

There is a Redeemer

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[0 : 0 0] hi good morning everyone please turn with me to Ruth chapter 2 as we continue the story of Naomi and Ruth Ruth chapter 2 now Naomi had a relative of her husband's a worthy man of the clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz 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 she said to her go my daughter so she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz who is of the clan of Elimelech and behold Boaz came from Bethlehem and he said to the reapers the Lord be with you and they answered the Lord bless you then

Boaz said to his young man who was in charge of the reapers who was it whose young woman is this and the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered she is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab she said please let me glean and gather among the sheaves of the reapers so she came and she has continued from early morning until now except for a short break then Boaz said to Ruth now listen my daughter do not go to glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young women let your eyes beyond the field that they are reaping go after them have I not charged the young men not to touch you and when you are thirsty go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn then she fell on a 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 but Boaz answered her 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 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 to you by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge then she said I have found favor in your eyes my Lord for you have comforted me and has spoken kindly to your servant though I am not one of your servants and at mealtime Boaz said to her come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine so she sat beside the reapers and he passed to her roasted grain and she ate until she was satisfied and she had some left over 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 so she gleaned in the field until evening then she beat out what she had gleaned it was about an ephah of barley and she took it up and went into the city her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned she also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied 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 worked today is Boaz and Naomi said to her a 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 Ruth the Moabite said besides he said to me you shall keep close to 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 men met with young women lest in another field you be assaulted so she kept close to the young women of Moab leaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests and she lived with her mother-in-law okay just as we uh as we begin on um the story of Ruth 2 which we've heard read out and then acted out with toys um we're going to walk through that story but i need to lay some background for it particularly if you weren't here last uh with us last week but um there is a there's a kind of an undercurrent throughout this particular chapter of danger Ruth and Naomi have made already made an arduous journey uh and a costly journey in leaving Moab and moving through to um to return to the promised land to Israel but in doing that they've left behind everything

they had they would have gone with what they could carry they turned up in a country that was naomi's own but but certainly not ruth's and um they turned up as widows with no no men to support or protect them so they were in an incredibly vulnerable state so to help us to get a bit of a sense of what that might have been like i've prepared a short video which we're going to watch now and and it gives you just a snapshot into what it's like uh to live as a woman in the 21st century where you know calling a calling the police is is just like a few minutes the police are a few minutes away an ambulance is a few minutes away we live in a very safe world and yet still uh women feel vulnerable so let's just share some of those ways we're going to look at um the particular vulnerabilities of um of ruth um of ruth and that was that she was female and that she was foreign in the in the land of israel so let's have a look at that video now one of the times i feel most vulnerable as a woman is when i'm walking home um to get to my car from the university library um it's dark and i will often have my car keys um in my hand ready to go and ready to hop in my car and unlock the door when i walk home from my bus stop uh at night it's pretty dark and poorly lit so um yeah i feel vulnerable especially when there's someone walking behind me and i will even go to the point of pretending to check my bag just so that so they will walk past and so that there's no one walking behind me and i feel a lot more comfortable times that i would feel most vulnerable would be coming home to an empty house um that's at night and it's dark and walking back to my car after say um having dinner with friends uh but i'm on my own when i moved from australia to england one of the hardest things was to leave my family especially my twin sister and also all my friends and i had to start all over again it's been really hard recently as my mom's health has been declining um i'm not able to go across and help her as i'd like to do and and that's really tough i feel like i have two homes but to be honest i don't feel completely at home in either my name is cindy i'm a born and bred chinese came into australia 15 years ago after 15 years of integration overcoming language and culture barriers my biggest struggle is still to form a meaningful and truthful relationship with other people i tend to feel like a misfit in many social settings and i guess that's probably because i'm so out of touch being a chinese and probably will never be blue enough to be called an aussie even after marrying one okay thank you for that and thanks for persevering with that too i hope that gives you a bit of a snapshot into to what it's like to live as a woman in this world in particular and from the perspective of being female and being foreign there's a certain vulnerability that comes with that and uh it's a challenging one to live with it's one that ruth and um that ruth in particular would have been living with all the time 24 7 as soon as she uh left her family and and moved into israel this would have been her life uh she would have had nothing she was started with nothing and she would have been an incredibly vulnerable state but this chapter begins with a with a it's just a ray of hope in in this um there is a redeemer and we see that in the um the first verse where this man is a certain man is introduced we read in verse one now naomi had a relative of her husband's a worthy man of the clan of elimelech whose name was boaz this up front introduction is a kind of a it's a device that storytellers use it's a signal for us to watch out for this guy and here's why he's a relative of naomi's he's of the same clan as elimelech that's the ephraimites which we know from last week means fruitfulness and he's a potential kinsman redeemer now that's something that uh that doesn't come to the fore at this stage just the fact that he's a close relative the people who first listened to this story and um as it was handed down and uh who read it uh would have known exactly what this meant uh for us it's a bit of a a bit of a jump for us to work out what that relationship actually means but then beyond that we read about his character he's a worthy man worthy means um more more commonly is translated as physically mighty or materially rich or morally upright so that's the character of this particular guy and then his name is boaz and boaz as far as we can tell it's kind of an obscure word um but we we think it means quickness when i say we i mean the boffins i just listen to them but but what we can gather from this is that boaz is an impressive man despite all that though ruth doesn't know any of this she has no idea who he is and no expectation that he or anyone else will help because as we see from her identity ruth is a moabite and in verse 2 we can read these words 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 it's ruth chapter 2 ruth is not just a moabite she is the moabite boaz is um boaz is worthy we read in in these um first verses but ruth is moabite now i don't think we can underestimate the hostility between israel and moab moab moab was synonymous with enemy it used to appear in the lists of um of of enemies of israel that the prophets used to prophesy against and you can see for an example of that and say isaiah 25 10 moabites were never to be included in the assembly of god's people even the egyptians who enslaved israel actually they got a three generation uh kind of buffer zone but then they're actually allowed in the

moabites never they weren't even to be treated with kindness we read and if you have a look at um deuteronomy 23 verses 3 to 6 you'll actually see that spelled out in deuteronomy which is the book of the covenants so the storyteller as he tells his

[12:31] story about um ruth he stacks these truths next to each other and he does it on purpose we're supposed to hear them and see the gulf between naomi and boaz yes there's a redeemer but naomi is too old and ruth is disqualified but we also learn in these verses first verse that ruth isn't just a foreigner she's a faithful friend and look at how um how ruth responds to a situation she knows it and she knows they'll starve if they don't do something and for her the barley harvest is her opportunity to act so ruth asks to glean now as boaz already pointed out gleaning is legal and we saw that in deuteronomy 24 you can also look up leviticus 19 verses 9 to 10 and that'll show you a similar kind of teaching this is god's loving provision for the poor and the foreigner in the midst of the israelites but gleaning is also dangerous especially for ruth and this note of danger is provides a context or a backdrop for the whole chapter ruth ruth knows that she has to find favor to have any chance and naomi only agrees because she knows that they have no choice and in the midst of all this comes a chance encounter in verse 3 we read what she does ruth so ruth set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers and she happened to come to come to a part of the field belonging to boaz who was at the clan of elimelech verse 3 this verse represents a journey that we can really easily overlook ruth happens to come to a part of the field belonging to boaz because every other field she tried sent her packing and while she's gleaning boaz turns up and can i just say it seems like a chance encounter but chance in this story is presented as the hidden hand of god god doesn't overtly act in this story he acts powerfully in and through the lives of his people so we glimpse god in boaz's character from the start too through his greeting he says the lord be with you and that with the response from his workers and you know and the lord bless you and that may probably probably it's a standard green you know like we say g'day but in the context of ruth and the fact that this is the first time we see anything like this suggested it's something more that we're getting a glimpse into who boaz is and we also see his character through his fatherly presence the way he speaks or the way that he is addressed in relation to the other people in the story you know young man young woman and daughter boaz is a mature older man and his kindness radiates like warmth from the pages this man boaz he is a redeemer by nature and boaz immediately notices ruth and asks who is she and the servant who is in charge of the reaper's answers she is the young moabite woman who came back with naomi from the country of moab that's in verse six that is how he describes her in the in that in his little um response he he describes right that ruth is courteous she's had a hard she's a hard enough work to actually impress him as the foreman but she's a foreigner emphasized twice the moabite from moab so what will an upright god fearing man like boaz do boaz had every right to banish ruth and to be seen as right in doing so instead he emphatically provides refuge rest look at these verses that boaz um once he's in once he's introduced to ruth look at what he says he says these words listen my daughter do not go and glean in another field or leave this one but keep close to my young women let your eyes be on the field that

they are reaping and go after them have i not charged the men not to touch you and when you are thirsty go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn do not leave keep close watch carefully follow my young women when you thirst drink from our provisions all of these speak to the danger that ruth was in and they show how boaz reversed it and then comes one of the most moving moments in the story i don't know about you but there are certain moments in uh in in some of the bible stories that just move you to tears and i this is this is one of the two in in uh in ruth it's kind of guaranteed as i sat in my study and was preparing this part of the talk it moved me to my i felt my eyes welling up with tears just just looking at it because this response is just speaks volumes to where ruth was coming from she's overcome and we read in verse 10 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 ruth has been carrying her identity around like a weight around the neck she's been living as a foreigner an outsider an enemy of israel she's been living a life of constant fear and shame the weight of that must have been crushing then boaz provides a little refuge and she's overcome some kind of mixture of shock and relief that means she can't even stand up because finally she can rest such a moving moment in this story but how can boaz do this as we've already found he would have been well within his rights to do the opposite and to be called righteous for it well the answer comes in boaz's reply that's in verses 11 and 12 boaz answered her

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 mother in 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 but to you by the lord the god of israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge it's kind of reminiscent of genesis 12 1 1 to 3 as we read this abraham left his country his people and his family he placed his life in the lord's hands and the lord's promise was to bless all nations through him boaz recognizes this kind of movement that that sorry that ruth has actually gone through all that you have done all that you have left all that you have chosen to come to ruth has taken abraham's journey in ruth's mind she is no longer a foreigner she's the lord's under his protection and boaz knows that this is exactly what god intended and what he desires god desires to bless not to curse god is not itching to condemn god is longing to save just look at john chapter 3 verse 16 and 17 and you'll see that for god did not come send his son to condemn the world but to save the world through him god is in the business of turning his enemies into his friends friends do you ever doubt god's heart toward you do you feel like you deserve to be rejected is your sin your shame your sense of unworthiness dragging you down some of us feel this way acutely and frequently the point is that everyone should start this way but that god doesn't leave us this way the lord is our redeemer god loves to welcome people like us into his family he willingly takes our shame on himself at the cross the son provides the redemption that we all need now don't get me wrong boaz doesn't know jesus at this point he's in history

he's well before um before jesus lived and died on the cross and rose again but he knows the lord and he knows the heart of the lord and he knows that he owes everything to his redeemer himself so he provides refuge and food rest and fullness for ruth you get the sense here that boaz is reflecting god's generosity toward him let her glean do not reproach her pull out some of it and leave it for her and do not rebuke her he says in these uh the instructions to his servants and suddenly boaz's servants are caught up in the scene they're literally throwing food on the floor if you understand how that economy worked they're throwing money on the floor for her and then at lunchtime boaz invites ruth to join them these were the kind of the you know the people who gleaned were generally the kind of more towards the fringe of society and yet boaz draws them in and she sat beside the reapers and they ate together they shared the same cup and she ate until she was full and she had some left over in this moment the emptiness is banished and ruth experiences the fullness that god provides all this fulfills god's promise to abraham through his descendants all nations would be blessed the lord redeems ruth through boaz the lord's nature is infused into him and to us it surfaces in all kinds of ways in us and for example i can i can give some examples from our church life in how we show compassion by providing nova meals by giving and to support churches and uh christian workers in in the philippines in myanmar in how we deconstruct racism sexism and under other inequalities wherever we go whether it be the workplace the home environment or wherever and most of all in how we testify to our redeemer but is boaz their redeemer well is he their redeemer ruth still has no no idea who boaz is in terms of relationship and how could she she goes out on a hazardous quest and returns with so much that naomi is stunned naomi um asked where did you glean today and where have you worked blessed be the man who took notice of you that's in chapter uh two verse 19 see gleaning isn't just isn't that productive it's kind of below the minimum wage and if you're thinking about how it fits into our social structures so there's no way ruth would come back from gleaning with this kind of results unless a man was extremely kind to her but who was it well the answer is drawn out in the sentence that ruth replies with but the answer is one word really it's boaz and naomi's response to this has two significant layers in verse 20 we see them um we see them unfold let me read those verses okay 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 can you see the two layers there the lord he has redeemed them and the man he is a potential redeemer it's a breakthrough moment finally naomi is seeing the goodness of god in her circumstances and isn't that so often the way for us we know god's good goodness in times of hardship but when we experience his goodness it feels like the sun breaks through the clouds let me give you the example of the um the the hymn it is well with my soul horatio spafford was able to to see goodness even in the the deepest tragedy of his life and sing of it but at the same time it is a mournful song isn't it

it's a song that expresses the weight of loss at the same time but when we experience goodness somehow it gives us a deeper sense of the truth that's been true all along and that is that god has

not forsaken or forgotten us and that's where ruth and naomi are the lord hasn't forsaken or forgotten them not the living that's ruth and naomi or the dead elimelech and and the sons the two sons here is a concrete expression of his kindness where kindness is actually the word hesed in in hebrew which means covenant faithfulness steadfast love the love that was there all along expressed in concrete terms boaz has been kind to ruth but ultimately it's the lord's provision the lord is their redeemer but is boaz his redeemer what role is boaz to play in the future ruth explains that boaz offered protection until the end of the harvest and naomi acknowledges the wisdom of this she survived one day but there's still very real danger in continuing to glean but will he be the kinsman redeemer that naomi hopes what is a kinsman redeemer well up until now the story is focused on on ruth and naomi's emptiness in with regards to losing their husbands but now we start to get a sense of what that loss truly means yes ruth and naomi were living life uh adrift in a in a really in a man's world they had no men to protect and support them but the the second tragedy and a deeper tragedy was that these two women were childless which meant that the line that their husbands represented within the people of israel was coming to an end with their lives a kinsman redeemer could reverse even that tragedy but will boaz be that kinsman redeemer that naomi hopes either way the door is opening to a new life ruth the moabite has experienced the lord's kindness the lord is her redeemer and her identity has changed an experience that we that we have too in our savior jesus christ thanks you