

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30AM 5th October 2025
Leading: Rev. Zoltan Biro; Preaching: Simon Bird

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A midnight rendezvous

WELCOME

Good morning.

It is great to gather again to remember God's goodness and faithfulness.

Today, we are going to continue the story of Ruth - the women who left behind everything she knew to embrace God in faith. Last week we looked at the power of kindness, that can break down barriers and at the same time build bridges. While today we will hear from Simon about the challenges of stepping out in faith.

But before we do this let's have a moment of prayer.

CALL TO WORSHIP

King of all the earth,
Creator of the universe,
Holy Triune God,
From everlasting to everlasting, you are Lord.

You are merciful and gracious, O Lord,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!**

You forgive all our iniquities
and heal all our diseases;
**Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!**

You redeem our lives from the pit
and crown us with steadfast love and mercy;
**Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!**

You satisfy us with good
and renew our youth like the eagles;
**Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!**

This is our God, the Holy One.
Come before him with thanksgiving
and offer him the sacrifice of praise.

HYMN

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name

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PSALM OF ADORATION

Psalm 103:1-5

Praise the LORD, my soul!
All my being, praise his holy name!
Praise the LORD, my soul,
and do not forget how kind he is.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He keeps me from the grave
and blesses me with love and mercy.
He fills my life with good things,
so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.

HYMN

King of kings, majesty,
God of heaven living in me,
gentle Saviour, closest friend,
strong deliverer, beginning and end,
all within me falls at your throne.

Your majesty, I can but bow,
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve your majesty.

Earth and heaven worship you,
love eternal, faithful and true,
who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
brought this sinner near to your throne;
all within me cries out in praise.

Your majesty, I can but bow...

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FAMILY TIME: On the threshing field with Boaz

(The young people will leave for their groups before the reading)

BIBLE READING 1: Ruth 3:1-18 (Carmen and Angel)

(An offering will be taken during the following song)

HYMN

Come set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made
Come set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit come invade us now
We are Your church
We need Your pow'r in us

We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captives' hearts released
The hurt the sick the poor at peace
We lay down our lives for heaven's cause
We are Your church
We pray revive this earth

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here we pray

Unleash Your kingdom's pow'r
Reaching the near and far
No force of hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this
Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ
We are Your church
We are the hope on earth

SERMON: Simon Bird

A MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS

This is a key moment in the book of Ruth: a midnight encounter, anticipation, a woman reaches out to a man, a risky strategy! How will Boaz react to Ruth? We are on the edge of our seats.

Ruth was rewarded for her boldness in approach to Boaz. She got her man. We too will be rewarded as we approach God.

Leading up to harvest Sunday, we are looking at the book of Ruth - a delightful story, which relates to many of us. We know sorrow, difficulties, and many have changed country; but we know God's provision and help.

The national situation at that time of the Judges, also, relates to ours - invasions, raids, famine, and economic oppression. Into this, like a ray of light, comes a simple and beautiful story. It is so characteristic of God to bring his solution, in the face of a world in turmoil, through small things - a widow, and a poor family. Let us find that ray of hope this morning.

The story, you will remember, is of a family who go to Moab because of famine. The men die, and the widow Naomi returns with her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth, who decided to risk all, stay with Naomi, and seek her future in God's land. Her memorable words were, "Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (1:16).

The story shows how God provides. They return at the time of the harvest, and Ruth takes advantage of God's law for the poor to glean in the fields. She 'just happens' to glean in Boaz' field. Boaz notices Ruth and kindly encourages her to continue gleaning in his fields. Naomi is overjoyed because Boaz is a wealthy and a close relative of Naomi. Another way God provides in his laws for the poor is for a next of kin to marry a widow and for a guardian-redeemer to buy back or protect their property and family.

The story also shows the people had to step out in faith to take advantage of God's provision.

So we come to this meeting in the middle of the night. Ruth's approach to Boaz resonates with us on many levels and I will look at three.

1. Stepping out in faith

The harvest has finished; the grain has been gathered, and it is time for celebration. But Boaz has not stepped forward to be the guardian-redeemer. Like all good mothers Naomi steps in with some marriage arranging!

How does she do this? She knows Boaz' character, seen his favour to Ruth. Boaz needs a reminder, a nudge, a little push! She knows the provision of God's law for Ruth the widow, so she engineers a way for Ruth to ask Boaz to be her redeemer and marry her.

But it is a risky strategy. Coming at night after a party, Ruth risked being molested by the men, and even Boaz. Boaz could have rejected Ruth or accuse her of immoral behaviour. Here also, Naomi was considerate for Boaz and avoided a public gate encounter.

She tells Ruth what to do and Ruth follows these instructions. Ruth trusts Naomi and the promise held out in God's law. She is actually standing up for herself, claiming her rights, and being bold. She steps out in faith shown by action. She walks over to where Boaz is sleeping.

This is like prayer. What right do we have to approach God with our requests? But that is just what he encourages us to do. (Luke 11:9-10). He has given us promises in his word, and he expects us, to remind him of his promises and plead with him to answer. The parable of the widow (Luke 18:1-8) shows he expects us to be bold and persistent.

So again, we see examples of faith and trust in God's providence. There are times when we need to take an initiative, take what seems like a risk, or in prayer, step out in faith.

2. Navigating love and romance

The story is about finding a marriage partner. The bible does not tell us this, but there may have been a budding romance. Even so, this midnight encounter was a risqué situation. We do not want to encourage our teenagers to find a partner by crawling into beds at night! We do not know how this fitted in with the

normal culture of the day, but they do say Ruth and Boaz acted with restrained dignity and do not suggest there was anything immoral going on.

Now in the West we over-play romance and sexual attraction, but the story of Ruth reminds us that marriage and family is central to God's plans. Remember that love, romance and intimacy within marriage is celebrated – just look at the Song of Songs. I say God has provided marriage in his laws as the best protection for the women and children. It is the best form of social security, so should be honoured by all (Heb 13:4).

For some and this can be a tricky situation to navigate. Maybe you have painful memories in this area: disappointment, pain, regrets, and conscious you have hurt someone. For these and other hurts in life, we can look to God for forgiveness and healing, as we look further at what this encounter means.

3. Boaz foreshadows the saving and redeeming work of Christ

Zoltan reminded us that redemption is a theme of the book of Ruth. The word means saving, buying back and protection. We shall come to Ruth's actual redemption in Chapter 4, but here I want to look at Ruth's approach to Boaz as an example and lesson for us in approaching Christ.

Look at the parallels between the story of Ruth and redemption in Christ. Boaz is a wonderful picture of God, he is kind, wealthy and a provider. God tells of his basic nature in Ex 34:6-7. Ruth represents us: a widow, poor, dependent – she needs a rescuer, and so do we (Rom 3:23). And God's law, providing a husband for a widow and rescuing from poverty, represents God's provision of redemption. The word used for this guardian-redeemer is used of God who redeems his people (Ex 6:6), and there is the same idea about Jesus, our redeemer (Eph 1:7).

So Ruth walks over to where Boaz is sleeping. We hold our breath; Boaz wakes up. He sees a woman at his feet! He does not disgrace her. Ruth with humility and faith makes her request: 'I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family' (3:9). Boaz gladly accepts her.

Is this you? Do you know you need God? You may not be poor like Ruth, but are you what Jesus describes as poor in spirit (Matt 5:3)? Do you know you need to be rescued? There might have been doubt about approaching Boaz. But we can be sure that God is kind and will provide for you. But like Ruth, you need to make a walk of faith. Like a decision to cross a bridge, it must be your initiative, you must step across in faith. But Jesus gives promises and says 'come' (Matt 11:28 and John 6:37).

Ruth said 'I am your servant Ruth. Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family.'

Will you come to him in humility? Will you say, 'I am your servant, I need you. Will you be my provider and protector? Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are the great redeemer.' Come now, and use this communion time to approach him in faith.

Our take-aways are: God's providence in all the circumstances of life. There are times we need to step out in faith or even give a nudge. Honour marriage. Come to Jesus, ask him to be your redeemer. Remember: Ruth was rewarded in her approach to God. She got her man. We will be rewarded as we approach God.

HYMN

You are my strength when I am weak
You are the treasure that I seek
You are my all in all
I'm seeking You like a precious jewel
Lord, to give up I'd be a fool
You are my all in all

Jesus, Lamb of God

Holy is Your name

Jesus, Lamb of God

Holy is Your name

Taking my cross my sin my shame

Raising again I praise Your name

You are my all in all

When I fall down You pick me up
When I run dry You fill my cup
You are my all in all

Jesus, Lamb of God

Holy is Your name

Jesus, Lamb of God

Holy is Your name

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COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Come to me, all you that are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Mt 11.28–30

Come to this table, not because you must
but because you may,
not because you are strong,
but because you are weak.
Come, not because any goodness of your own
gives you a right to come,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come, because you love the Lord a little
and would like to love him more.
Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.
Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body.

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 demonstrating 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.

Sharing the Wine

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

Prayer

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise,
that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: Peggy

Our Heavenly Father,

Today, we hear the story of Ruth stepping out in faith. You are a loving father who looks after all your people and always keep your promise. Empower us to stay strong in our faith in you.

May you grant world leaders wisdom and conscience to bring peace to Gaza and the Middle East, to bring the drone and cyber attacks targeting airports in Europe to an end. May you comfort and heal those who are hurt, and calm those who are distressed and worried.

Lord, have mercy, hear our prayer.

You created a beautiful world for us to live in. Different parts of the world are hit harder than ever by natural disasters - flooding in Spain, earthquake in the Philippines, hurricanes and storms in America, the UK and Asia. May you protect your creations and guide us to restore harmony with nature.

Lord, have mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray that our political leaders in the UK will seek unity for the country, bring stability to the economy, and ease the increasing cost of living.

Lord, you care for our wellbeing. In our home town Reading and at Abbey, may you bring hope to those who are in need, may you bring healing to those who are sick, may you comfort those who need support. Fill our hearts with love, compassion, and kindness.

Lord, have mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

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BENEDICTION

As you go from here, remember this:
God's love is from everlasting to everlasting,
from generation to generation.
Just as a father has compassion on his children
so God has compassion on those
who listen to his voice and who do his will.
Go out in the knowledge
that the everlasting love of God goes with you.
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 (see over)

Wednesday 8th 10.30 Renew Wellbeing
 12.15 Bible Study
 2.00 iCaf 3

Thursday 9th 10.30 Toddlers
 7.30 Men's Bible Study

Friday 10th 5.00 Table Tennis Club
 7.00 Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Sunday 12 th	10.30	Harvest Thanksgiving Worship
Ruth 4:1-22		
The Date at the Gate: Ruth's Redemption – Followed by Harvest Lunch		

QR Code for Financial Offering:

