

Sunday 22nd May, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Call to Worship/Prayer

Jesus says to us, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Notice the only condition is that you are weary and burdened? All of us in some ways are weary and burdened. Life is hard. We are prone to get worn out. But Jesus is not. Let’s come now to our Lord Jesus by faith, and reach out and find rest for our souls.

Song – Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of
Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

3 To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish but naught changeth thee.

2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness
and love.

4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render, O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

Bible Reading – Ruth 3:1-5(CSB)

3 One day Ruth’s mother-in-law Naomi said to her, “My daughter, I must find a home^[a] for you, where you will be well provided for. **2** Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. **3** Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don’t let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. **4** When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.” **5** “I will do whatever you say,” Ruth answered. **6** So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

Announcements – Sunday 22nd May 2022

Focus for May – Hope. One of the things that seem to crush our hopes is when powerful people are stopping good things from happening. Maybe it's the government or your boss at work or big business but these things can wear us down. And make us look at our present situation not look at what God might do in the future. But in Proverbs 21:1 we hear that *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes."* Powerful people (and event) are in God's hands. So don't look within or around look up. For that is where hope is found, being in the hands of our great, great God.

Women of Truth (now called RENEW). Hope in the Darkness. Saturday 28th May 9am-12:30pm. Metford Community Baptist Church. \$25 pp. Speaker: Lily Strachan. For more details and to register (by Friday 20th May) hgm.org.au/renew. The Bible tells us that God is all loving and all-powerful but so often we struggle to believe these truths in light of persistent illness. Come and consider how we might live well in the midst of mental illness. Come and see where hope is found.

Teaching the Bible – Sunday 29th May 2:45-4:45pm. Charlestown Church. Do you want to be able to better teach the bible to audiences, big or small, men, women or mixed? Or do you want to think through how to communicate the message of a bible passage more clearly? Then, come along to this seminar. During that time we will be looking at the preparation needed for the passage and the person and we all will have a chance to develop a short talk to put into practise what we are learning.

World Mission. Many thanks to those who joined our session last week on the Christians in Afghanistan. We need to be aware of what is going on with our brothers and sisters all over the world. If you would like to pray for them why not consider going to [World Watch List - Most Dangerous Places For Christians - Open Doors](#) and learn more.

Kids Spot:

Church Picnic: Sunday 5th June. We look forward to another church picnic in the coming weeks - Thomas H Halton Park, Croudace Bay. Kids will love the recently completed adventure playground (fully enclosed), with a good bike track as well. Bring your own lunch and picnic blanket. We will meet at the playground from 12pm. Inquiries - Simon Mulready 0404 942 544

For your diary: Pastoral Care & Dementia. What is dementia? How do you care for a loved one with dementia? What role do we play as a Church for those who are helping loved ones with dementia? Are there any good resources out there that can help me? The do and don't about visiting people with dementia. On Sunday June 26 from 3-5pm we are running a time to think about the Christian and Dementia. More details in the next couple of weeks.

Song – Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

Pastoral Prayer Points

Psalm 14:7: “O that Israel’s deliverance would come from Zion! When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad!”

Pray for the Anglican Church of Australia: Pray that the Lord would prosper, revive and renew the Anglican church. Thank God for Kanishka Raffel and others standing strong against the push to solemnise same-sex marriages. Pray for great courage and boldness to continue to stand firm for Christ.

Pray for children: Pray God would guard our children from the evil one. Pray many of them would come to know and trust in Christ from an early age. Pray they would recognise the difference between the truth of God’s word and lies from the world. Pray for parents to be Christ-like to their children and intentionally train them up in the Lord.

Pray for Taylor family. We grieve with the Taylor family at the news of Stephen’s father dying on Monday. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. He comforts the afflicted..” (2 Cor. 3-4a). Pray that the God of all comfort would comfort the Taylor family during this time. And they would know the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

Pray for Cyprus, Pray for a shattering of bitterness and prejudice between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Pray for Muslims in the north to place their hope not in economic prosperity but to repent and believe in Jesus. Pray for discipleship, spiritual maturity, and bold witnesses among ethnic minority believers.

