

Ordinary Desires

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[0 : 00] You know, this is just a really good time to remember how blessed we are to live in this city. When I was in Angola a year ago, when I arrived in Angola, the power was all out in that part of Lubangu, which is where I was.

I was there for just over two weeks by the invitation of SIM to do some teaching. And every single day that I was in Lubangu, there was not a single day when there was not a power outage for a significant number of hours.

And that's just normal life there. That's just normal life. You don't have power all the time. And we just take it for granted. And so it's just one of those things that we should be thankful for, that we have a power grid.

And it connects to the fact, which is sort of my next point, is that, you know, we have just normal, ordinary desires that are just very good desires. And it's good to work to help meet the ordinary human desires of our community to seek to be a blessing in the city.

Switching more specifically to my sermon, I grew up in a Christian house. But in some ways, it was growing up in a Christian house that made it hard for me to become a Christian.

[1 : 11] And part of that was because I was very familiar with the Christian culture. And I didn't like Christian culture. I didn't want, I thought if I had to become a Christian, I had to sort of like the Christian culture that I saw, which was as a child and as a teenager, it was the only Christian culture I knew.

And I didn't like the music. I didn't like the way they dressed. I didn't like how they wanted me to spend my time. I just didn't like a whole lot of it. And I wanted to sort of be part of a different culture. And it was a real problem for me. It felt as if I was going to have to sort of kiss my normal desires that I had for how I wanted to live my life goodbye and sort of force myself to do something that didn't fit.

And it's a very common concern that people have that if they're going to become a follower of Jesus, that there's a whole pile of things that they desire, that they like, that they just have to get rid of.

Because God's going to say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. And our life will seem smaller rather than bigger as a result of giving our lives to Jesus. And this very ancient story that we're going to look at actually talks about human desires in a very, very interesting way and helps us to understand what it means to follow Jesus, even though it's a story set 1100 B.C.

[2 : 32] So if you have your Bibles, turn in them to Ruth chapter 3, Ruth 3. And we're going to also have the text up on the screen for those who don't have your Bibles or just find it easier to follow along like that.

And if you're a guest here this morning, here's a little thing about this. So this is a story set around 1100 B.C. We don't know exactly when it was written. And the way to understand this story is a little bit like if you watch Netflix and you get something which has been made specifically for Netflix or maybe something like from Europe, you know, where they have shorter series and the series all stands together as one.

And so this is like a four episode series. And we've looked at episode one and two. Today we're looking at episode three. And next week we look at episode four. And each episode sort of stands alone, but it's all part of four episodes that make up a big story.

And in the first episode, what we saw, we were introduced to a man by the name of Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons, Malon and Kilian, and how they had to leave Bethlehem.

Ironically, they had to leave the house of bread because there was no bread in the house of bread. It was a famine. And so they go to a place which was a traditional enemy of Israel. And while there,

all of their dreams come to an end.

[3 : 54] Elimelech dies. The two sons marry. After more than 10 years of marriage, the sons die. There's no children. And all it is is just tragedy after tragedy after tragedy.

And by the end of the story, Naomi says, you can't call me Naomi anymore because that means pleasant. Call me Mara, which means bitter. And she delivers two sort of rants against God.

And that's episode one. Episode two we looked at last week. In episode two, as I said last week, in some ways it's a little bit like a rom-com. A bit of a shock after a whole series of tragedies and complaints and bitterness against God.

And here we see Ruth, who's a woman who's introduced in the first episode. One of Naomi's sons marries Ruth in Moab. And so she's a Moabitess.

And Ruth and Naomi have come back to Israel. And Ruth, in a sense, is an economic migrant. And Naomi has come home because there's prosperity back in Israel.

[5 : 02] And what we see in the last episode is that things start to turn for the better for Naomi and for Ruth. Through Ruth going to work in the field. And by a chance encounter, she comes across Boaz.

And that's the beginning of a turnaround in Ruth and Naomi's life. This chance encounter. And if you remember last week, I shared how in the original language, when it says that they happened by chance, it says, By chance they chanced.

And you can't capture it in English, but in the original language, it's a literary device to say the opposite. It would be as if I said, by chance, this happened.

Right? With all the hand gestures to let you know that it's not by chance. That it's by providence.

That God has been working anonymously. But present and with power in this situation.

And now we come to episode three. And here's how it goes. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, that's Ruth's mother-in-law, said to her, My daughter, should I not seek rest for you that it may be well with you?

[6 : 15] And just sort of pause. In the original language, it's literally the place of rest. And so what Naomi is saying to Ruth is, listen, you need a place of rest. You don't just need a nap.

You need a place of rest. She's really saying what you need is you need some security. You need some financial security, some emotional security, some physical security. And in the context, we'll talk about this a little bit more.

She's saying you need a husband. And Naomi says, Ruth, that's what you need. You're still a young woman, and that's what you need. So verse two, she says, Naomi's still speaking.

It's not Boaz, our relative, with whose young women you were with. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash, therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak, and go down to the threshing floor.

But do not make yourself known to the man until he is finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and uncover his feet, and lie down, and he will tell you what to do.

[7 : 22] And she replied, all that you say I will do. Now, just pause here. These few verses that I just read, if you read an academic commentary, a huge, way, way more time than you'd think was spent on this.

Like, there's probably about four times more work done on these few verses than all the rest of the chapter. Why? Well, one of the things is that in the Old Testament, the word feet is sometimes used when they want to refer to a man's sexual member.

I didn't know that before I read the commentaries either. In other words, they don't want to come out and just say it, so it's a type of a polite way to talk about a man's sexual member. And so, there's a lot of commentaries about what's actually, what is Naomi actually telling Ruth to do here in this situation.

So, if you want to read pages and pages of academic commentary, you can go and do it, but I'll just tell you this very briefly. Sometimes feet is a way of referring to a man's sexual member, and sometimes it's just talking about feet.

And in this case, it's actually just talking about feet. And it has to do, there's a, you don't want to know all the literature. Literary geeks, find an academic commentary.

[8 : 38] You can look it up and you can geek out over verb tenses and constructions and nouns connected to other stuff. But basically, there's a lot of stuff that goes on. Naomi doesn't say to Ruth,

dress provocatively.

And some commentaries, believe it or not, some preachers will say that Naomi has told Ruth to get dressed in a wedding gown and go and do this, trying to make it sound more pure.

It's just a cloak. In fact, the word that she urges Ruth to, the piece of clothing that Naomi tells Ruth to wear is basically sort of like a poncho.

It's a heavy outer garment that if you don't have a blanket, you can use as a blanket to sleep in. So she's not saying get sexually provocatively dressed.

She's not saying go in proposition or try to hook up with Boaz or tempt him, nothing like that.

Something completely and utterly different is going on.

[9 : 39] It's very, very simple. And we're going to see what's going on in a moment. But she says, listen, you know, it's going to be dark. He's going to be there. Watch where he is in sort of secret, sort of sneak up to where he is, do these actions.

And well, what's going to happen? Let's read up verse six. So Ruth goes down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain.

Then she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. And just sort of pause. One of the things I like telling couples when I'm preparing them for marriage is that during the wedding ceremony, there has to be three sober people in the room.

I mean, hopefully there's a whole room full of sober people, but there needs to be a minimum of three sober people in the room. The couple getting married and me. And if everybody else in the room is under the influence of some soon to be no longer controlled substances or alcohol, I said, then what we'll do is I'll go out to the street corner and I'll find two sober people over the age of 18 and I'll say, could you come in for a minute?

We need you to witness a legal document. Because if you are drunk and you exchange vows and then sign a document afterwards, you can say, what? I didn't mean that. I thought I was drunk. So just here's the thing.

[11 : 06] Whatever's happening now is Boaz isn't drunk. In the original language, all it says is he's just feeling good. He's had a good meal.

He's had an appropriate amount of an alcoholic beverage. He's not drunk. He is just feeling a thousand percent. You know, for some of you, he's had quinoa and kale and chickpeas.

And for others of us, you know, he's had some juicy lamb and some quinoa and some kale because we're going to be healthy. So, but he's just feeling great.

That's all that's going on here. So he's just feeling great. He goes to lie down and he goes to sleep.

By the way, cultural context, at celebrations like this, often prostitutes would show up because there's people flush, young men flush with cash.

But that's not what's going on here. It's all very chaste. So what happens? She lays down. She's uncovered his feet. Verse eight. At midnight, the man, that's Boaz, was startled and turned over, turned over, and behold, a woman laid his feet.

[12 : 16] He said, who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.

And just sort of pause here. Now, this is a huge ask. And you don't realize until right now the huge risk that Naomi has urged Ruth to take.

Ruth has just asked Boaz to marry him, marry her. Spread your wings. There's some other ways you can translate that.

If you have different versions of your Bible, it can sometimes be your covering. More literally, it's spread your wings over your servant is an idiom for marrying me. By idiom, you know how an idiom is when they say something which we all know what it means, but literally it doesn't make any sense.

If I say that somebody's a few bricks shy of a load, you know, if somebody has a screw loose, most of you know what that means. I don't mean literally they have screws in their head and it's a little bit loose.

[13 : 23] You know, I mean they're a bit crazy or whatever, right? So this is an idiom. So Ruth has just asked Boaz to marry her. This is a huge risk.

Remember, Boaz is rich. Ruth is poor. Boaz is a native-born Israelite. Ruth is an economic migrant.

Boaz is older. Ruth is younger. Boaz is a man. Ruth is a woman. Huge risk. She's also asked that he will redeem her.

Now, we're going to talk about this a little bit more in a moment, but for some people, this is very, very, very problematic.

Because some people might wonder, is the Bible here teaching that a woman needs a man to fix her?

[14:25] Does a woman need a man to make her more complete? Does a woman need a man to redeem her life? Is that what the Bible is teaching here?

Well, we have to read the rest of the story. Well, we have to read the rest of the story, but I'm going to come back to it.

If I don't come back to it, start waving your arms, which either means you have had a charismatic moment, or you're trying to get my attention to return to the story. So how does Boaz react? This is a huge risk.

Huge, huge, huge, huge, huge risk. Even today, with far more equal relations between men and women, I said far more, not perfect, but far more, that would be a huge risk.

Can you imagine an Iraq or a Syrian economic migrant who comes to our country and a woman? It's still a huge risk. So how does Boaz react?

[15:22] Verse 10. And he said, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. Just pause here. You know, they don't say anything about it, but I bet her sweat was pouring off her palms and her underarms, and she was probably shaking when she asked this.

And his initial response, she'll start to relax. Because he doesn't say, how dare you? Like, what? Are you? He doesn't act with disgust.

His first words are, may you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. Daughter here means, it's helped one of the many pieces of Edwin said he was older than her, but it's a term of affection and care. You have made this last kindness greater than the first. And that you have said, And now, my daughter, do not fear.

I will do for you all that you ask. For all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am a redeemer, yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

[16:33] Remain tonight and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good. Let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.

And I just sort of pause here. This is another important thing to gather about this story. He's not mansplaining. He's not mansplaining.

He's not saying, well, you just said a few words. I'm going to say a lot of words. I'm going to tell you how it all works out because I'm a man and I'm smart and you're dumb. It's not what's happening in the story. Once again, if I don't explain it in a moment, wave your arms.

But we will talk about it in a moment. But the main thing is, it's not mansplaining. But it's very, very, very significant to what it means to walk with Jesus.

And it's very significant in the story. So what does she do? You know, verse 14, she doesn't say, you're mansplaining. I think I take my offer back. No, she doesn't say that. What she does, verse 14, so she lay at his feet until morning.

[17:38] But arose before anyone could recognize her. When anyone could recognize another. And he said, let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor. And he said, bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out.

So she held it. And he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. And just sort of pause here. There's lots of things going on. Basically, what he's doing is he's protecting her honor.

And he's also giving her a cover in case she stopped. But more importantly, the fundamental thing she's doing is she goes home and it's real.

You know, Naomi will see the barley and she knows it's real. It's not just a few words. He's serious. It's almost like giving a ring.

It's something which is real. Siri thinks I'm talking to it. Sorry. And verse 16.

[18:43] And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, how did you, the mother-in-law said, how did it fare my daughter? Then Ruth told her all that the man had done, saying, these six measures of barley he gave me.

For he said to me, you must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law. And Naomi replied, wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out. For the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.

And because if you were paying attention a little bit earlier, Boaz said, there's technical problems and legal and other problems with me actually being the redeemer. However, it's a cliffhanger and you have to come back next week to find out what happens next.

So what's going on here? Okay. So some of you might say, okay, George, I'm going to be, let's see if you have your dancing shoes on here. Because we all know that things in 1100 BC and so much stuff in the Bible, it's very, very, it's filled with patriarchy.

It's oppressive to women and others who weren't in positions of power. And it sure seems as if this story is about Boaz having to redeem Ruth.

[19 : 45] And don't you think it's a little bit insulting that in 2018 in a city like this, right beside a university, that some type of a story like this would even be read?

It seems to be teaching that women have to be passive. They have to be dependent upon men. They find their identity in a man. And don't you think this is just not an appropriate story? Why on earth would you read it in a story today?

Okay. By the way, these are all great questions. Every single one of those is a great question. So part of it, before we actually look at a little bit of trying to understand this Redeemer thing, I mentioned this the first week. I'm going to say it again. Actually, could you all turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 24?

Luke, those of you have Bibles. It's not going to be on the screen, unfortunately, but Luke chapter 24 and verses 25 to 27. Luke chapter 24, verses 25 to 27.

[20 : 50] And in the flow of the book of Luke, this is after Jesus has risen from that he's died on the cross. He's been buried. And on the third day, he's risen from the dead.

And it's a series of resurrection encounters where Jesus is showing people that he's fully alive. And in this particular encounter, in the road to Emmaus, he talks to two disciples.

And in them, he says, in verse 25, he said to them, Oh, foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. That's really important.

Moses and the prophets is one of the ways that you say what we would call the Old Testament, what Jewish people call the Tanakh, all of the 39 books written before Jesus. And Jesus is saying to the disciples, Listen, in all of the Old Testament, it's all about me, all about my life, my death on the cross, my resurrection.

[22 : 03] And in verse 27, in beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, in all of the scriptures. So that means for us, the reason I'm saying this is why do we read a story set in 1100 BC?

We read it because Jesus told us to. That's why I read it, because Jesus told me to. And Jesus said, when I read these stories, when he said that the stories all refer to him, what it's saying is that in a particular sense, Jesus is deconstructing the Old Testament.

And what I mean by deconstructing, there's sort of two senses of deconstructing. I mean the sense that he's helping us to reinterpret it. So that if we read an Old Testament text and say, oh, it teaches patriarchy, it teaches that we should uphold patriarchy, it teaches that a woman needs a man to be a full woman, or a woman needs to be married to be a full...

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Jesus has deconstructed the Old Testament. He said we have to read the Old Testament always within the perspective that it's helping us to understand who Jesus is, what he did for us on the cross, and what it means to follow him.

That's always going to be the context. It's about Jesus. So if that's the case, then what on earth is going on with the story? If you could put up the first point, that would be wonderful.

[23 : 23] In the Old Testament, so it's said in 1100 BC, everything in the story assumes that there's only five books of what we now call the Bible, which would be known to people, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

And in those five books, there's a very powerful idea taught, the idea of the Redeemer. And the thing about a Redeemer is the Redeemer owns your insoluble problems and works on them until

they are made right.

That's what a Redeemer does. A Redeemer owns your insoluble problems. Notice, owns your insoluble, unsolvable problems and works on them until they are made right.

I can't solve certain problems. A Redeemer comes and works on them until they're made right. And they own the problem. You see, you and I don't need a rock star.

And most of the time, we don't need a guru. We don't need a consultant. We don't need a coach. Sometimes we need a Redeemer. You know, off and on, those of you who come to our church for very long, you know there's all sorts of things we don't know do very well.

[24 : 35] I used to joke that if you don't like organized religion, come to Church of the Messiah because we're not really always very organized as we should be. But one of the things that happens sometimes is that some people, they see a problem and they come and they give me a written report and advice about how to fix it.

Once I had an 18-page report. Another time, I had a 16-page report. Normally, they're shorter than that. And they come, and with a great sense of accomplishment, they come and they put it on my table and say, George, you read and follow all of these things and the problem will be solved and then they walk away feeling very virtuous.

And I take it and throw it in the garbage because it's completely and utterly worthless. The reason it's worthless is I don't need a consultant. I need somebody to roll up their sleeves and say, George, I know how to fix this and I know that you can't fix it and I'm going to own the problem.

I'm going to own the problem. I'm going to help you to get it done. I'm going to help to teach you how to get it done. I'm going to coach, but I'm not just going to coach and help. I'm going to get it done. I'm going to own the problem.

See, a consultant doesn't own the problem. They own the paycheck after the problem. I'm not putting down those of you who are blessed to have jobs as a consultant. And sometimes consultants are, in fact, very, very helpful.

[25 : 54] I'm not knocking consultants. I'm just saying that there are sometimes some issues where you don't need a few new ideas, you don't need a little bit of help. You need somebody to roll up their sleeves and work on a problem you cannot solve by yourself until it's solved.

And that's what Boaz does for Ruth. He says, if I am not, you will be redeemed. And that's what he does. He says to her, he says, listen, I understand you have debt issues, property issues, ownership issues, financial issues, status issues.

And because you are an economic migrant from another country, you can't solve those things. I'm going to own your problem. And so that's why in the text, he's not mansplaining.

Because you see, if he said, I'm going to own your problem, and then afterwards he said, oh, by the way, what's your problem? You'd go, oh, gosh. I got a dork, not a redeemer.

Like I got a clueless person. The fact that he knows what's going on isn't the mansplaining. And it's not making a general comment about the relationship of men or women.

[27 : 06] In fact, you think about it, that's exactly, this helps you and me to understand what it is that Jesus does for us. If you could put up the next point. I mean, this is really hard news.

But, you know, the fact of the matter is, is that you are separated from the Lord. And you are dying. I mean, the second you are born, you begin to die.

You get older, you get better looking and stronger and richer and all that type of stuff. But the fact of the matter is, is that you're born mortal. And mortal means you will die.

And the Bible says that physical death is a constant reminder of the spiritual truth that we are separated from God and cannot fix that problem ourselves.

And you and I are separated from the Lord. You and I, we are dying. And you and I, we cannot fix this. And Jesus is the Redeemer.

[28 : 12] Call out to him with humble, penitent trust, and he will be your Redeemer. Why is he the Redeemer? He's God's provision. It is God owning my problem and yours.

It's not God's problem. It's my problem and yours. And when you understand in the New Testament that Jesus is called the Redeemer, this story helps you to understand what exactly that means.

That Jesus says, I will do everything that has to be done because you cannot solve this problem yourself, and I will do everything that has to be done to make it right.

And that's what he does. His sinless life. His death upon the cross. His tasting all there is to taste of death without anything left over.

His resurrection. His ascension. His coming again. His dealing with the just penalty of our sins. His perfect life standing for ours.

[29 : 11] His defeat of death, which he shares with ours. He does everything that has to be done that we cannot do ourselves. And humble, penitent trust doesn't mean groveling.

It just means to come to that point where we say to Jesus, I can't fix this. I need a Redeemer. And the wonderful news of the Gospel is that there's no one here so rich or powerful that they do not need a Redeemer.

And there is no one here so passed over or so broken that Jesus will pass over you. We will not need a single person ever in our lives who are so passed over or forgotten or derided that Jesus will not be their Redeemer.

And that's what this story is opening up to us. Well, some of you might say, George, I can see how this sort of fits about the Redeemer.

But, you know, George, I don't know if you got it straight. Doesn't it seem as if this is really all about Ruth doing it herself? Like, God isn't even mentioned in this story, George.

[30 : 35] Like, Ruth is the one who takes the risk. And Ruth is the gutsy one. And Ruth and Naomi, they're the ones who figure out the strategy.

Like, it's going to be really dark and we won't know where Boaz lies down. So sort of, you know, take a hiding place and just watch where he goes to lie down and keep track of him and then sneak in after people are sleeping and do all that.

It seems like it's all Ruth and Naomi taking the risk and doing everything like this. But don't you think the story is a little bit more about telling us to sort of do all that type of stuff? Well, that's...

Here's the thing. Last week, I shared with you... Remember, and I did it at the introduction. I said how when in chapter 2 it goes, by chance, they chanced.

In other words, it's a literary device to let you know that this is going to be a story about God's providence. And it's introduced in chapter 2, not in chapter 1. It's not as if by God's providence, if God caused all these terrible things to happen, that the solution to the Christian problem of evil isn't that God does all the evil things, by the way, and the good things.

[31 : 44] No, the issue of providence is brought in after Naomi blasts God for being a terrible God and ruining her life. Naomi blasts God.

And remember I shared how rather than God, the Lord erasing Naomi's complaint, he caused it to be written in Scripture so we hear it. It's an invitation for us to be honest to God when things are just going really, really crappy.

And this idea of providence comes in, and there's a bookend because when you're next week, you're a bit of a spoiler alert, but at the very end, it emphasizes how God's providence has been working for 700 years.

This is a story about God's providence. And providence just means that God acts anonymously. He is present anonymously in our lives. And he's present anonymously, but with power in our lives because providence is all about God leaving you and me space.

Well, why does he leave a space? Let me tell you. If God, with even a zillionth of his glory, appeared right here, right now, or a spectacular miracle appeared here, right now, what happens?

[32 : 53] It sucks the air out of the room. It sucks the air out of the room. There's no space. There's just the force of God's presence hammering you like this.

And there is no space for a personal response of faith. And in fact is that the main way that God relates to human beings is anonymously, through his providence, his presence, acting.

It's through providence that Naomi and Ruth and their trust in God's providence that they come upon a world planet. It is through providence that Boaz is predisposed to say yes, just as it was by providence that they met.

And here's the thing. If you could put up the next point, that would be very helpful. The gospel will shape you to live under the Lord's providence without passivity or presumption.

The gospel will shape you to live under the Lord's providence without passivity being overly passive or presumption. You see, once we understand that Jesus is the Redeemer who takes our insoluble problem and works on it until it's made right and that on one hand we now have this secure identity with God, a secure identity that even though I'm going to screw up and I'm going to do all these terrible things and I'm not going to live a perfect life but I have this secure identity that's given to me as a gift by grace and that the Redeemer doesn't just sort of say, okay, oh yeah, okay, I got George

done that with conversion.

[34 : 34] I'm going to go off and no, no, he now continues to work in my life through providence. He never lets me go. He never abandons me. There's a security there to trust that through even the circumstances of my life that God can still be at work and as the gospel grips us, it teaches us that we shouldn't be passive but we also shouldn't be presumptuous.

By passive, it means that, well, I need a job and I'm going to just trust in God's providence so I'm going to sit playing PlayStation and eating potato chips until that job as the head of the CBC is given to me because they call me out of the blue.

That's not understanding God's providence. God's providence gives you security to act and take risks but it's also not saying that providence is a Christian superpower.

We don't have superpowers. if you're a Christian. So you can't say, well, because of God's providence, I'm going to jump off the edge of this building because under God's providence nothing bad will happen to me.

No, that's presumption. Do we get things wrong? Sometimes are we too passive? Sometimes are we presumptuous? Yes. That's why we need a redeemer. But as the gospel shapes us and we start to understand that God is present and powerful in our lives anonymously through strangers, through circumstances that he hasn't left us or abandoned us as we start to understand that this is my father's world, this is God's world, if as that grips us, it allows us to take risks.

[36 : 11] It allows us to step out in faith. And even if we get it wrong, it's not the end of the story, it's not the end of the world. But some of you might say, well, George, okay, just, you know, before you leave, that's all very, very good, George, but here's the thing.

You're talking about all these high spiritual types of things, but look, George, all she wants is a husband. All she wants is to get out of debt. All she wants is some financial security.

All she wants is a home that is hers. And all she wants is maybe a baby. Like, she doesn't want all these highfalutin, spiritual, evangelistic stuff.

She just wants normal things. And here we come right back to the beginning of the sermon. If you remember at the beginning of the sermon, I don't expect you all to remember. I'm not even sure how many of you are awake. No, that's an aside.

But that, at the beginning, I said, you know, one of the problems I had with the Christian faith is that I was very familiar with Christian culture and I didn't like it. And I was worried that if I became a Christian, I would have to say goodbye to a lot of the normal desires that I thought were just normal desires.

[37 : 17] And I had to say goodbye to them. I had to take on these new desires. And it just, it was very hard for me. It was a barrier to be coming to faith. So here's where this story is very helpful.

It's precisely the ordinariness of the desires. If you could put up the final point, that would be wonderful. The Lord made you to have ordinary desires. And when he saves you, he does not kill your desires.

He reorders and purifies them. The Lord made you to have ordinary desires. And when he saves you, he does not kill your desires. He reorders and purifies them.

You see, what happens is, unlike in mysticism and unlike in religion and unlike in spirituality, in religion and spirituality, what you have to do is you have to purify yourself, purify yourself, cleanse yourself, deny yourself, go through rituals, do all of this and all of this and all of this.

And maybe at the end of it, you eventually have union with God. And the Bible says none of that's going to work. You need a redeemer. You've got to begin with union. And that only comes as a gift.

[38 : 23] And out of union that comes out of a gift, then the gospel starts to shape you, to trust him, to shape your identity and to shape your desires.

And you're shaped out of gratitude. You're shaped out of security. You're drawn and propelled to change out of security, out of grace, out of generosity, out of love, out of mercy.

And that's what shapes you. And so the gospel comes to you and then change. And the gospel, what happens is that the Holy Spirit applies the gospel to deeper and deeper levels of our heart so we start to be able to change.

And some of you might say, but George, doesn't the Bible say you've got to crucify the flesh, you've got to pick up your cross and follow him. And are you saying that all desires are good?

And here, I'm just going to take a moment, I'm going to, like there's an elephant in the room, are you saying that gay desires are good? Are you saying transgender desires are good? And what about

terrorists and their desire to kill people?

[39 : 32] Are you saying that all desires are good? If you had thought of that question, that means that's a great question. It really is. It's a really good question. You have to come back next week and we'll answer it.

No, just joking. Just very, very, very, very briefly. So here's the thing. Those things are in the Bible about crucifying the flesh and picking up your cross. But we need to think about two different things. First of all, some desires that we have are idols. That's why I said in my point up there that the Lord is going to reorder your desires.

And by that I mean there's nothing wrong for a young man or a young woman to have ambition to want to be able to get a good job. That's completely fine.

But it's not fine if all of a sudden getting more and more promotions and more and more money starts to become bigger and bigger and bigger part of your life. that desire has gotten disordered.

[40 : 34] It's gone out of order. It's become an idol. It's become a god. And one of the things that the gospel starts to do is it starts to put your order, your desires in some type of order with the desire for God first and having a proper desire for others and having desires to be generous and hospitable which is a natural human desire to be generous.

But if you get so consumed and make an idol out of money then that normal desire for generosity completely and utterly dies in you. And so what the gospel does the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit applies the gospel to your life your desires start to be reordered and put in a proper order so you're free.

Not so you don't have any desires but so you're free. I put to death idols and idolatrous desires inordinate desires but not normal desires to be able to make enough money to eat and to live and have a roof over my head.

The Lord doesn't kill those. And the other aspect of it is is that he purifies them because the problem isn't the desire but the object of the desire.

The problem isn't the desire the problem is the object of the desire. And often connected with idolatry but he purifies them as well.

[41 : 52] You see it's a normal human desire a proper desire to feel at peace with your body. To feel at peace with your body.

To be at home with it. And that's a hard thing for almost everybody here. Lots of us we're not at home with our body because our body is too skinny it's too fat it's too young it's too old not enough hair too much hair loosen the hair wish I had hair.

That's separate from other I don't want to be trivial about it but it's also connected to the whole problem of I don't feel like I'm a man and I feel like I'm something else and I have desire listen the Lord it's a natural very proper desire to feel at home in your body and the wisdom of the body because the Bible is deeply in favor of the body but my normal desire you see what the Bible will do is for those of us who struggle with feeling as if we're not the gender that our biology is is that the gospel starts to shape you it will start to heal you to love your body and love who you are and come to peace with it and it's a natural thing to desire sexual intimacy and the Lord will start to either shape you to be to realize that most of us spend a large part of our lives not in a sexual partnership many never enter into it and many are in it just for a season but their husband or their wife dies before they do and they spend many many years single and the ordering of desires is there's other things which are higher and there's ways of coming to the Lord and crying out to him for those unfulfilled desires but more importantly is that at some point in time in your discipleship the ordering of your desire what it is that you long for will fit with what your body is because it's part of God's good creation for you and so you see this text in the very ordinariness of desires like Buddhism would say desire is the problem religion and spirituality of almost every stripe says that a key part to being godly is to kill your desires but we see here a celebration of ordinary desires which is good because you and me having a body isn't a mistake it's not an error it's not something we have to get over and the gospel shapes us to have our identity in him and to start to learn to be at peace with our body could you all stand please

I know I've said some controversial things I'm fine with pushback but the main thing is I just want you to understand this as we go our different way is that the big thing here is this story is helping us to understand who Jesus is that he comes to you today as the redeemer that's who he comes to you as the redeemer your big insoluble problem he will be your redeemer and you have other lesser but still very important insoluble problems and he will be your redeemer and if you have not given

your life to Christ there's no better time now than to call out to him and say Jesus be my redeemer I humbly just be my redeemer and for those of us who are dealing with some very insoluble problems the bible here is inviting us to call out to him and say

Lord you have been my redeemer and the big thing and the eternal thing I have this anger problem I have this greed problem I have this lack of generosity problem I have this workaholism problem I really need your help please be my redeemer there's no better time than now to call out to him and do that business with the Lord let's pray Father thank you that you are gentle with us thank you that you do shake us grab us by the shirt and shake us sometimes but that you are you are kind you are good and we thank you that Jesus has come to redeem Father you know those insoluble problems going on in our lives right now you know it better than we do and we just invite and give you permission to come and work in us in a powerful and deep way to apply the gospel to our lives that we might know that you are the redeemer and we ask

[46 : 48] Father especially because I brought it up that you help us to be at home in our body that you heal us in our embodied existence and that's really Father I know that for many of us that's a complicated multifaceted prayer but we just thank you that you will not leave us you will not abandon us you will not forsake give up on us that you will redeem us and so we ask you to come and be our redeemer and this we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen