

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30AM 12th October 2025
Leading: Pauline Mbukwa; Preaching: Rev. Zoltan Biro
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The date at the gate

WELCOME

Good morning. Today is Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday, and it is the perfect time to conclude the book of Ruth. Remember where we are coming from? From a hopeless situation, emptiness, bitterness, and today we are wrapping up with news of restoration, redemption, fullness, and celebration. Last week, Simon talked about the midnight rendezvous where Ruth steps out in faith with boldness to propose to Boaz to be her redeemer. Boaz now takes a step further to act, to redeem Ruth.

Prayer time

CALL TO WORSHIP

**God of restoration, God of abundance, God of fruitfulness, God of generosity,
God of celebration, God of goodness, God of love beyond imagining.**

**We gather, bringing the best that we can offer to give thanks to you for the good things you give us,
to celebrate your abundant provision.**

HYMN

Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness,
sowing in the noontide and the dewy eve;
waiting for the harvest and the time of reaping—
we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

Refrain:

Bringing in the sheaves,
bringing in the sheaves,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.
Bringing in the sheaves,
bringing in the sheaves,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadows,
fearing neither clouds nor winter's chilling breeze;

by and by the harvest and the labor ended—
we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves. [Refrain]

Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master,
though the loss sustained our spirit often grieves;
when our weeping's over He will bid us welcome—
we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves. [Refrain]

Author: Knowles Shaw (1874)

PSALM OF ADORATION - Psalm 34::1-5

I will always extol the Lord;
His praise will always be on my lips.
I will glory in the Lord;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
Glorify the Lord with me;
Let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
He delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant;
Their faces are never covered with shame

Hymn BP&W 135

We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all His love.*

He only is the Maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,
By Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.

We thank You, then, O Father,
For all things bright and good;
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
For all Your love imparts,
And what you find more precious,
our humble, thankful hearts.

Matthias Claudius (1740-1815). Tr. Jane M. Campbell (1817-78)

FAMILY TIME: At the city gate

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

Prayer of dedication

*Lord, we thank you for these and many more that you have given us.
We thank you, God our Father, for your love in giving us so much.
Help us to remember that these gifts are meant for everyone.
Help us to find ways of sharing with those who are poor or hungry.
In the Name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

BIBLE READINGS: Ruth 4:1-22 (Sean and Mohammad)

Hymn MP 128

Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist
Without the knowledge of Your parenthood and Your loving care.
But now I am Your son, I am adopted in Your family,
And I can never be alone,
'Cause Father God, You're there beside me.

I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
Forever more.

I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
I will sing Your praises,
Forever more.

Ian Smale © 1984 Kingsway's Thankyou Music. CCL No. 258961

SERMON: God's Redemption of our World - Ruth 4

Introduction

Today we have our Harvest and Thanksgiving festival. Nearly all cultures celebrate harvest. Now from this perspective the book of Ruth is a great story for our Harvest festival, because it brings together all these meanings. It happens at an abundant harvest and by the end of the book Naomi

experiences full restoration and healing. And this Divine Redemption that I would like to talk about to this morning.

1. Why is Redemption Necessary? – We Live in a Broken World

The book of Ruth opens in a time of crisis: famine, social upheaval, and personal tragedy. Naomi's family is devastated—her husband and sons die, leaving her vulnerable and bitter. This brokenness isn't just Naomi's story; it's a reflection of the human condition. We all experience loss, disappointment, and situations beyond our control. In such moments, people often feel hopeless, blaming themselves or even God for their suffering.

Redemption is necessary because, left to ourselves, we cannot fix what is broken. The world is marked by pain, injustice, and separation from God. Naomi's story reminds us that restoration is needed—not just for individuals, but for communities and creation itself. The harvest, in biblical tradition, symbolizes both the joy of provision and the longing for healing and wholeness. Jeremiah 8:20 expresses this tension: even when the harvest comes, there can still be a sense of emptiness if true healing hasn't occurred.

2. Who Can Provide Redemption? – Only the Creator-God Can Repair His Creation

The story of Ruth emphasizes that redemption is not something we can achieve on our own. Naomi is powerless to change her situation, but God is at work behind the scenes. The book's central theme is faithfulness—God's faithfulness, Ruth's loyalty, and Boaz's kindness. Redemption is an act of grace, not something earned or deserved.

God's kindness goes beyond what is expected. While humans may blame God or feel abandoned, God is actively working to restore and heal.

The love shown by Boaz to Ruth reflects God's love for humanity. I don't want to get into too much technical details about the legal process described in the first part of the chapter. If you want to know more, you are welcome to join us on Wednesday bible study where we will have more time to explore the details of this legal case presented by Boaz.

However, I want to highlight that although at first glance it seems like Ruth is being up for sale, a more careful study reveals something completely different.

The first part is straight forward. A piece of land is up for sale, and the closest relative has the right to buy it. In Israel the sale of a land wasn't permanent, it was more like a lease, and after 50 years it would go back to the original owners. So, if there are no surviving relatives that land will become part of the buyer's estate. However, if there are surviving relatives this is only a lease.

As it stands Elimelek has no surviving relatives, so the closest relative is very happy to buy the land.

The key to our understanding of this section is in verse 5.

Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the^[a] dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

Originally this was written like this: "On the day you the land from Naomi, I will acquire Ruth the Moabite" About 700 years ago, the I (Boaz) was changed you (the closest relative).

But what the story actually tells us is that Boaz has fallen in love with Ruth and he was intending to marry her. This however has financial implications for this close relative. He might have bought the land thinking that it is a permanent investment but if Ruth has a child this child can reclaim the land at the end of the lease. So Boaz got the girl and got the land at the same time.

Love conquers all. Just like God's love redeemed our broken world through the cross.

Redemption is unmerited; it is a gift. The story encourages us to trust in God's goodness, even when circumstances seem bleak, and to recognize that God's faithfulness can bring restoration out of brokenness.

3. How is Redemption delivered in our world? – God uses Imperfect people

The last chapter of the book of Ruth closes with the genealogy of king David which mentions Tamar and Perez as direct ancestors of Boaz. Tamar was the mother of Perez and daughter in law of Judah, the patriarch of the tribe of Judah of which Bethlehem was part of. The people of Bethlehem actually traced their ancestry from Perez.

No wonder that in the blessing of the elders we read:

”¹¹ “May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the family of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. ¹²Through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.””

The inclusion of Leah and Rachel is not a surprise as they are considered to be the mothers of the 12 tribes of Israel. In this context Leah is important, as she is the mother of Judah.

Now Tamar, was a Canaanite woman who married Er - the eldest son of Judah. Er died and so Judah’s second son Onan was tasked to marry Tamar, but Onan was unwilling to do this so he also died. At which point Judah considered Tamar cursed and refused to take care of her.

Years later, Tamar took things in her own hands and tricked Judah to make her pregnant and the result of this was the birth of Perez, who became the ancestor of Boaz. If you think about it, this ancestry line is far from perfect.

By the way, in the Bible there are only two instances when women got pregnant by tricking men to sleep with them. Besides Tamar, the second time this is mentioned in the Bible is Lot’s daughters who commit incest and get their father drunk and sleep with him. What is interesting in the context of the book of Ruth is that the Moabites trace their ancestry from Moab son of Lot and his older daughter. You see neither Ruth nor Boas come from a morally clean family line but this is exactly the point of the story, that neither Ruth nor Boaz the redeemer of Naomi are perfect, but because they were faithful in doing good and blessing people they were used by God to deliver his redemption in our fallen world.

The story of Ruth highlights that when we are faithful in following God we can become a blessing in our community. Our world is fallen and it will stay fallen until it is fully redeemed at the return of Jesus, but meanwhile God uses imperfect people to deliver the redemption of local communities.

Imagine the impact Abbey Baptist Church could have on Reading if we all allow God to use us to bless our local communities, neighbourhoods and friendship groups.

So, the challenge to us this morning is to:

- a. Be faithful in following God and be continuously filled by his spirit, and;
- b. Be a blessing to people around you.

HYMN BP&W 329

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love

Francis Van Alstyne (1820 – 1915)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: Eva Suen

Hymn BP&W 123

For the fruit of his creation,
thanks be to God;

for the gifts of every nation,
thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
in our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

F. Pratt Green © 1970 Hope Publishing Company

BENEDICTION

May the redemption of Ruth by Boaz remind you of Jesus Christ's unconditional love for all
May you find renewed hope and restoration in Christ
May you find rest, abundant blessings in God
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, go with you always. 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.

Events to highlight next week

Wednesday 15 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.15	Bible Study
	2.00	iCaf 4
Thursday 16 th	10.30	Toddlers
	10.30	Bible Study
	7.30	Men's Bible Study
Friday 17 th	10.30	Prayer Meeting
	5.00	Table Tennis Club
	7.00	Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Sunday 19 th	10.30	Worship with Communion New series - Gifts or Fruits - what's the difference? (Intro: What are the gifts of the Spirit?) 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Galatians 5:22-23
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