

Naomi's Revelation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 July 2016

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] I would like to return to the short section that we read from the book of Ruth in the Old Testament and verses 19 to 23.

Now, you are just coming to this, you may think it is a fairly inconsequential section of the book. It is almost like a bridge between two more important parts, more important sections of the book and we may just gloss over it quickly.

But I hope you will find that as we spend a little bit of time under God's word in this passage that we will find it relevant and important for us in our life of faith. We believe that the Bible is God's word, each part of it and it has significance and importance to us.

So I am going to briefly retell this short story. I am going to add some little bits that are hinted at and become more clear later on in the book of Ruth as we will go on to study it.

But Ruth said along on a busy day she has been in what later transpires to be Boaz's field and Boaz and his workers have been really generous and kind to her. She has worked from morning till night, she has only had one break during the day and at lunch and then she has gone home and she has threshed the wheat that she has gleaned and she also has a little bit extra left from her lunch that Boaz gave her, some roasted barley and she takes that home and she presents it to Naomi. Naomi, her mother-in-law, has been waiting all day wondering what is happening, how is Ruth getting on, what will happen to us, poverty stricken and may be fearful of what is the future.

[1 : 45] Naomi, Ruth staggers home with £20 roughly worth of grain for them to eat and to make into bread and even some roasted barley that is left over that she can give to her mother-in-law to eat.

Naomi praises the man whose field she was in and begins to recognise and see that God is with her or God is with them, she goes on when she asks whose field it is, Ruth says well it was a guy called Boaz. Boaz, this is tremendous, Boaz is a kinsman redeemer, I will go on and explain a little bit more what that means later. Boaz is a close relative, Naomi begins to see that God's provision is working out through what is happening and she thanks and praises God for his kindness, for his hessed is the word that she is for his kindness both to the living and the dead and she is excited by what is happening and so Ruth said yes it is great and he said that I can come and stay and glean in his fields for the whole time and to stay close to the men that he has, the young men in his field.

Now here I am just going to interject something which Ruth may have been thinking as we go on the story, she thinks I will stick with the young men, I am sure there are some good lookers there and these are young guys and maybe this is God's way of giving me a future and a husband and a hope and maybe this is the answer to Naomi's prayer, I will get one of these young men who is about my age and I can take one of them as my husband, my next husband.

But interestingly enough in chapter 2 in verse 8 you will see that Boaz did not actually say that and verse 8 he says now listen my daughter go and glean in another field and leave this one but keep close to my young women.

So kind of Ruth had changed a little bit what Boaz had said but then Naomi in response to what Ruth says probably is also thinking about something and she says yes that is great go back to his fields, stay there and stay close to his young women, not as young men, stay close to the young women you will be safe with them, you will avoid issues of jealousy, you will be protected if you go with them or any other young men you may be in danger of assault or rape or anything as a mobite woman, stick with the young women.

[4 : 21] Naomi was probably thinking I am not so interested in Ruth getting hitched up with one of the young men I am more interested in her getting hitched up with Boaz because he is the kinsman Redeemer and he is the one that will Redeemer family, I will go on to explain a little bit more about that.

And Ruth takes Naomi her mother-in-law's advice she does return to the fields, she does return to them and sticks with the women and harvests with them for the rest of the harvest.

So this is God's word that is the story it is fairly inconsequential, it is fairly you would think insignificant and yet we recognise it as part of God's word for us. We have seen already that God works in small people's lives in ordinary lives, Ruth, daughter-in-law, Naomi, mother-in-law, insignificant in world history but yet hugely significant because they are recorded for us in scripture.

He works in their lives and he also works at a higher level, last week we kind of talked about a split screen in the Bible, almost like two pictures in one screen you have got the world from humanity's point of view, from Ruth and Boaz and Naomi's point of view where they didn't know the future, they didn't know God's plans and yet also from God's point of view where we have constant hints and verses which tell us that God is working out something greater, something better, pointing forward to something more significant, not just for Ruth and Naomi but for humanity also which the whole Old Testament is doing.

He is a God who works therefore at the day-to-day level, in your day-to-day level and in mine and also at the cosmic level in the universe in which we live and that's good isn't it?

[6 : 08] That's what infinity, that's what an eternal God and infinite God speaks of, means he's infinitely great to the infinite X number, he is greater than our greatest thoughts and our greatest discoveries and our greatest understanding of the universe.

There's much about him we cannot understand because he's infinite and we are finite and that goes out into the cosmic plans and purposes and control and sovereign power he has over this world.

But also it works the other way doesn't it, he is infinitely interested in the minutiae and the small things because he can be, because of who he is, he can count the number of hairs in our head and the number of grains of sand in the sea and be interested in your and my requests and pleadings and lives.

Never say to God, never think, I'm not going to pray about this because it's too insignificant, that is sovereign of the, he's not interested in my small problems and difficulties.

That's not the infinite God that we know and love, nor is it the God of Ruth and Naomi. So let's say two things following on from last week, the first is that God works in ordinary lives and then also God hints at his extraordinary plans here.

[7 : 29] So we see him here working in ordinary lives, Ruth and Naomi are very ordinary people and yet they trust in God, Ruth has come to faith in God, Naomi has returned to faith in God, she's a backslider who's come back to faith in God and now God is outworking his plans in their lives and they are beginning, we're beginning to see how trust works in their lives.

Now that makes it therefore important for all of us if we are believers because we are looking always to see how trust, trusting in God outworks itself in our day to day lives and our day to day thinking.

First we see with Naomi that she's moving from bitterness to blessing. We can see God working in our lives by the way she's changing in their attitudes and the way she's thinking in these verses 19 and 20 when Ruth returns to her and she begins to see what's happening, she says blessed be the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead, blessed be the man who took notes of you.

And remember the end of the last chapter she was saying don't call me blessed, don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, call me bitter because God has dealt bitterly with me and yet here we see her beginning to see that God is showing kindness, loving kindness, blessing grace to her, she couldn't say that before, circumstances haven't changed that much.

She's moving as it were kind of from melancholy to melody, there's bitterness to blessings. And that's an important journey in our lives because repentance which she has done, she's turned back to her.

[9 : 14] Remember last week I said that there's whatever else you're doing in your life nothing is more important than returning to God on a daily basis, keeping going back to God as Naomi had done.

Her repentance wasn't and isn't just a moment, it was a moment, it's not just a moment, it's also a journey. So when we turn back to the Lord, when we've been far from Him, when our mouths have been silent, when we haven't been praying, when we've avoided worship, when the Bible is closed, when we're just thinking for ourselves and then we come in that place where we return to God.

It is both a moment when He forgives us and is delighted to hear our voice but also a journey when we are learning more about Him. And Naomi is beginning to see God unpack Himself to her in her life so that she is no longer speaking about whom bitter, she's now recognising His kindness not only to the living, that's herself and Ruth, but also to the dead.

Her husband, Elimelech and her lost sons, Mahalan Kileon, that there may still be provision for them, their name may still be progressed and furthered and may not be lost through what is happening with her and with Ruth.

She can see this love, this chesed, this word that she used, this loving kindness, it's the last word, the commentators or the translators translated into English language because it was one of the hardest words, the authorised version always used to call it loving kindness, two words, grace, it's a very deep, wide word that the English we can't really do justice to, but it speaks about God's kindness and grace to His people and that gives her hope in adversity and it leads her to praise.

[11 : 05] Now in our lives the same should be the case as we begin to, as we turn back, if you want to, if you're cold hearted and far from Him and think that I've returned to Him but I don't feel His love, I feel His bitterness, I feel coldness towards Him, I don't feel this love, then remember that repentance is not just an act of obedience, a single reality, a moment, it is also a journey and as we continue to turn back to God and open our lives to Him and seek His guidance and help, we begin and we'll begin again to see His loving kindness in our lives and we look for that as we return to Him, we look for that God of grace to be moving and moulding and changing and guiding us.

So we see Naomi moving from bitterness to blessing as God works in her ordinary life, but we also see Ruth, God working in Ruth's life and how does he do that?

Through Naomi. So Naomi is returning to God and right away God is using her, using Naomi who's returning to God to give Ruth some advice and that's significant and important, it's very ordinary, it's very everyday advice as it were, so nothing particularly deep seated but she says yes, Ruth, you go with the women, don't go with the men, go with the women.

Now I just want you to do a short word study with me and I need to wake you up because it's hot and sweaty in here and it's hard to concentrate. So I want you to follow with me in your Bibles to four references to the same word.

Now usually when God uses the same word in a passage it's for a reason because He wants us to link them together and if you look at chapter one in verse 14 we have the famous verse right at the beginning of the story where Naomi and Ruth and Orpah maybe going to part from one another, they lifted up their voices and wept again and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law but Ruth clung to her.

[13 : 13] That's the word I want you to think of, that Ruth clung, he stayed close, it's a word that means that there's intimacy, it's used in Genesis one of Adam and Eve coming together, they came close to one another, they clung to one another, it's a word for closeness and reliance and protection.

Then in 2 verse 8 you'll see Boaz said to Ruth, now listen my daughter do not glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young women, same word, cling, cling, stay close, be protected by my young women.

And then in chapter 2 again in verse 21 where we read Ruth says, besides you shall keep close to my young men until they have finished my harvest, cling to my young men, it's what she says, it's the same word that's used in these three and then Naomi in the last time we see it in verse 23 and Naomi says so keep close to the young women, cling to them.

So we have a journey here using that word where we see that Naomi, Ruth uses that word because she recognises what's important, she wants to stay close to Naomi and Naomi's God and she knows the significance of that and then it's as if she thinks well now that God's brought me here I'll stay close, I'll cling to these young men, that's where my future lies, that's where I'll get a husband from, that's where I'll stay and God will perpetuate the name of Naomi and her family and I'll cling to them.

But then Naomi says no cling to the young women, that's where you'll be safe, that's where you'll be protected from jealousy and from anything else and also whether Naomi recognised or understood God's purpose here but ultimately she was saying God's got a different plan for you.

[15 : 07] It's not for one of these young men who you're compatible with and who's your same age, it's for Boaz, he's an older man but that is who the Kingsman redeemer is to be.

God had a purpose and a plan for where Naomi had to cling, where Ruth had to cling to, where she had to stay close to, where she was to find her future and it wasn't where she thought was the practical and the responsible place to be.

So she listened to Naomi, her mother-in-law and she did what Naomi said and learned from her in that advice. Now we don't know exactly how much Naomi knew or even Ruth knew but we can see the split screen, we can see God working and we can see God working in their lives and with his higher plans.

Now I think there's a great model there for us, if you take Naomi and Ruth and I'll come back to this at the end as a little example of church, of a community of people together, of believers together, then it's important to learn from the same kind of lessons that Ruth had, to stay close, to take advice from, to cling to those who will take you in the right place, young people, that's a very important lesson to learn in your Christian lives, to cling to and to stay with and to take advice from Christians who are older than you, who have been through it before you and who will guide you prayerfully, we hope in the right direction and will give you advice that sometimes may not seem the most practical or the most relevant but will be woven from experience in their lives.

Hugely important that we learn, that we're intergenerational, that we learn from one another and grow and grace together and the older people don't come away and say, wow there's nothing for me to do in this church, it's full of young people.

[17 : 03] You have a hugely significant role to play in leading, in guiding, in getting to know, in spending time with, in being sacrificial towards the young and the faith, towards the lambs, towards the people who need like Ruth guidance and direction and that together we learn from one another and we grow together, I'll come back to that and finish with that later on, it's just a kind of broad application of what is here.

So we see God working in ordinary lives, we see Naomi moving from bitterness to blessing, we see Ruth being willing to respond to guidance that she's given by another believer who ultimately is guiding her in God's paths and leading her the right way and keeping her, protecting her from danger.

It's a great thing as an older Christian to do, to keep a young Christian from spiritual danger, there's probably nothing more important than you'll do than take a young Christian away from the edge of the precipice.

Not condemning them, not pointing the finger, not staying away from them but committing to them and drawing them back into security and safety and into God's will.

So that's the first thing, the second thing is that not only does God work in ordinary lives but God hints here at his extraordinary plans that come through the book of Ruth.

[18 : 30] Because what we have introduced in verse 20 is the concept, the idea which is very foreign to us in Scotland, in the Western world, in the 21st century, the idea of a kinsman redeemer.

In verse 20 Naomi says the man is a close relative of one of our redeemers, our kinsmen, our redeemers, a goel is the name for that in the Hebrew in the Old Testament.

And this concept is introduced here and it's very important that we understand it. It's not kinsman, not k-i-n-g, it's kin as in kith and kin as in family.

Family redeemer is really, covenant family redeemer is what's been spoken about here. And what we understand by what's happening here is that God is telling us about his plan for humanity that involves the redeemer, the Lord Jesus, the great kinsman redeemer of which Boaz is a type points towards.

And we do need to understand a little bit about the culture that God developed around his own people where this kinsman redeemer was important.

[19 : 40] And we'll look at that briefly. It reminds us by way of introduction of the centrality of kin in the mind and in the purpose of God, the centrality of family.

God is not a divine solitary. God is not a divine individual. He is a triune God. He is a God in society, God in community, God in family, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a perfect fellowship and friendship and trust and love with one another.

And we are made in his image, male and female in his image, made not to be alone. So we reflect God and God is reflected in God. The importance of family is reflected in God's creation that he made us a family.

He made us community, I'm speaking here greater, more so even than just simply in marriage, but in wider family through grace in the church and through community generally.

We see that. And we see that sin right from the beginning has come in to break family that kin kills able. And we see division and separation and tension and Satan has always come in to divide and to tear apart community and family and marriage and church also, which is why in Ephesians 1:10, we just finished in our morning church before the summer Ephesians that the core, the center of Ephesians is the redemptive purpose of Jesus Christ is to unite all things to himself and Christ, things in heaven and things in earth.

[21 : 24] That was the central theme to unite, to bring together because kin matters to God. And in this Old Testament people, the covenant people of God, the family of God, the Israelite people of God, we have this provision for the protection of it through a kinsman redeemer so that the effects of brokenness and poverty and loss and brutality and division could be dealt with in this way.

You know, that's what we see in our prayer, the terrible reality of what sin does. It divides, isolates, it separates.

We see it in society, we've been praying about it in society, in the terrorism that we see and the nations rising against one another. We see it in communities, we see it in families, we see it in marriage, we see it in church.

And it's anathema to God to see that because his core purpose is to unite us, to bring us together. We just so easily in the name of God divide proudly and arrogantly and self-righteously.

This is purpose is to draw us under the unity of the gospel. So the Old Testament covenant community, this kinsman redeemer concept, it had four aspects to it that I'll just mention very briefly, which was to redeem someone in the family, had the position, had the authority, had the provision, the resources to redeem others in the family who were in difficult circumstances.

[23 : 02] The first is from slavery. Leviticus 25 tells us that, a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to memory of Klan then he is.

So he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him or a close relative from his clan may redeem him. So it's redemption from slavery where one of God's people became a slave.

Or it could be also redemption in terms of financial redemption, buying back land. Land was how they lived, they lived by working the land. And so there was the possibility if they sold their land through poverty to allow that the redemption of the land, if your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.

Because land was hugely important, it was the means of production, it was the way that they lived. There wasn't a support system other than that.

Then connected to the Kinsman Redeemer was the idea of the Levitate Law which is a very strange concept to us all together where Ryome certainly alludes to it and it's spoken of elsewhere in the Old Testament where if brothers were together one of them dies and has no son the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger.

[24 : 24] Her husband's brother shall go into her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of her husband's brother to her and the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother. That his name may not be blotted out of Israel because the whole idea of generation and name and family was hugely significant, hugely important.

It doesn't have the same resonance with us and seems a bizarre and strange thing but it was because of the importance of the seed and the family to protect and to preserve life.

Then the fourth element of the Kinsman Redeemer is the Avenger of Blood. The Avenger of Blood shall himself, that is the Kinsman Redeemer, shall put the murderer to death when he meets him, he shall put him to death.

The Kinsman Redeemer had a responsibility to a member of their family who was murdered, it was life for life and he was to take the life of the murderer justly in God's eyes as part of a recognition of the sacredness of life and also the importance of Kith and Kin and family.

The Kinsman Redeemer concept is God's introduction to us and to the people throughout the Old Testament of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ who is our Redeemer, our Kinsman Redeemer, the one who comes to redeem his people.

[25 : 51] I mentioned that or we read that in Luke chapter 4, he comes to redeem his people to bring them back from slavery, release them from slavery and that is part of the image that relates back to this picture here of whom Boaz was an imperfect example.

So it points forward therefore to the plan of God for humanity, both cosmic and individual, personally dealing with the problem that we face, the problem of death, the problem of guilt, the problem of slavery, the problem of having no future, no home and no inheritance.

And we are to understand that because it changes our understanding of God and our understanding of Hesed, kindness, grace, whatever our circumstances and remember, Naomi and Ruth's circumstances weren't great but they began to understand what God was doing in their lives.

So in the cross, the cross of Jesus which remains central and core to our faith, to our understanding, it speaks of at least these four elements and I'm sure a whole lot more of redemption that comes out of this Old Testament picture where God is working, preparing us to understand him better.

So it reminds us, and this is important for us to remember, that in Christ as Christians we are released from slavery to sin. Remember we talked about slavery, Galatians 5 1 for freedom Christ has set us free, stand firm therefore, do not again submit to a yoke of slavery.

[27 : 29] It's returning back to this whole concept that would have been known to the people of God as is the passage in Ephesians 1 where we're reminded that he has redeemed us and freed us to serve him and follow him by his grace.

Well what does it mean to be enslaved to sin? Do you think you're enslaved to sin as a natural person? What does that look like? What does it look like for someone to be enslaved by sin?

It simply means that we are imprisoned by desires and by motives that don't take God into consideration. We can be enslaved in the most polite and nice and gentle and kind looking ways but we can have hearts that are far from God.

It means that out of Christ naturally we can do good things with the wrong motives. We can't do good things with the right motives, in other words to glorify God.

We can't do good things that will please God. We choose to do things that God hates. We love being in control of our own lives and we can't break free naturally.

[28 : 36] We're enslaved and the fact that we're all going to die naturally is recognition of that and Christ comes to set us free by his death in the cross so that we can be forgiven.

He breaks the power of sin. He breaks its curse. He breaks its strength. He breaks our inability to do good so that we can, as we trust in him and are empowered by the Spirit, we are set free to serve him.

We can love him. We can glorify him. We can make mistakes and be forgiven by him but not be enslaved and not be imprisoned and you can't walk out from here and say, oh I had to sin.

It's just in my nature. I could do the right thing. I just had to give in to temptation. If you're not a Christian that's the reality but if you're a Christian that's not our excuse.

It often is our experience because that's the choices we make but we can resist sin and resist temptation and make the right choices and not be enslaved because Christ has set us free to serve him.

[29 : 44] We need to return and not become slaves to sin because sin will destroy us and sin will eat our hearts and sin will deceive us into a black dark empty place.

So we see redemption in terms of freedom from slavery. We also recognize it in the offer of life, life for life. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by coming a curse for us so that we might know the blessing, the promise, the life that he gives so that he's our substitute.

We know that as our kinsman redeemer he dies in our place so that we can live. We have the resurrection power in our lives.

We receive his blessing and his kindness and his loving kindness in our lives and eternal life before him. And that life that he offers, the cross where justice and peace kiss mutually, whereas love and his justice is satisfied also remind us that one day his ultimate justice will be satisfied.

And all the injustice we feel in this world in which we live, all the wrongs that have been done to us will ultimately be judged before the living and true God of all things because he's the kinsman redeemer.

[31 : 05] He will redeem us, he will forgive us because he's paid the price for our sins, but he will bring justice to bear in this world, this universe, which will be the introduction of the new heavens and the new earth within dwells righteousness.

And as our redeemer he also offers us belonging. This is merging the last two elements of kinsman redeemer together. So we talked about buying back land, the kinsman redeemer.

Well God gives us an inheritance, we're told that here in 1 Peter 3, 4. Blessed or thank God for the Father our Lord Jesus Christ, who is great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To an inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. So we have this great, we've got this great property, we've got this great belonging, this great home.

This home where in dwells righteousness is that will encompass the new heavens and the new earth, which will be glorious and which will be ours, the land belongs to the Lord and will be ours as he redeems us from that curse of not belonging.

[32 : 21] Whatever else hell is, it's a place of no belonging, of no home, of no love, of no security. And also not just a land but also a name, the remembrance, the passing forward of a name of a people.

The nation shall see a righteousness in the kings Isaiah 62 says, see your glory and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. And in Christ in other words we have an identity, just as the Levite law was to intend to keep the identity of a people, of a clan, of a name in perpetuity going forward.

So in Christ we have a name, we have belonging, we have our identity. So often we look for our security and our name in other things, our houses, our careers, the name we have in society is also transient.

It's all, so you know, few years from now my only name will be best on a gravestone, forgotten by most. The house that we have will be passed on, it will not be there anymore.

We are here for just a moment and we pass on but yet Christ gifts us as our kinsman redeemer, this great home, this great future, this great identity as belonging to him.

[33 : 49] That is what should give us a perspective when we're struggling as Christians, when it's difficult when we're poverty stricken, when we're lost, when things are difficult.

We need the split screen of Scripture. We need to see that God is working in our very small ordinary everyday lives but he's also got a great purpose and a great plan which he was beginning to unfold in the stories of the Old Testament and in Ruth that come to culmination in Jesus Christ.

He's our redeemer. Do you know that you have a redeemer? Do you live as if you have a redeemer, a kinsman redeemer? Do you know that you've been rescued, you've been freed, you've been given an inheritance and a name and that it's significant, that it's important, that it's valuable or are we chasing a name?

Are we chasing a bank account? Are we chasing our own purposes and our own plans that they might give us what we think we want and need for God, the infinite God of the Universities I've provided for you?

And all is tough and all is difficult because we live in a broken world where Satan is thrashing out in his last death throes to try and pull us away from himself.

[35 : 01] That's what Satan will do. He will try and pull you away from Jesus while you and I are asked to return to Jesus every day. Satan will say, don't bother, it's a waste of time.

Just go for it yourself. Live under your own steam. Somewhere in the future you may understand redemption, he will say.

So I finish just by going back to the point I made at the beginning about the importance of kin to God, the importance of family, the importance of community, the importance of his...

He's our elder... You know, it's talked about in the New Testament as our elder brother. That comes from this whole concept as well of kinsman redeemer. He's a family member, God becomes our loving father and there's this closeness, this community.

You're not saved to be an island, you're not saved to be an individual. It's not a consumerist gospel where you take what you want and just drift off and live your own life and pick and mix salvation.

[36 : 02] It's that you're saved into a people, you're grafted into the people of God, you become part of a family. If family's tough, family's hard, it's much easier to go our own way. It's much easier just to be an individual because family let us down, because family fail, because family are a mess.

And yet he says to us, I've redeemed you to be a people and I've redeemed you young and old. Now you owe me to give advice, Ruth to take advice, to learn from one another, to grow, to seek it out, to search it.

Don't see church in consumerist terms. Wonder what this church can give or can do for me and if they don't do it for me then I'm just going to go off and off because they're not doing it for me.

They're not acting as Christ like as they should. Well, we know that because we all do that ourselves. We act as we shouldn't. But our responsibility is to act Christ like ourselves individually and if it isn't happening among others then it must happen from our hearts out.

Let us begin the revolution in the church if it's a cold and distant and careless and loveless church that's divided and split and separate. Let us be the beginners of redemption.

[37 : 16] We are a redemptive people and so the church of all places, the community I'm speaking of here, our own church St. Columbus or as visitors all the churches you belong to, it's anathema for our churches to be communities divided, to be untrusting, separate, uncaring and intolerant of one another because it means we don't know our own hearts and we don't know what Christ as kinsman redeemer has done for us and we are to reflect that same kinsman redeemer attitude we are to defend and protect and love and care and provide for one another.

We don't just say I'm alright Jack. That's not the gospel. The gospel says, I haven't seen them for a while in church.

I know they're struggling. I'll just avoid them. No. And it says I'm struggling but I'm not going to avoid church. I'm not going to stay away from that wretched bunch of people.

I'm going to come in here and I'm going to worship and serve and seek to be ministered to and look for it and ask for it. Oh yeah, we're struggling and we're failed but we are God's community that are to reflect the unity of the aim of Christ which is to unite all things together in heaven and in heaven. We are struggling and failed and weak people but above all, as I mentioned this last week, I can't remember what it was, I mentioned last week, it flashed through my mind.

Yeah, above all, last week I said that we should have a love for the outsider. Remember that if you were here because that is what's reflected in the book of Ruth and that is how this care and concern and this love for kin should be reflected in the church that we have a pastoral eyes that we look out for the lambs, we look out for the broken, the weak, the struggling, that we don't just gravitate towards our pals, the ones that we are on the same social scale as, the ones that are getting on well, the ones that are doing great spiritually. We go to the ones who are isolated, who are struggling, who are finding things difficult and if we don't know that then it's our duty as brothers and sisters to do so and to find out. We are a redemptive people and we have a great privilege of being part of God's redemptive family but along with privilege comes great responsibility and so we seek to reflect God and reflect in our walk of faith what it means to belong to a family with all our feelings and all our faults and I'll be the first to put a hand up and talk about the faults of the minister and the elders and the deacons and members of this congregation but as we strive together to learn and grow and develop and mature because we're a redemptive people. We have a kinsman redeemer in Jesus Christ who has freed us from slavery, who has given us a hope and a future and a name and a belonging that nobody can take away. Don't let Satan deceive you otherwise. Let's put our heads in prayer.

[40 : 41] Father God we ask in prayer that we would recognise the power of Jesus Christ and his message and his great love and his great desire for bringing us together. Forgive us when we reflect a divided, mistrusting, selfish, careless, godless and judgmental attitude so often in our own hearts and very often we don't even make that public but you know Lord our hearts and you know how often we judge everyone by our own standards and how often we are always very judgmental and hard and minute in our condemnation of others and very generous and gracious and forgiving in our attitude towards ourselves. Forgive us when the evil one can take the good things of the gospel and pervert them and twist them and help us constantly to return to you, to know your hesed, your great loving kindness, your great care and concern. Even in difficult times as it was for Ruth and Naomi may we remember that often we can't see and we don't know, we feel like we are barren or we are in a famine ourselves. May we still return to you and know and begin to experience the journey of repentance and may we be blessed. Lord we thank you that you showed outstanding commitment and love in becoming the kinsman redeemer to your people who had no interest in you and nothing to offer and no goodness but you've come and redeemed us and given us hope and a future. We rejoice in that today and we pray your blessing on us as we rise from here that it would be something that the Holy Spirit takes and challenges and teaches us and as we go into this week we will often think about these words from scripture and about the story of Ruth and about its message of the great redeemer Jesus Christ. Amen.