

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30AM 21th September 2025
Led by Rev. Zoltan Biro. Preacher: Pauline Mbukwa
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
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A story of love, redemption, and faithfulness

WELCOME

Good morning, everyone. It is wonderful to be together.

I am not sure if you noticed, but Autumn certainly arrived. The days are getting shorter... we get more and more rain... But at the same time, it is Harvest time and this year we have a bumper crop of apples and pears. So, I am expecting the price of apple juice to go down.

As we are continuing our Harvest series based on the Book of Ruth we will finally get to the point in the story where harvest becomes an important context. The first chapter ended with an important sentence. When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem it was the start of the barley harvest.

Pauline will introduce and talk about Gleaning which was ancient Israel's benefit system.

But before we get there let us acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and let's pray.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Here in this place, there are no foreigners,
for all are welcome in God's house.

Here in this worship, there is only acceptance,
for love is the language of faith.

Here in our lives, there are no divisions,
for God dwells in each of us.

Come, let us worship in unity and love.

We are here to worship God in unity and love.

HYMN

As the deer pants for the water
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

You alone are my strength, my shield;
to you alone may my spirit yield:
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy;
you alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

You're my Friend and you're my brother
even though you are a king:
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

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FAMILY TIME: How do we take care of the less fortunate in our society.

*(*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which young people will leave for their groups)*

HYMN

He is Lord, He is Lord
He has risen from the dead
And He is Lord
Every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord

You are Lord, You are Lord
You have risen from the dead
And You are Lord
Every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

BIBLE READING 1: Ruth 2:1-13

THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: John

Prayers for Others

This week is the start of the Jewish New Year – Rosh Hashanah (literally “Head of the Year”) and also known as the Feast of Trumpets when the shofar (ram’s horn) is blown as a call to a time of reflection, repentance and renewal culminating in Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement.

Today is the International Day of Peace with the theme “Act now for a peaceful world”.

So we bring these two things together in our prayers. *(Please say the words in bold type.)*

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, You are the Creator of heaven and earth.

We praise You, for You give life and breath to all.

As the shofar sounds, You call Your people to awaken and return.

Awaken our hearts, O Lord, and lead us in repentance through Christ.

We await the day when the trumpet shall sound, and Christ will come again.

Raise the dead, wipe away every tear, and make all things new.

Grant mercy, justice, and peace in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen and so many other places in the world suffering oppression and conflict. Grant us freedom to speak freely about you and to share the good news of your kingdom. Give us courage to stand up for righteousness, whatever the cost. Give us grace to be accepting of the situation we may find ourselves in. Give us more love in our hearts so that we act to help each other in our needs. Give us wisdom to discern how best to care for each other in this church and in the wider community.

For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and forever.

Father, we bring these prayers by Your Spirit in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

JAN STRUTHER (1901-1953) © Oxford University Press

SERMON

Gleaning with Grit and Grace:

Accepting our situation and doing something to change it, working diligently, and being humble

Ruth 2:1-13

Background

The book Ruth is about a love story. It demonstrates how God's children can experience his sovereignty and covenant kindness. Human kindness reflects the Lord's kindness toward his people. In Chapter 1, we have looked at how Ruth makes a radical decision to leave her homeland and follow her mother-in-law, this was an act of kindness. Boaz shows kindness to Ruth, acts as her kinsman redeemer and marries her. In Chapter two, we see Ruth rising and taking action to glean in the fields. God puts people in our paths at the right time and right place to help us fulfill our purpose.

We draw five key lessons from chapter two which will help us to understand the character of God and also to reflect and how we have been responding to difficult situations in our life.

1. God's divine providence

The law of Moses allowed the poor to glean in the fields of the farmers, picking up the loose grain that fell from the sheaves as the reapers gathered them up. *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 'And you shall not glean your vineyard,*

nor shall you gather [every] grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I [am] the LORD your God." Leviticus 19:9-10. The law demonstrates God's faithfulness and his divine providence. God provided for the poor and he still provides for us.

2. Desperate times require action

When we face a difficult situation in life, we should not remain stuck on the problem but step forward in faith. In Chapter one we have seen how Ruth and Naomi are coming from a land of famine; they have had a loss of their loved ones. Now, they enter a foreign land and it is time for barley harvest. What does Ruth do? She seizes the opportunity with faith and action. She says: "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I may find favour. She had faith that she would find favour. As believers we are encouraged to pray but also to do our part as Ruth did. Ruth's faith led her to trust that the Lord would show her favour, but she still took the necessary steps to pursue it.

3. Hard work and Humility pays off

In Ruth 2:7, we learn how Ruth worked from morning till evening to gather food and rested a little. Tough times require us to be tough and diligent to get results. Ruth humbled herself to glean after the reapers. We need to humble ourselves and God will lift us up. Boaz noticed Ruth's hard work; some servants were watching Ruth, they saw. This teaches us that there is always someone who notices our hard work. Paul the apostle encourages us through 2 Thessalonians 3:10 *For even when we were with you we gave you this rule, the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.* And Proverbs 14:23 says *All hard work brings a profit but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

4. God remembers the good things we do for others

Ruth thought she was nobody, this is why she was surprised why Boaz had shown favour to her. Perhaps she felt that way because she was a Moabitess, a foreigner, and not an Israelite. When Ruth asks Boaz why she has shown favour to her, a foreigner, Boaz tells her that he has heard all that she has done since the death of her husband. When Ruth showed kindness to her mother-in-law, she did not know that these acts of kindness would be recognised one day. You may be doing acts of kindness to people and feel like your efforts are unnoticed. God remembers his people and he rewards those who trust him. If you do good to others, continue to do so. As the word in 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

It also teaches us that reputation matters, people talked about Ruth and her story spread that she showed kindness to her mother-in-law. Proverbs 22:1 says: "*choose a good reputation over riches*". What kind of reputation do you have?

5. Obedience

Ruth's story also demonstrates obedience. Zoltan shared in the previous sermon that both Ruth and Mary were obedient and were willing to sacrifice their security to deliver redemption beyond themselves. Ruth 2:8 says: *Then Boaz said to Ruth, You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay with the women*". Her story teaches that true obedience isn't just about following rules but about trusting God's purpose, even when the future is uncertain. The book illustrates how obedience can lead to blessings, not just for the obedient individual but for their family and future generations. Deuteronomy 28:1 says: "*If you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all his commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.*"

Conclusion

In summary:

- Accept the difficult situation or challenges of life but step forward in faith to do something.
- Be humble, always work hard in everything you do, God will reward you
- Be kind to other people, God remembers the things you do and honours you at the right time

HYMN

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

*God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame*

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need. *Refr.*

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise. *Refr.*

GRAHAM KENDRICK © 1993, MAKE WAY MUSIC

COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

*Jesus calls us out of the shadows,
out of the graves, to be entirely known,
and entirely filled with God's presence.*

Jesus calls us all:

**all who were made in God's own image,
all who breathe the breath of God's spirit: the Spirit of Life.**

Jesus calls us to the table,

**to the meal that nourishes our bodies
and binds our dry bones into one Body, living in Christ.**

Jesus calls us, here and now.

**Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ.
Come, not because you must, but because you may.**

Communion Prayer

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
**cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Institution

The apostle Paul tells us of the institution of the Lord's Supper:
For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed
took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving

Loving God, we praise and thank you
for your love shown to us in Jesus Christ.
We thank you for his life and ministry,
announcing the good news of your kingdom
and showing its power in the lifting of the downtrodden,
and the healing of the sick, and the loving of the loveless.

We thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross
for the redemption of the world,
and for your raising him to life again,
as a foretaste of the glory we shall share.

We give you thanks for this bread and wine,

symbols of our world and signs of your transforming love.
Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, that we may be renewed
into the likeness of Jesus Christ and formed into his Body.
This we pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.

Sharing the Bread

So when we take and eat the Bread let us remember,
that Christ died for us and feed on him
in our heart by faith with thanksgiving. Amen

Sharing the Wine

Drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for you
and be thankful.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His Word;
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!

TIMOTHY DUDLEY-SMITH © 1962 HOPE PUBLISHING COMPANY

BENEDICTION

Go now from this service of worship
to the service of God's people near and far,
refreshed by the living water that Jesus offers to you.
Listen for the tired voices of the broken,
search for dry places and drained souls,
and become for them a spring of living water.
And as you go,
may the blessings of the God of life,
the Christ of love,
and the Spirit of grace
be upon you this day and forevermore. 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.

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Events to highlight next week:

- Wednesday 24th 10.30 Renew Wellbeing
 12.15 Bible Study
 2.00 iCaf (new session)
- Thursday 25th 10.30 Toddlers
 7.30 Men's Bible Study
- Friday 26th 5.00 Table Tennis Club
 7.00 Iranians Meal and Bible Study
- Saturday 27th 10.00 Deacons Day

<p>Sunday 28th 10.30 Worship Finding Favour in the Field – Ruth 2:14-23 (The other side of the coin is God's blessing, Psalm 127) Followed by Annual Church Meeting and Ordinary Church Meeting</p>
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QR Code for Financial Offering:

