

A Gospel Shaped Life

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] We ask, Father, that your word would grip us. We know, Father, that it's impossible for us to read your word day by day and always have it grip us. And we ask, Father, that for those of us who are in Jesus, you would help us to hear part of your word and read part of your word every day.

But now, Father, as we gather around your word, we ask that you would bring your word home to us, that you would help us, Father, to be honest with ourselves and honest with you in light of your word.

And we ask that your Holy Spirit, Father, would bring Jesus very close to us as we hear your word. And we ask that Jesus would just have his way in the very center of our lives and to the very end of our lives.

And we ask this in Jesus's name. Amen. Please be seated. So because I watch Netflix and Amazon Prime and I'm always looking for a good show to find, it's not uncommon that around the family and with other places that people will say, somebody will say to me, oh, George, you know, you should watch this movie.

And if my kids are there and if they've seen the movie or heard of it, they'll often very, very quickly say, actually, I'm going to turn from this mic to this mic. Done? Perfect.

[1 : 15] Anyway, so one of the things my kids will often say when somebody recommends a movie to me is they'll say, Dad is not going to like this movie because nobody gets shot and nobody dies. And so they think I only like movies.

I mean, I have to confess. Okay, don't do what I say, okay? This is confession. I like watching Die Hard at Christmastime. I mean, you know, what can I say?

Like they're a little bit, it's not as if my children do not know me, okay? Okay, so, and so anyway, and another thing they would say about me is that I generally don't like romantic comedies.

So I know I've just alienated a large group of the room, but that's just, you know, full disclosure time. So one of the problems we have today, if you're just a guest, we're going through the Gospel of Ruth, not the Gospel, the Gospel of Ruth, yeah.

We're going through the Book of Ruth, and we're going to read it in a moment. If you have your Bibles, you might want to start looking for it. It's a teeny tiny little book between Judges and 1 Samuel, which are bigger. Those of you who don't have your Bibles, the text is going to be on the screen in a couple of minutes as we start to read through it.

[2 : 22] And so one of the ways to think of the Book of Ruth is as if you watched a Netflix special with four separate episodes. So each episode is its own episode, but all four of the episodes tell a bigger story.

So each episode tells a story, but all four episodes together tell a bigger story, and that's a way to understand it. And it's also a bit of a challenge for me preaching because, well, you know, because there's a bigger story.

But anyway, so here's the thing is last week's story, where we were, if you missed last week. Well, last week's story, I mean, that was actually people died. So, you know, I liked it.

No, it's terrible. So in last week's story, we get introduced to Naomi and her husband and her two sons, and they go to, they leave Bethlehem because there's a famine, and they go to Moab, and they take their two sons.

And they get to Moab, which is an ancient enemy of Israel, and they're Jewish people, and they go to this place where they go to their enemies, so to speak. But while they're there, first of all, Naomi's husband dies.

[3 : 26] Her two sons take wives in Moab, and then the two sons die, and there's no other sons to Naomi, and both of her kids, her sons and their wives, have no children.

And in that ancient world, they have just about died. They have hit the bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the bottom. And Naomi hears that the Lord has visited his people back in Judah, in Israel, and so she says she's going to go back.

And as she's going back, she ends up having several very frank talks with her daughters-in-law, whom she loves, and they love her. And she says, listen, don't be fools. My life is over.

At first, she does something which is quite faithful. She's quite faithful. She sort of has this, like, way advanced sort of sense that the Lord will even bless them, even though they're in Moab, which is quite—we talked about it last week.

I won't go back into it again. But, you know, the Lord can bless you in Moab, but you need to go back. You're still young enough to have husbands and have a life and have a future. My life sucks, and my life is terrible.

[4 : 31] I will only drag you down. Don't come with me. Horpa agrees with Naomi's diagnosis and goes home. Ruth does this remarkable act, and we talked about it last week.

I will go with you wherever you live, wherever you stay, wherever you walk. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. And I will stay in your land, worshiping your God.

Even after you die, nothing will ever make me leave you. And ultimately, in the day, leave the Lord. And it's quite a remarkable speech. But as the story goes on, other two remarkable things in the story is that Naomi just blasts God and says, God, my life sucks, and it's all your fault.

And she says it twice. And then when she gets back to Bethlehem, she actually tells everybody, you can no longer call me Naomi, which means pleasure and pleasant. You have to call me Mara, which means bitter.

And then she gives it. That's the second zinger. Because God has made my life completely and utterly bitter. And that's how the story ends. So that, you know, it's a bit of a shocking thing to realize that for a lot of religious and spiritual people and for a lot of Christians to believe that God actually allowed, actually had that recorded, this blast against him, had it recorded twice.

[5 : 52] And so now we're going to look at Act 2, the second part of the story. And here's the problem. It's a romantic comedy. Now, why is that a problem, some of you say?

Well, I mean, the problem is, I mean, this could be made by Disney, this next part. This isn't X-rated. This is, I mean, not that that stops Disney anymore. But that's, you know, it's just, it's like a romantic comedy.

It's, we just look at it and go, oh, yeah. Yeah. So the poor young thing meets a rich guy. And there's really, it's a bit blah.

But there's something else going on here. So let's at least look at the story now that I've warned you that you're going to find it. I mean, some of you are going to say, well, I could see how they could make that into a script. And it could turn into a bit of a love story and all that.

And as those of you who know the rest of the next two chapters, a love story does develop. But this is the beginning of it. It's like a rom-com. It doesn't seem very serious. Okay. And it doesn't seem very, like, real to real life.

[6 : 55] It seems a bit fairy tale-ish. Well, let's look at the story. Okay. So turn to Ruth 2. And those of you who don't have Bibles or just would rather look at the screen, let's look at the screen and see how the story goes.

And here's how it goes. Now, Naomi had a relative of her husband's, a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And we'll just pause here.

Just so you don't get confused in the story, what the writer does, the story is set, what the writer does is he lets the reader know something that the actors don't know.

Okay. Okay. That's what you need to understand. He's telling us, but Ruth doesn't hear this. The writer, we don't have to know if the writer is a he or a she, by the way.

I shouldn't say he. But the author of the story lets us know something that one of the characters, one of the key characters doesn't know. Okay. That's how the craft works.

[7 : 51] Verse 2. And Ruth, the Moabite, said to Naomi, let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor.

And Naomi said to Ruth, go, my daughter. And just sort of pause here for a second. And the story is going to mention quite a few times to remind us that she's from Moab.

And just those of you who weren't here last week or you don't remember, when the Israelites tried to, when they would talk about who the Moabite people are, they'd say, well, listen, what can you expect?

Because the way the Moabite nation was founded was a man got drunk, had sex with his daughter, and the daughter got pregnant. And that was the guy who started Moab.

Like, what can you expect of such a people? And they've always been our enemies. So this story is going to mention quite a few times this episode that Ruth is from Moab.

[8 : 57] So it wants us to remember one moment, this is who Ruth is in the eyes of the Jewish people who were there. And it's going to come up that they recognize that that's where she's from as well.

And they just want the reader to recognize this. The other thing, which is that there's no answer about it in the text, but it looks as if Naomi has given up on life. Because Naomi doesn't say, that's a really good idea to go glean.

Let's go do it together. She says, you go. And Naomi does absolutely nothing whatsoever. Ruth's going to do all the work.

So Naomi has continued to have given up on life. She's living in a desert. Her life is as good as dead. And she is doing nothing to deal with it. She is completely and utterly depressed.

But Ruth recognizes the need that they're going to have to get some food. So she says, let me go out and have a chance to glean. And in the ancient world, what she could have, even in places like Moab, that after you've got the barley and everything like that, there's always something left behind.

[10 : 05] They don't get 100% of it. So you can go and see what's left behind. And what she might or might not know is that in the Old Testament law, there were specific rules around how harvesters were to harvest because God in his law wanted to provide for the poor.

And so God in his law, if you were, in fact, an observant, faithful Jewish person at this time, you would have known that you intentionally leave extra grain untouched at the edges.

And it's your goal. In fact, if you got 100% of the grain, you were disobeying God. God didn't want you to get 100% of the grain. He wants you to leave some of the grain behind so the poor and the dispossessed could have grain to eat.

She might or might not have known that. The story doesn't tell you. But she uses that word. So she sets off. And she doesn't really know where she's going. It's not that big.

But she just sets off. Like, I know the harvest is going on. I'll just see if there's some good fields. And the story continues in verse 3. So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers.

[11 : 13] And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz. Boaz, our ears pick up because Boaz is a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech. She happens to come to the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech.

Now, just pause here another game. This story is going slow. But there's actually some depth here in the story. In the original language, when it says happened to, you know how it says up there, she happened to come to the part of the field?

In the original language, it says she chanced to chance. It says chanced twice. She chanced to chance. And it's a literary device to try to emphasize the opposite.

Oh, yeah. Like, she happened to come to this field. Like, that's in a sense how you read it. She happened to come to this field because what they want you to know is that it wasn't just chance.

I'm not going to talk about it very much today because it's going to come up in the next episode, so to speak. But what's at work here in this story is that on one level, God is never mentioned. But what the author has just done here by saying, well, she just happened to come to that field is, no, it's not just happening.

[12 : 28] It's providence. Providence. God is acting behind the scenes to nudge her in a particular direction because he's at work in her life.

He's working anonymously in her life. You see, the main way that God works in a Christian's life is anonymously. In heaven, we will discover how many times our prayers were answered.

You know, Lord, keep my family safe. And then we'll find out that God caused somebody to, caused you to stop for a pedestrian. If you hadn't stopped for a pedestrian, you would have gone through a light and had a car accident. I mean, I don't know what it is.

But you'll discover how many times, in fact, God has been answering your prayers and active in your life, but he does it in an anonymous way. And that's what the story is signaling. God is working anonymously in this story, in particular in the story of Boaz and Ruth and Naomi.

It's a very important and comforting thought that God works anonymously in our lives. It means he works gently and respectfully.

[13 : 33] Some of you have heard, the start of my journey that led to me becoming a Christian was when I was walking down Elgin Street.

And as I'm walking down Elgin Street, I saw a poster that captured my eye. And this was a long, long time ago when Christians didn't have rock music.

I know it's hard for young people to believe. Ask some of the old timers. If back in the old days, if you'd seen a Christian rock concert, well, first of all, for some of the old timers, they didn't know what rock, they hadn't been rock music yet.

But for not quite as old timers, Christian rock, and by providence, that poster caught my eye. By providence, I went down Elgin Street.

I didn't go down O'Connor. I didn't go down Metcalf. I didn't go down Bank where there were no posters. I went down the street. I noticed the poster out of all the posters. I went to the event. It was the beginning of my journey to becoming a conference.

[14 : 31] That's providence. That's providence. So the writer is saying, okay, guys, just listen. God is acting anonymously in this story.

And then it continues. Verse 4. And this is part of the providence. Because it wouldn't be that Boaz showed up every day. But as part of the providence, not only, you know, she goes to this field, this field, this field.

She ends up following this field. And they haven't kicked her off. And by providence, she's there. And by providence, Boaz shows up. Because the guy who's like the boss of the boss of the boss of the boss of the boss, as you know, doesn't always show up in a particular workplace.

But he shows up at this workplace this day when Ruth is there at the very, very beginning of the barley harvest. Verse 4. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem.

And he said to the reapers, the Lord be with you. And they answered, the Lord bless you. Now, just pause here again. This is actually going to be just a bit of an aside about why this is a bit significant.

[15 : 34] What this show, first of all, in Ottawa, we can all relate to this. The first thing it shows is unlike some hockey teams where the players don't like the owner. I don't know where that would be.

In this case, it shows that the workers like the owner. But the more important thing is it's setting a tone. Boaz is obviously working to set a tone for how people talk and how the workplace works.

When my kids were all younger and I had all nine of them at home, occasionally we would have bouts of name calling. I know that's hard to believe. That kids would call each other names. And I'd have to have a bit of a talk with them.

And I'd say, listen, you have to have a bit of a decision here about the type of house you want to live in. Do you want to live in a house where everybody calls each other names? And where it's completely and utterly miserable?

Or do you want to live in a house where that doesn't happen? Where it's not miserable? Like the choice is yours. And my kids were great kids, still are great kids. And I mean, they're kids.

[16 : 35] I'd have to have the talk more than once. But they'd understand that if you go ahead, and I can't say some of the words from the pulpit that they would say to each other. If that's the heir of the house, it's going to be a toxic type of household.

And so what Boaz is doing here, he's putting the Lord at the center of the workplace. A Lord who blesses. A Lord who greets. He's at the center of the workplace. So it's actually quite significant.

Anyway, so verse 5. Then Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers. This is not reapers in a firefly sense, by the way, for those of you with a pop cultural reference.

These are people who bring in grain. Okay. He says to the reapers, whose young woman is this? And I just pause. So maybe some of you have brought your seeker friend who's never been to a church, and they come to a line like this and go, Oh, dang.

Here we go. I'm going to have a conversation afterwards. Yes, the Bible tries to tell Christians that women are just property. You know, whose woman is this?

[17 : 44] As if she's not her own woman. Like, why can't she be her own woman? Why does the Bible try to talk as if women are just property of men? That's not what's going on at all. I grew up in Montreal.

When I moved to Ottawa, I had a hard time adjusting because I felt like we'd moved to a small city. And I eventually got over it. And then my first place as a minister was in the suburbs of Ottawa.

And then after that, I went to Eganville with 1,300 people. And I also looked after a little church in Killaloo with 700 people. And I looked after two other little churches, one in Traymore and Klontarf with zero people.

I used to joke you could go to Klontarf at just about any time of the day, close your eyes with an assault rifle, a Kalashnikov rifle, and fire a full clip around you and not hit anything other than maybe a deer.

And, you know, eight people would show up on a Sunday. And I cared for that. They were my congregation. I was their pastor. But here's the thing which took me a long time to understand when I was in a rural church.

[18 : 52] And for those of you from rural areas or those of you from other countries, is I had a hard time getting used to the fact that you never just met somebody. Like, Denise would not just introduce me to Delmer.

Delmer. She would say, Delmer is married to Jan, who is... You got it, right? And everybody.

That's how all the introductions worked. It was never just... You know, in Ottawa, you don't do that. You don't say, hi, this is Gary. You know, he's... Well, in fact, Gary's related to nobody in Ottawa. I mean, other than through Lynn, right?

And it would look weird. But that's how rural people do. For many people, you could, you know, ask some people who are immigrants here. That's probably how in many other cultures it works. You always establish the family connections.

And that's what Ruth... That's what Boaz is doing. Who is that person? Like, who... Like, help me to fit her in. Is she, you know, Bob's cousin's, you know, wife's sister or something, right?

[19 : 51] But you always establish that. And that's what he's trying to do. It's not trying to tell us that women are being treated as property. And so she... And verse 6, go back to verse 6. And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, She is the young Moabite woman, there's that word, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

She said, Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. So she came and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest. In other words, she's been a very, very hard worker.

Now, probably what's happened is that Ruth has gone to different fields and they've kicked her off. But this particular manager, because he understands that Boaz is actually trying to keep what the law says and have it formed...

He wants... That Boaz wants the Lord and the Lord's word to form Boaz's life and Boaz's workplace. This manager has allowed the woman to glean. And now I guess, in a sense, what's Boaz going to do?

And his answer is actually quite remarkable. I have... I'm actually a very shy person. That the Lord...

[20 : 57] After I became a Christian, about three months after I became a Christian, I actually started a Christian club in my high school. I mean, how cool was that? That's what everybody said.

You're supposed to laugh at that. Christian clubs, like, go right up there with the chess club and the cello club in terms of coolness in a high school. Okay? Like, to start a Christian club at your high school is to tell everybody, put a big tattoo on your forehead, this man is not cool.

Anyway, and on top of it, I had very, very, very bad acne. I was very shy. And I knew that when you had a Christian club, you had to open the Bible. Nobody else would do it, so I would do it. And that was the beginning of what turned into me becoming a pastor.

But I... Anyway, so you... All of us have been in situations where we're out of our comfort zone. We're in a gathering. Maybe it's in a different country, a different culture, just a different subculture.

And somehow or another, we get in there, and we're not sure how anything works. Like, I... This sounds so crazy, but the first time I went into a place in England, I sat down, because in Canada, the waitress comes to you.

[22 : 05] And I sat there, and I'm getting more and more uncomfortable because everybody else... I discovered you have to go up to there. You go to the cash to get your meal, and the waitress brings it to you, but she doesn't come to take your order.

Anyway, you know what I mean. You go into a new situation. You don't really know what to do. Maybe you're with rich people. You don't know what to do. I remember I got invited to a \$500...

It was a \$1,000 a plate meal once because there was a person in the congregation who gave me the ticket and my wife. And we were a bit nervous.

Because I have no idea how to act at a \$1,000 a plate meal. I'm a McDonald's guy. Like, living it up is going to Subway. That's where the higher class people go, you know, where I feel a bit stretched, right?

And we felt very uncomfortable here. So you can just imagine Ruth. She doesn't really know what's going on. Listen how Boaz helps her in verse 8. Then Boaz said to Ruth, Now listen, my daughter.

[23 : 11] He's taking some responsibility for her. He doesn't say, Listen, you Moabite. Or he doesn't say, Oh, come on. Just make yourself at home and then leave. Leaving her completely and utterly helpless is what to do.

You know? But he says, Now listen, my daughter. Do not glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young woman.

He gives her a blank check into the future. Stay with me and stay close. Don't have to stay far away. Come as close. Come really close. And then verse 9. Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping and go after them.

Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? Long before the Me Too movement, this is a workplace where women are not to be sexually harassed.

Why? Because Boaz is being guided by the Word of God. The Word of God always forbids the harassment of the weak in general and women in particular.

[24 : 09] Always. Always, always, always, always. And he knows there's going to be an issue there because a lot of these young men are very unconverted. And he says, I've told the young men, you're not allowed to harass or touch or molest you.

And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn. So he said, you're welcome here. And not only are you welcome here, I want you to work close. And not only are you to work close, you're completely and utterly under my protection.

And not only are you under my protection, have as much water as you want. She knows how to function. It's a very, very kind and compassionate gesture. He's entered into her world. And it even gets deeper because, well, sorry, we jumped up the story a little bit.

So verse 10, then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner? And the bowing on her face, that's just a cultural moment.

Remember, one of the reasons that the Bible here mentions this story with all of its cultural particularity is because the Bible isn't about timeless, eternal truths that we just know.

[25 : 19] It's not about abstractions. It's at the heart of the Bible is the idea that God loves not the abstraction of George, not the abstraction of human beings, but God loves George, and God loves Andrew, and God loves Joey, and God loves Lynn, and God loves Alex, and he loves you in your particular story, in your particularity, and he wants you in your particular story to enter into his story and have his story change your story.

And so particularities are mentioned. Verse 11, but Boaz answered her, and this is very interesting, what he's going to tell her right now is I do this because the Lord wants me to do this, and in a sense he doesn't say, I'm doing this for my glory, I'm doing this to show you how cool I am.

You know, this is all the Lord's provision for you. The Lord wants to bless you, and he's just using me. Listen to how he puts it. All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and your mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.

The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel. Remember, they keep telling you she's a Moabite? Given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

By the way, this is really important. Bible, for those of you who might get confused outside of the context of here, it's very, very clear that you're only to use masculine pronouns for God.

[26 : 59] But, the Bible just compares God to a hen. Right? That's fine.

The Lord, the Almighty God, is like a hen, and you are like one of the chicks, and you find sucker and protection under the hen's wings.

Very close and intimate. And it just shows that, you know, there's some order of the images, but we're to use these type of maternal images for our Father God in terms of how he protects us and cares for us.

And then, verse 13, she responds, I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.

Now, just sort of pause. We're almost, we're sort of almost just through reading the story, and we haven't even got to the full significance of the story. Like, so far, I've brought out some of the details so that when you're reading the story, you can sort of understand some of the things going on here, but it does sound still like a little bit of a rom-com story, doesn't it?

[28 : 10] God acts in her life. For a lot of us, we'd say, well, that's sort of a very inspirational story. I know how Disney makes inspirational movies, and I feel inspired, but you know, George, the problem is that, I don't know, George, like, my, my life sucks, George, and I can watch all sorts of inspirational movies, and I feel good for a little bit, but then my life still sucks.

And I don't know if this story's going to do anything for me, George, because did I tell you that my life sucks? My life sucks. Well, it's still going to sound very rom-com-ish, but we need to go through the rest of the story, and then we'll show how this is actually a very important story for our lives.

Verse 14, at the meal, and at mealtime, Boaz says to Ruth, come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine. So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her, he passed to her roasted grain, and she ate until she was satisfied and had some left over.

One scholar says that at the time that this was written, you could divide Jewish society into 16 levels, 16 strata, and everybody would have known where they were, that it was a very stratified society.

It's a very, very common thing in ancient cultures to be very stratified. We try to pretend that there's no classes here, but there are social classes here, and there are other types of classes, but we try to pretend they aren't.

[29 : 41] But in the ancient world, they would have just said, yeah, there's classes. I'm of this class. You're of this class. You know, and if you're a high class, you just, the lower class people exist to serve you. And from the data, it's not clear whether Boaz is at number three or number four.

Number one's the highest. But what is clear is that Ruth is at 16. Ruth is at 16. Boaz, it's not clear whether he's three or four.

He's really high. Like, generally, she can't see that high. Right? And it's quite shocking for an ancient story that a number three or a number four is serving the number 16.

And the other thing, which is very shocking, which we don't get as shocking as, and by the way, the reason we don't find this shocking, the reason that, the reason that even if I was to read this at a coffee shop, and not a single person there was Christian, none of them would find this shocking.

The reason Canadians don't find this shocking is because whether Canadians realize it or not, these stories have changed how they understand the world. Every person I talk to at a coffee shop has been formed by the biblical worldview, even though they don't know it.

[30 : 55] Every single one of them. Because it's just not the way the ancient world would have worked. In the ancient world, Boaz wouldn't have allowed Ruth in the field.

Why? Because a dollar given to the poor is a dollar less for me. And if you do do it, you do it for your own glory. So people will sing your praises, not for her.

And if you do allow her here, it would be, listen, if you come and serve me, I'll give you a few scraps. But he serves her. And as we'll see in the story, he serves her and gives her more than she needs.

Verse 15, when she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, let her glean even among the sheaves and do not reproach her. And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean and do not rebuke her.

You see, what Boaz understands is that if you read the Old Testament, when it talks about the tithe, when it talks about leaving the borders, what it is, is God is, what God is doing is God is launching us on a trajectory.

[32 : 06] He's saying, if you start to understand that I am Jehovah Jireh, I am your great provider. If you start to understand that I have redeemed you out of the nation, out of Egypt and out of the house of slavery, I have redeemed you and you are mine and I am your God and I will care for you.

I want you to so be gripped by who I am and how I have rescued you that all of those natural tendencies within you to hoard, to be self-centered, to be miserly, that they will begin to die on you as you are gripped by how I have redeemed you and you start not only to do these few small acts of generosity, but you grow in generosity.

That it's not just a matter of, okay, I got that little tiny bit of generosity out of the way, but the Lord wants to so work to free you from having, from serving money and serving yourself and serving all of that that you start to learn the freedom of giving and blessing and Boaz has got it.

Boaz has got it. Let's just finish reading this story very quickly. It's already 32 minutes, but here's, so he's gone way beyond what has happened and he's told the whole workplace, you are to be generous with this woman.

Verse 17, so she gleaned in the field until evening and then she beat out what she had gleaned and it was about an ephra of barley, but basically she's gleaned enough for two people to live for two weeks.

[33 : 33] Okay, that's how you can understand it. She's gotten enough food for two people to live on for two weeks and she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.

Remember, bitter, sees what she's gleaned and she also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied so bitter has something extra to eat and her mother-in-law said to her, where did you glean today and where have you worked?

Blessed be the man who took notice of you. So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. Remember, we know that Boaz is somebody but she didn't know that until right now and Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, may he be blessed by the Lord whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead.

Naomi also said to her, the man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers and that's going to become an important word for the rest of the story but I'll leave that for next week and the week after.

And Ruth the Moabite said, remember, they want us to remember, besides he said to me, you shall keep close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it is good my daughter that you go out with his young women lest in another field you be assaulted.

[34 : 47] So Ruth kept close to the young woman of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvest. So for eight weeks, seven or eight weeks, she stayed there. And if at six, you can just do the math, if six days a week she was getting enough for two people to live on for two weeks, you can do the math.

At the end of this process, Boaz has been remarkably generous to her. And she has provided, Boaz and Ruth have provided for Naomi and Ruth to live for the whole year and to be able to trade and have some leftover, have elbow room.

And Ruth continues to live with her mother-in-law. So, okay, so here we go. We spent a lot of time. You've got the story sort of straight. So could you put up the first point, Andrew? Here's how we start to unpack this, you know, because it does just sound like this is a, you know, a romance movie.

It's an inspirational movie. You know, I took out a movie from the library about a cowboy who breaks his back and ends up, you know, getting new meaning in life.

It's an inspirational movie. I haven't taken it. I haven't watched it yet. Maybe I won't because I have to return it tomorrow. But it's like, just sounds like an inspirational thing. But here's the thing which is really important about this story.

[36 : 01] Ruth isn't trapped in the circle or by fate or by the gods. Instead, by the Lord's providence, Ruth is living a different story, a resurrection-shaped story.

So, you see, here's the thing that we don't quite appreciate about older stories. Like, you know, we watch something like The Lion King and they have all this wonderful thing about the circle of life and all of that and everything just seems happy and all that.

But here's the thing. In the ancient world, the circle is a trap. You are stuck. In fact, the circle is depressing because you know what the circle tells you? You live and then you die.

Don't ever forget that. You live and then you die. It's just a circle. You live and then you die. No hope.

You're stuck. And we like movies like The Lion King because we imagine that we're the prince. We don't realize that the circle is used in all of the ancient stories in all of the ancient world to justify servants being servants forever.

[37 : 14] If your life sucks, it's going to suck until you die if I'm a high caste person because it's the circle.

or it's just fate. You're fated to die or the gods are mad at you and you're all, you're just a puppet. And those are all the options.

And in this story, we see something which, like literary scholars, talk about how in the Old and the New Testament a completely different idea emerges into the consciousness of the world.

That it's not just that we're sort of stuck in this endless circle of death and rebirth. It's not that we're stuck in some type of a fate, but that you can change your destiny. You can be like me and be, and my dad and my mom had grade 8 education.

Grade 8 education. I have a master's degree. I have a professional job. I have a respectable job. And a lot of you can tell the same type of story.

[38 : 17] And you tell people, you know, what do they say at every high school graduation? Every single high school grad. None of them say, it's a circle of life. Your life sucks. You're going to die. What do they say?

They say, follow your dreams. They say, the world isn't just a fate. It's not just a circle. You're not trapped with where you are. If your life sucks, it won't suck after you just pick up the ball and whatever and grab your talents and live your dream.

And that's what they say at every single high school. Every single high school story is not based on the basic myths and understanding of the ancient world and today.

Because what is it working today? What does a serious movie look like today? Especially when you look at movie reviewers and movie reviewers want to show that they're not just fluffy promotional hacks, but they're serious.

So they have a couple of the movies they have to put in, you know, because let's say when the first Guardians of the Galaxy came out, it like made a gazillion dollars and everybody loved it and it laughed, so you have to put it in there. But you also include the serious movies.

[39 : 17] And what's a serious movie? Justice doesn't happen and you die. I Love Tanya is a serious movie. If you watch that movie, her life sucks.

Her life sucks, her life sucks, her life sucks, and at the end you discover that her life really does suck. It's a serious movie. Why is it a serious movie?

Because what do we really know? What do serious thinkers know? What do serious thinkers know? Is that death wins. What do serious thinkers know? Serious thinkers know that everything is a result of time and chance.

The strong eat the weak and you die. So yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You can have your inspirational stuff and everything like that. And here's the other thing, by the way. The non-serious movies make a billion dollars and the serious movies that the critics love make 15 million dollars.

Why? We now know at the deepest levels, even if we don't know how they can possibly be true, we want those stories to be true. We want the high school graduation speeches to be true.

[40 : 25] We want it to be that we're not just on some wheel of fate that's going to eventually crush us. That we're not trapped. We want a resurrection story to be true.

So, in fact, actually, if you think about it, if a modern filmmaker just made Ruth one, the serious critics would say, that's a real story.

She ends up with nothing, cursing God. Yes! And for all 5,000 people on the planet who watched it, that's yes.

And Ruth two just blows it. Oh, standard rom-com stuff. Young thing meets rich guy. Come on. Fairy tale, Santa Claus, Easter bunny, great pumpkin.

Not serious. But here's the thing that's going on, you see. If you could put up the next point, Andrew. Canadians do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but they love resurrection-shaped stories.

[41 : 29] Right? Canadians do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but they love resurrection-shaped stories. You see, what's happening for Canadians is this. This sermon series is called Upside Down.

If you just, for a second, don't see the words there, all those buildings are standing on nothing. All those buildings are standing on, oh, thank you, I didn't know you could do that.

All those buildings are standing on nothing. You see, we want a resurrection story without the resurrection. We find the resurrection offensive. But we now come to understand that our resurrection story got to be true.

It's got to be true. Because gosh, it sucks if life sucks is the only thing that's true. If death wins, you know, if justice never wins, if right and wrong, just, if wrong wins, and so we believe this inspirational stuff, but we're stuck in a culture where we have resurrection stories with no resurrection.

And so the serious people say that's illusion. Your life just sucks. Can you put up the next point, Andrew? Because the resurrection of Jesus is true, the story of your life can become a resurrection story.

[42 : 56] Because the resurrection of Jesus is true, the story of your life can become a resurrection story. You see, that's what's going on here in Ruth, is this story, the ancient world, they would have been used to the idea that you're just a puppet in the hands of angry gods.

They would have been used to the sense that there's stories of how the fates are going to eventually have you die. They're used to the stories of the circle of life. And your life sucks and then you die. But this story is starting to be something which is very revolutionary and it's preparing us for the day when a man named Jesus is born and lives an anonymous life for 30 years.

And then he has a three-year public ministry and he does remarkable things like raise the dead by a mere voice of command. And he does remarkable teachings. And then shock of shocks, a man who could feed 5,000 from a few barley loaves and fishes and we thought that he would be somebody different.

And he dies on the cross and it looks as if the story is completely and over. And on the third day in a real place, in a real city, a real number of years ago, on the third day the tomb is completely and utterly empty just as he prophesied and predicted.

And then he starts to show himself to lots of people and the word comes out that the body cannot be found and the only explanation is that this man in a completely new way, still recognizable but a completely new way, he actually has risen from the dead.

[44 : 20] It's true. And this casts this bright light all the way back to all the Old Testament stories. Ruth is preparing us for a resurrection story.

Ruth is living a story where she is as good as dead. You see, it's not so much that the stories are linear but the Bible story starts up here and there's a death and then it goes like this.

Right? That's what inspirational stories are like, right? They're sort of like a check mark. They go right up and to the right. And this is saying the reason we love resurrection stories is that God was preparing our hearts for the resurrection of his son.

And here's the thing is that it means that wherever you are if you've given your life to Jesus he, you know, there's nothing you can do about your past but no matter what your past is the rest of your life can be shaped and marked by the resurrection of Jesus.

Now this isn't a health and wealth gospel story. It's not saying that it means that you're going to have lots of money and all of a sudden you know, all of us guys are going to look like George Clooney or Brad Pitt or a younger version of them or Paul Newman and you know, all the women are going to look like you know, pick your actress I picked a guy analogy on purpose and you know, you're all going to be rich and you're all going to be athletes like Usain Bolt and all that type of stuff.

[45 : 54] No, it's not a health and wealth text. But it means like even Ruth at the very bottom of the social level that she's going to be able to do something as happens in this story that makes Boaz stop and bless the Lord.

And give him all the credit and just wow him with the goodness of God. It means that at the center of your story you can start to look you're dying, you're dying, you're dying, you're in the desert but resurrection is possible.

God is in the resurrection story business. And it might just be that God uses you in whatever that desert space is for a period of time that you start to have a sense of his presence and his providence in the midst of it in such a way that it inspires others or it brings you into a new depth of pride.

I don't know what it is but you see at the heart of a resurrection story is a surprise not fate. And I say this because it's not a high school graduation but it's because Jesus actually did rise from the dead and the story of Jesus and the story of the gospel is to be the story of your life.

Can you put up the final point, Andrew, please? The gospel shapes you to shape the world in a gospel shape. The gospel shapes you to shape your world in a gospel shape.

[47 : 14] See, what we need, this is why we read the Bible. This is why we need to have friends who are Christians. This is why we need to be in small groups where we start to learn how to do life together.

This is why we come to church on a Sunday morning and the telling of the gospel is always to be central. Because what we need is not for me to tell you new rules or new techniques.

You know what we need? We need God and his kindness to have the Holy Spirit bring the gospel home to deeper levels of who we are. That's what I need.

I need God's Holy Spirit to day by day and week by week and month by month bring the gospel home to a deeper level of who I am so it touches more and more of who I am.

The story of the gospel, that God loves me, that he has done everything to make me right with him, that all of my sins have been dealt with on the cross and all of the righteousness I need to stand at the banquet table of my God and my king at the end of days, all of that righteousness has been given to me by Jesus and that when I put my hand in the hand of Jesus, he will never let me go.

[48 : 29] And the world might tell me that my life is going to suck. The world might tell me my football coach, my dad, my mom, my wife, my friend, they all might tell me that failure will be the final word about me.

But when I put my hand in the hand of Jesus, he will never let me go and the final word about me will not be failure. And that's true of you.

And it's not because I'm an optimist. It's because this is what the Bible teaches. The final word about the person who puts their hand in the hand of Jesus will be, welcome.

I have been looking forward to walking with you face to face. That is the final word about the least person who puts their hand in the hand of Jesus.

Let's stand. Let's stand. Bow our heads in prayer.

[49 : 35] Father, there are some of us here who really are in a desert place. And Father, you know there are some of us here, we've been in a desert place for quite a long time.

And Father, we thank you so much that you know them and you love them and that desert isn't going to be the final word about you. Ask Father that your Holy Spirit for every single one of us who is here that your Holy Spirit would bring the gospel close to us.

That every single one of us, Father, that your Holy Spirit would make the gospel more real to us. That for every single one of us that you would have the gospel, the story of Jesus and who he is and what he's done for us and what he's won for us and it's all by faith.

That that would start to shape us. That it would shape our desert, it would shape our lamentation and our calling out to you, it would shape our prayers, it would shape us to look for surprising ways by which you will bring new life and you will help us to die to idols that make our lives seem even more bitter and even more deserted and that we might start to see those different ways that you are bringing life into our world and will use us to bring life to others unworthy as we are.

So Father, we know that we need you. We know, Father, that we need the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel ever closer to us and to write the gospel and make it more real to us day by day as we live.

[51 : 05] And so we call out to you who love us. You are our Father who loves us. You want us to pray and we call out to you and we ask for this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.