

## (4) Kindness towards all peoples

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] This morning's reading can be found on page 269 of the Church Bibles, it's Ruth chapter 4. Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the Redeemer of whom Boaz had spoken came by.

So Boaz said, Turn aside, friend, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit down here.

So they sat down. Then he said to the Redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

So I thought I would tell you of it and say, Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me that I may know.

For there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you. And he said, I will redeem it. Then Boaz said, The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

[ 1 : 1 4 ] Then the Redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging. To confirm a transaction, one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel.

So when the Redeemer said to Boaz, Buy it for yourself, he drew off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Marlon.

Also, Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Marlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.

You are witnesses this day. Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.

[ 2 : 4 7 ] And he went into her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a Redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel.

He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.

Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, A son has been born to Naomi.

They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez. Perez fathered Hezron. Hezron fathered Ram.

Ram fathered Aminadab. Aminadab fathered Nashon. Nashon fathered Salmon. Salmon fathered Boaz. Boaz fathered Obed. Obed fathered Jesse.

[ 3 : 48 ] And Jesse fathered David. Thanks very much, James, for reading the passage to us. Please do keep your Bibles open there on page 269 as we look at Ruth chapter 4 together.

And as usual, if you turn to the back of the handout, you'll see an outline of today's talk. Let me pray for us before we start. Father God, we do thank you that you've revealed yourself to us in your word, the Bible.

Thank you, therefore, that we can know just what you're like. We ask that you would speak to us now. Please teach us more by your spirit about who you are. And to know you better as this great and kind God that you're showing us from the book of Ruth.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as Simon said, today is the last in our series of talks from the book of Ruth. A book which we've been seeing is all about the kindness of God.

As we've progressed through the book each week, each chapter has given us a different angle and a different perspective and appreciation of God's kindness to us.

[ 5 : 00 ] So, in chapter 1, we saw God's sovereign kindness. All things working out for the good of those who know and love God.

In chapter 2, we saw God's abundant kindness. Provision, protection. There is every spiritual blessing for those who take refuge under the wings of God.

And then last week, in chapter 3, we saw God's loving kindness through a willing Redeemer. A Redeemer who brings us into God's rest, the rest of heaven ultimately.

Not out of duty or out of obligation, but for no other reason than that He loves us. Sovereign kindness, abundant kindness, loving kindness.

And today in chapter 4, we're going to see that this kindness of God that we've been seeing over the last three weeks is for anyone. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, God's kindness is not limited to a certain people group.

[ 6 : 07 ] God's kindness is open to anyone. Anyone who perhaps feels unwelcomed by God. Or unwanted by God this morning.

Who perhaps thinks of church as a large no-entry sign. Well, this chapter will come as a warm welcome to you. As we see God's kindness to an outsider named Ruth.

As we see God's kindness to a sinful insider named Naomi. We will see God's welcome is for anyone, even you. And for the majority of us who do know God's kindness and his welcome, will this chapter be an important reminder to us?

That we too were once outsiders like Ruth. We too once were lost, hopeless in a dire situation. But no matter who we were, no matter what we'd done, God showed his kindness to us.

And so we sit here today as members of God's family, with this glorious future ahead of us, only because of God's kindness to us. Well, that's where we'll be heading.

[ 7 : 15 ] First, let's look at God's kindness is for anyone, no matter who you are. See this in verses 1 to 12 of chapter 4, where Ruth the Moabite becomes Ruth the Israelite.

We're going to see in these verses that through the costly redemption of Boaz, God brings Ruth, an outsider, into the people of God. Showing his kindness is for anyone.

So look with me at verse 1, let me read that to you. Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the Redeemer of whom Boaz had spoken came by.

So you'll remember we finished chapter 3 last week with Boaz wanting to marry Ruth, but there was this problem of another nearer Redeemer in the way. Boaz wanted to settle the matter quickly, and we see him here rushing to the town centre.

And would you know it, the very man he needs comes walking by. Behold, there he is. No coincidences with God. Again, we're seeing this is God at work here.

[ 8 : 21 ] So Boaz says to him, verse 1, Turn aside, friends. Come on, sit down here. Let's have a little chat, shall we? Because you know this woman Naomi, verse 3, who's come back from Moab. Well, she's selling this parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me that I may know. For there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.

Now, imagine you can sort of see this guy's eyes light up. The pound sign's in there. Here's a cheap piece of land going. We can quickly redeem this. Naomi will be off soon, and I'll have it for myself.

So he says, yeah, I will redeem it. The end of verse 4. But then Boaz says, verse 5, The day that you buy the field from the hand of Naomi... Sorry, verse 5.

Let you catch up. Verse 5. Then Boaz said, The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

[ 9 : 26 ] So they say you always check the small print, and there it is. Oh, by the way, yeah, Ruth is part of the package. So you can redeem the land, sure. But if you do, you'll have to marry Ruth as well to keep the family name alive.

Now, if you missed last week, and you're wondering what's going on here, let me just quickly give a reminder about a redeemer. A redeemer was someone within the family, wealthy enough, willing enough, to secure a future for their relatives if they're in poverty, either by redeeming the land, or in the case of a widow with no children, marrying the widow to keep the name alive, the family name alive.

Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 25, places you can go to if you want to look into that more. Anyway, back here, Ruth 4, clearly this nearer redeemer, he is willing, sorry, he's wealthy enough to redeem, but he's not willing enough to redeem.

If we see what he says in verse 6, he says, well, no, if that's the case, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

In the end, he's more concerned with his own welfare than truly the welfare of Ruth or Naomi. He's thinking, well, look, if I marry Ruth, then the land will then go to her son, and I'll lose the land, I'll lose the money, I'll impair my inheritance.

[ 10 : 57 ] He doesn't want that, and so he chooses not to redeem the land. I cannot, the cost is too great for him. But not so for Boaz. Boaz is willing to redeem no matter the cost.

Back then in deal making, they didn't sign on the dotted line or shake hands. The seller passed his sandal to the buyer. It should be interesting if you did that in the city this week, but verse 8, we read, when the redeemer said to Boaz, buy it for yourself, verse 8, he drew off his sandal and hopped off home.

But then, Boaz says, verse 9, you are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Marlon.

Also, Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Marlon, I have bought to be my wife. Ruth the Moabite. has now become Ruth the Israelite.

Through this costly redemption of Boaz, God has brought Ruth, she's bringing Ruth into the family of God. An outsider, a foreigner, an outcast.

[ 12 : 10 ] Now a full member in the family of God. God's kindness is spreading out to outsiders, for anyone. And just look at the way the elders pray for Ruth in verse 11.

May the Lord make this woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.

Back in the book of Genesis, we read of Rachel and Leah giving birth to 12 sons. And from these 12 sons come the 12 tribes of Israel, the whole nation of Israel.

And they're saying, well, look, may Ruth be this founding mother of Israel, be like them. You can't feel more included than that, can you? And they continue in verse 12.

May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman. House of Perez became the preeminent line in the tribe of Judah, or the preeminent tribe in the line of Judah.

[ 13 : 19 ] So that most of the people sitting there in Ruth chapter 4 will have come from this clan, will have come from Perez. And they're saying, well, may your house be prosperous, prominent, have a great future in Israel.

As we put this all together, we think this is just so astounding what has happened to Ruth. There she was, no food, no security, no future.

She was a widow in this foreign land, childless, her mother-in-law, the only person she knew, no friends, no respect, a foreigner, an outcast, a merbite, the lowest of the low.

And here she now stands, fully accepted, into the people of God with this glorious future ahead of her.

Why? Well, only because of the kindness of God. His sovereign kindness in bringing her back from Moab in the first place, his abundant kindness in showering her with provision and protection through Boaz, his loving kindness through Boaz's willingness to redeem her.

[ 14 : 31 ] Now in chapter 4, as it all comes together, we see her as a full member in the household of God. God's kindness to Ruth.

Outsiders coming insiders, foreigners becoming family members. God's kindness is for anyone, even outsiders. It doesn't matter where you're from, today, Israel, Palestine, Brixton, Streatham, prison, even Dunwich, God's kindness is for you.

It doesn't matter how you speak, how you dress, what you earn, what other people think of you. Anyone can take refuge in God's family. Anyone can belong.

It's just wonderful news that God doesn't limit his kindness to a certain group of people or race, but shows his kindness to anyone, not least because of the travel we would have been in, had he not.

So glance down at the quote I'd put there on the back of the service sheet on the outline. This is from Ephesians chapter 2 where the Apostle Paul describes the application of these verses for us as Gentile outsiders.

[ 15 : 51 ] Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated, strangers, having no hope and without God in the world.

it's easy to forget that this is what we were once like. Separated from Christ. Like aliens, strangers, like the kid who gets ignored at school or like the homeless person on the street who are outsiders, outcasts, hopeless, without God, just like Ruth.

And without God's kindness to us we would have remained like that and ended up just another dead name on a tombstone like Elimelech, rotting away until the final judgment.

This is what we were all like. This is how far you and I were from God. How hopeless our situation was. But it continues, verse 13.

Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ because of his kindness. And only because of his kindness God brought us near.

[ 16 : 58 ] transforming us from outsiders to insiders. And we can see the cost to him there. Not the impairing of his inheritance but the impairing of his own son.

The blood of Christ. That's how God brought us near. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish as outsiders or outcasts but have eternal life in the family of God.

So that now verse 19 you are no longer strangers and aliens but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

What a turnaround. Because of God's kindness to us we are no longer strangers now we're saints. because of God's kindness to us we're no longer aliens and outcasts but full members of the household of God.

It's not that last sentence from Ephesians 2 just astounding in him that's Christ you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Holy Spirit.

[ 18 : 19 ] The elders prayed that Ruth would have this great future in the house of Israel but surely they never envisioned this where God's people the church would one day end up enjoying a relationship so intimate so complete so satisfying because they themselves the church would be the very dwelling place for God himself.

Father, Son, Spirit within the church. It's just astounding and this is what it means for God to have changed us from foreigners to family members. This is why it is great news that God shows kindness to outsiders people like you and me.

Now it's easy in our comfortable lives to forget how kind God has been to us. I think we underestimate don't we how dire and awful our situation was without Christ.

Lost, hopeless, outcasts on spiritual death row. And also we underestimate just how amazing and glorious our status is now in Christ as members of his family.

And so we need to do two things. We need to remember how futile our lives were without God and we need to realise how glorious our position and future is now with him.

[ 19 : 45 ] And the more we do or the more we appreciate how dire our situation was back then the more we appreciate how glorious amazing it is now well of course the gap grows and we just become more appreciative of God's kindness that he has shown to us in Christ.

in transforming us from outsiders to insiders in welcoming us into his family just like he did for Ruth. Now if you find this difficult to grasp or you're struggling to see God's kindness to you well look at this character Ruth herself.

I mean we all love reading the book of Ruth don't we? It's a great story rags to riches. We love to read of God's kindness to her. This is just how God has treated us and more so.

Ruth is a physical picture of these spiritual realities that we have in Christ. And so as you see God's kindness here as you read it to yourself and you think wow what a God you think well this is our God or if you look at Ruth and think I wish God was like this to me treat me like this kind to me like this well he has been in Christ.

More so continues to be if you trust in Jesus Christ your life has been radically transformed like Ruth's. The no entry sign has gone.

[ 21 : 05 ] If you know Jesus Christ if you've taken refuge in him you fully belong to God's family now. And it really is astounding the kindness that God has shown to us to allow us to do this in Christ.

Well if God's kindness is for anyone no matter who you are secondly God's kindness is for anyone no matter what you've done.

Because in verses 12 to 19 we see the climax of God's kindness in the story both to Naomi and to Israel despite their sin and rebellion.

So look down at verse 13 with me. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife and he went into her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son.

This is only the second of two times that God is mentioned in the book in the active tense and we saw it all the way back in chapter one where the Lord lifted the famine and now we see it again God giving Boaz and Ruth a child.

[ 22 : 18 ] God at work in these people's lives God showing his kindness. But what is surprising is how the focus now shifts to Naomi. Even though it's Boaz's and Ruth's child the women address Naomi as if it is hers.

Do you notice that? So let me read verse 14. Then the women said to Naomi blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a redeemer and may his name be renowned in Israel he shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of old age for your daughter-in-law who loves you who is more to you than seven sons has given birth to him.

Verse 16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. Verse 17 And the women of the neighbourhood gave him a name saying a son has been born to Naomi.

Not a son has been born to Ruth a son has been born to Naomi. Now why? Well he probably worked it out by now that even though this book is titled Ruth really it's a book about Naomi and God redeeming her.

The story began with sinful curse Naomi on the run in Moab that ends with joyful blessed Naomi having found rest with God in Bethlehem and in between we've seen the focus on Naomi Naomi going from bitterness to joy from poverty to provision from emptiness to fullness so that now we read of her daughter in law Ruth by her side worth more than seven sons and a child on her lap the restorer of her life the nourisher of her old age again we say what a turnaround this is the kindness God shows to sinful cursed Naomi the same kindness that God shows to the whole of Israel sinful cursed Israel because do you remember what the first verse of the book was in the days when the judges ruled we said that this was a time when there was no king a time of unrestrained sin and rebellion against God disobedience to his word rejection of his rightful good rule it was a terrible time and now the last verse of the book which you all know by heart now

[ 24 : 42 ] Obed Father Jesse and Jesse fathered David we've gone from no king to King David from curse to blessing for God's people big picture the book of Ruth tells us the story of God's kindness in leading the nation from the terrible days of the judges to the glory days of King David God is just so gracious and kind to his people they're sinful they're rebellious God finds a way to forgive them they deserve death and judgment but God preserves them what a turnaround this is the kindness God shows to his sinful cursed people the same kindness God shows to his sinful cursed world today through King Jesus you know Jesus got in a lot of trouble when he came to earth because he hung around with outcasts outsiders prostitutes he got a reputation as a friend of tax collectors and sinners and you know why well listen to his words it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick

I have not come to call the righteous but sinners whether we're outsiders like Ruth or consider ourselves insiders like Naomi the fact is that we are all sinful by nature we all need saving forgiving we need God's kindness that is why Jesus came to earth to seek and save the lost to forgive us and bring us into God's family we don't deserve it but that's the point God's kindness is for anyone no matter what you've done I've chatted to people who've said you know I just don't think I'm good enough for God I've had some friends honestly say you know I just don't think God could forgive me for this as if God's kindness is not for them as if they've got some sort of black mark next to that name that sort of bars them from God's family from heaven I need to share this truth from Ruth chapter 4 if you have friends like that God's kindness is for anyone no matter what they've done

Jesus Christ he came to earth for sinners people like you and me Jesus well he was cursed on the cross so that we the cursed could be blessed he became an outcast so that we could become a member of God's family so don't for one moment think that some action in the past would exclude you could exclude you from God's kingdom because God's kindness in Christ it covers your greatest sin God's welcome is there turn to Christ take refuge in him God's kindness is for you no matter what you've done and for the rest of us I take it that these verses are a healthy reminder to us in case presumption sets in that we sit here today as members of God's family only because of God's kindness to us it is certainly a kindness we did not deserve imagine it Naomi sitting there with baby Obed on her lap she couldn't say she had deserved it it was only because of God's kindness despite her sin despite running away to

Moab as the nation were enjoying the blessings of peace and prosperity under King David they couldn't say they deserved it it was only because of God's kindness despite their sin and rebellion it's just the same for us the miraculous transformation that's taken place in our lives from outcast to family member it's not something we deserve it's only because of God's kindness despite our sin when we think of rags to riches stories we can think of a guy going in at the bottom doing the paper round working his way up through grit and determination until he becomes the head of the company or people being discovered for some talent musical talent singing talent sporting prowess as if there's something inherently worthy in them which there is in this case and they deserve it but with us it wasn't like that at all there was no spiritual talent or spiritual prowess to our name there was no grit or determination on our parts there we were in our filthy spiritual rags and we loved it we deserved absolutely nothing from God and yet God showed his kindness to us clothing us in royal robes bringing us into his family a royal family whose dynasty lasts forever we have so much to be thankful for as we reflect on our transformation from outcast to family member from outsider to insider from hell bound to heavenly home and not for one second deserving it what can we do but just say thanks to God for his kindness how can we ever grumble or complain against God when he has treated us like this how can we ever doubt his kindness to us we have so much to be thankful for and really that is what the whole book of Ruth is about being thankful for God's kindness to us in the Lord Jesus if you've grasped the message of Ruth you won't just be saying well I know what the book of Ruth is about you'll be giving thanks in your heart now to God for his sovereign kindness for his abundant kindness for his loving kindness kindness which has radically transformed your life in Christ and if we've really got it well you won't need me to tell you to be thankful you just will when you got up this morning when you come to church over lunch your life will just be overflowing with thankfulness to God overflowing because that is what happens when an appreciation of God's kindness pours into a person's heart a kindness which we've seen is what the book of Ruth is all about let's give thanks to God now in prayer and then we'll give thanks as we remember the Lord's Supper let's pray together

Father God we do praise you again this morning for your incredible kindness to us in transforming us from outcast to family members we praise you that your kindness knows no limit praise you that you would welcome us into your family despite the way we treated you we are so thankful and we ask Father God that by your spirit you would keep us thankful help us to remember what we were once like without Christ help us to realise how glorious our lives are now in Christ because of what you have done for us move us we ask to praise you in ever increasing degrees of appreciation of your kindness we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amensysteme Amen Amen Amen Amen

[ 31 : 59 ]    Amen