faithfulness**, especially in difficult times. So, when you're facing uncertainty, talk to God honestly about your worries and ask Him for hope and strength to persevere, trusting that He is working even when you can't see the outcome.
- **Recognise that God's grace is for everyone**, regardless of their past or qualifications: Next time you feel unworthy or disqualified, remember that God's love isn't based on your achievements. Also, look for ways to show kindness to someone who might not expect it, just as God has shown grace to you.
- **Celebrate and share the story of redemption with others**: Share your experiences of God's faithfulness and grace with friends, family, or colleagues.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

#### **Song MP 975**

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea  
A great High Priest, whose name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me  
My name is graven on His hands  
My name is written on His heart  
I know that while in heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart  
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within  
Upward I look, and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin  
Because a sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free  
For God, the Just, is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me  
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb  
My perfect, spotless righteousness  
The great unchangeable I Am  
The King of glory and of grace  
One in Himself, I cannot die  
My soul is purchased by His blood  
My life is hid with Christ on high  
With Christ, my Saviour and my God  
With Christ, my Saviour and my God

*Vikki Cook, Charitie Bancroft.*

### **Blessing**

I pray that the Lord will keep you and bless you in mind, spirit and health. May this coming week be one of great joy and peace for us all. Amen

### **The Grace**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen**

### **Weekly Notices**

Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15	Bible Study
Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30	Toddlers
	7.30	Men's Bible Study
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup>	10.30	Prayer Meeting
	5.00	Table Tennis Club
	7.00	Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup>	10.30	<b>Worship with Communion</b> <b>Gleaning with Grit and Grace - Ruth 2:1-13</b> <b>(Topics: Accepting our situation and doing something to change it, working diligently, Being humble)</b>
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