Bible Reading – Ruth 3:6-18 (CSB)

7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. **8** In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

9 “Who are you?” he asked.

“I am your servant Ruth,” she said. “Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer^[b] of our family.”

10 “The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. **11** And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. **12** Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. **13** Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.”

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

15 He also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he^[c] went back to town.

16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her **17** and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

18 Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

Sermon by Jon Brown

Risky Business (Ruth 3)

I pulled some quotes from a website titled: 50 Awesome Quotes about Risk Taking. Here's 6:

"Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing..."
— Helen Keller.

"Do one thing everyday that scares you..." — Eleanor Roosevelt.

"I'll play it first, and tell you what it is later." — Miles Davis.

"Pearls don't lie on the seashore. If you want one, you must dive for it."
— Chinese Proverb.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbour, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.." — Mark Twain

"Go out on a limb, that's where the fruit is..." - Jimmy Carter

People take all sorts of risks don't they? Risks for the sake of fun. Or getting a promotion. Or having a family. People climb mountains, cross seas, work long hours, endure pain. What are you willing to risk, and for what?

Ruth 3 is risky business. The structure of chapter 3 is similar to chapter 2. Notice both begin with Naomi and Ruth. And then an encounter between Ruth and Boaz. And then back to Naomi and Ruth. But chapter 3 is also different. Boaz was the main man last week in chapter 2. This chapter focusses on the actions of Ruth. Naomi's initiative and Ruth's obedience. Ruth takes some big risks. She puts all her eggs in the Boaz basket.

And we're going to see how Ruth's actions give us great insight into authentic faith. As we walk through this chapter I'm going to unveil these facets of faith. And how these facets are still true of faith in Christ today. The question is: What would it look like for you to trust Jesus like Ruth trusted Boaz? So first up we begin with,

1. Naomi and Ruth (vv. 1-5)

So our story has been following these two women who were destitute. And how the Lord is turning their emptiness into fulness - through the riches of His grace. In chapter 2 we found out that Boaz is the embodiment of God's kindness to these women. He is their kinsmen Redeemer.

But hasn't redeemed them yet. Although the signs are promising aren't they. Around three months have passed between chapter 2 and three. We know that because in verse 2, we're told that Boaz and his men will be "winnowing barley on the threshing floor." And in the mean time Naomi has been scheming. But Naomi isn't the archetypal scheming mother in law. It's not a lesson on how to arrange a marriage.

This is about two women who are destitute. And they are coming to take refuge under God's protection and provision. Under His Wings.

Notice in verse 1? Naomi is seeking to care for Ruth. And Boaz is the man isn't he. Check out verse 2, "Now isn't Boaz our relative? And haven't you been working for him (for around 3 months now)?" Naomi calls Boaz "our relative." And in doing so is pointing out that he is the Redeemer. This was provision that God had made for people like Naomi and Ruth in his law. Leviticus 25:25 we read, "If your brother becomes destitute and feels part of his proper, his nearest relative may come and redeem what his brother has sold." In other words, because Boaz is Naomi's husband's relative he has moral obligation to help them. And so Naomi outlines her bold plan...

Check out verse 2: "Tonight, he will be winnowing the barley of the threshing floor". This is the place where the potential harvest begins to be realised. The grain is threshed out. Piles of cut stalks are turned into mounds of life-giving grain. "Now is the time," Naomi says. Get ready! "Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes." Ruth washes off the dirt from the day. And is to go to Boaz pure. She puts on perfume, literally anoints herself. But don't think that Ruth is seducing Boaz into improper intimacy. There's no sexual immortality in the scene. But there is intimacy for sure! Ruth is going dressed and perfumed as a bride.

And Naomi goes on with her plan: "go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking." It's all very secretive isn't it. It's risky business! Ruth is to sneak up and lie where Boaz is lying. And uncover his feet. And Naomi says, "He will tell you what to do."

And notice in verse 5, Ruth agrees doesn't she? "I will do whatever you say". Naomi's plan is a concrete expression of covenant faith. She is putting her trust in God's covenant care. Naomi has confidence in God's word about the Redeemer. And Ruth shares Naomi's faith. Ruth is going all in. This is shown in her obedience.

Facet 1: faith is reaching out to the Redeemer. Authentic faith isn't passively waiting for something to happen. It's not a fuzzy feeling on the inside, when you just know that you know. It's intentional. It's deliberate. Naomi and Ruth are deliberately reaching out to their Redeemer, Boaz. We exercise authentic faith today by deliberately reaching out to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. You can see this in the gospels:

- Faith is the man with leprosy reaching out to Jesus. Coming right up to him and saying, "Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean."
- Faith is the friends of the paralysed man digging a whole in the roof to reach Jesus.
- Faith is the centurion reaching out to Jesus to heal his daughter.

- Faith is the woman with the issues of blood, reaching out to Jesus in the crowd to be healed. Faith is deliberately reaching out to Jesus for help. It's true that faith is a gift from God. But we are called to exercise faith. And we do that by reaching out to the Redeemer. But let's keep going in through Ruth to see what happens between:

2. Boaz and Ruth (vv. 6-15)

Check out verse 6, "Ruth goes down to the threshing floor and does everything her mother in law told her to do. And when Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile." The phrase 'good spirits' has a spectrum of meanings; from drunkenness to cheerful. Since Boaz was a good man, he probably more at the cheerful end than the drunk end! Anyway he lies down in his own spot. And Ruth approaches quietly, and uncovers his feet to lie down. Ruth is completely vulnerable isn't she? She's a young foreign widow! She has no rights! But she has faith in the character of this man. And she is willing to risk it all.

Facet 2: Faith is risking it all for the Redeemer. Ruth puts all her eggs in the Boaz basket. And authentic faith for us today is putting all our eggs in the Jesus basket. Faith is the friends of the paralysed man, digging through the roof. Risking so much to get to him. Faith is the woman with the issue of blood, who pushes through the crowd. And risks looking like a fool. And getting turned away and rejected, just to get to Jesus. Ruth gave up all other securities and trusted in Boaz alone. Faith is giving up all our earthly securities, and trusting Jesus alone to save us. It's all or nothing. Faith is willing to risk reputation for Jesus. Faith is willing to risk livelihood for Jesus. Faith is willing to risk your life for Jesus.

And while we're at it: facet 3: faith is intimate. This is just between Ruth and Boaz isn't it? It's deeply intimate. Faith is between two individuals - you and Christ. No one else sees, no one else knows. It's a one on one encounter. You and I can't have faith credited to us because of our parents. Or because we were baptised as babies. Or because we go to church. Or have Christian friends. Faith is personal. It's between you and Christ. Faith is a person entrusting himself or herself to One Redeemer.

And at midnight, Boaz wakes up. And he's stunned. Here, lying at his feet is a woman! And so he asks, "Who are you?" And check out Ruth's reply in verse 9, "I am Ruth, your servant - take me under your wing, for you are a family redeemer." Remember this idiom "take me under your wing.." Was used in 2:12? There Boaz acknowledged that Ruth had come under the corners of the Lord's garment for refuge. This same idiom is used in Ezekiel 16 to refer to the Lord marrying His people. Ruth is asking Boaz to marry her. Christopher Ash says, "Ruth is asking Boaz to be the flesh and bone incarnation of the redemption she is seeking from God." Ruth is calling on the covenant promises of God and asking Boaz to honour them. Notice Ruth doesn't appeal to Boaz on the grounds of her beauty? We don't even know if she was attractive! She appeals on the grounds of God's covenant promises: "Since you are a guardian redeemer of our family."

This brings us to Facet 4: Faith is grounded in the covenant promises of God. Faith is deciding to trust what God has promised. Ruth doesn't rest her case to be accepted by Boaz in her own attractiveness, does she? Ruth grounds her appeal on covenant promises. Because Boaz was a guardian-redeemer of Naomi's family. Because he was a man from the same clan as Elimelech. Boaz had an obligation to raise up offspring for Elimelech. Ruth is calling on this promise. In the same way, faith in Christ calls the promises he's made to us through Christ. "You promised to be a redeemer to me, now do what you have promised."

And on this grounds Boaz accepts Ruth doesn't he? Check out verse 10, "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor." This 'greater kindness' is Ruth's kindness to Naomi. Ruth pledged herself in covenant loyalty to Naomi (1:16-17). And now she is demonstrating it. Someone said, "The love story of the book of Ruth is not between Ruth and Boaz; it is between Ruth and Naomi, and Naomi's covenant God." Boaz is willing to accept Ruth isn't he? "And now my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character." Ruth risked it all for Boaz, and it paid off!

And this takes us to Facet 5: Faith is effective. When faith calls on the covenant promises it is always effective. The Redeemer will always accept the claims of faith. Boaz is a trust-worthy redeemer. When called up to help, he doesn't hesitate does he? There's a paradox with faith isn't there. It is a gift from God. But we really do exercise it! And God really responds to it. And we see this time and time again in the gospels. When the leper asks Jesus "If you are willing..." Jesus doesn't hesitate, "I am willing." Or the woman suffering from bleeding. When Jesus stops in the crowd and says, "Who touched me?" And she falls down at His feet trembling.

And what does he say? Goo away? No. "Daughter, your faith has saved you. GO in peace and be healed from your affliction." Or the centurion who comes to Jesus saying, "Lord my servant is lying at home paralysed. In agony." And he asks Jesus to simply say the word and the sick man will be healed. And Jesus marvels at his faith. And tells the centurion, "Go. As you have believed let it be done for you." When anyone reaches out to Jesus in faith they are always accepted. "Whoever comes to me I will never turn away." Faith is always effective.

But notice there's a complication in our story. "Although it is true that I am a guardian-Redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I." It must have been that closer relatives took preference to raise up an heir for a widow. Naomi hinted at this to Ruth back in 2:20, "That man (Boaz)... is one of our kinsman redeemers." Now we're told about another. And so there's some tension isn't there. We've seen the kindness of Boaz. And we want him to be the redeemer. But maybe he can't know! And so Ruth stays the night. And then in the morning Boaz loads her up with six-measures of Barley. And she goes back to Naomi.

3. Ruth and Naomi (vv. 16-18)

So Ruth comes back. And Naomi asks, "How did it go, my daughter?" And Ruth tells her. And shows her the first-fruits of the harvest. Soon it will be more than grain! And our chap-

ter closes with Naomi telling Ruth to wait, “Then Naomi said, ‘Wait...my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled.’” The pause button is hit.

Ruth waits. And we must wait. We’ve seen faith demonstrated, how will it be rewarded?

Facet 6: faith involves waiting. There’s a tension about faith. Faith isn’t sight is it? It carries with it a waiting for resolution. Faith reaches out to claim future redemption. But until redemption is complete, there’s tension. “Wait until you find out what happens.” Faith rests on the character of the redeemer. And just like Naomi and Ruth waited on Boaz. We gotta wait in our engagement to Christ. Waiting for the consummation. We look forward to the redemption our bodies. And our wedding day - Rev. 19:7-9: ‘Let us be glad, rejoice and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself. She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feasts of the Lamb!’”

So the invitation is open to come and be redeemed. Have you accepted it? Have you reached out to Jesus by faith? He is worth the risk! He will be your Redeemer and receive you into his family. He will cover you with his wings and be your refuge. He will spread the robe of righteousness to cover your nakedness. God has promised to welcome you for the sake of Christ. He will never cast you out. He loves you with an everlasting love.

Song – All to Jesus I Surrender

All to Jesus, I surrender
All to Thee I freely give
I will ever love and trust You
In Your presence daily live
I surrender all, I surrender all
All to Thee, my blessed Savior
I surrender all

All to Jesus, I surrender
Lord, I give myself to Thee
Fill me with Your love and power
Let Your blessing fall on me
I surrender all, I surrender all
All to Thee, my blessed Savior
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender
Now I feel the sacred flame
O the joy of full salvation
Glory, glory, to Your name

Closing Words - Jude:

24 Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.