

Sunday 15th May, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Call to Worship/Prayer

Let's begin by reading some of God's word from Titus 3:4-7. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. 6 He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life

Let's turn to God in prayer. Our Great God, you have heaped grace on us in Christ Jesus. There's nothing left for us to do but stand in wonder and sing your praises!

Song – And Can It Be?

1 And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

3 He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me. [Refrain]

5 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own. [Refrain]

2 'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more. [Refrain]
4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
[Refrain]

Bible Reading – Ruth 2:1-17 (CSB)

2 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side. He was a prominent man of noble character from Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz.

2 Ruth the Moabite asked Naomi, "Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favor?"

Naomi answered her, "Go ahead, my daughter." 3 So Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She happened to be in the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech's family.

4 Later, when Boaz arrived from Bethlehem, he said to the harvesters, "The Lord be with you."

"The Lord bless you," they replied.

5 Boaz asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 The servant answered, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab. 7 She asked, 'Will you let me gather fallen grain among the bundles behind the harvesters?' She came and has been on her feet since early morning, except that she rested a little in the shelter." [a]

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. [b] Don't go and gather grain in another field, and don't leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. 9 See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven't I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled."

10 She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?"

11 Boaz answered her, "Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn't previously know. 12 May the Lord reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

13 "My lord," she said, "I have found favor with you, for you have comforted and encouraged your servant, although I am not like one of your female servants."

14 At mealtime Boaz told her, "Come over here and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar sauce." So she sat beside the harvesters, and he offered her roasted grain. She ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

15 When she got up to gather grain, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her even gather grain among the bundles, and don't humiliate her. 16 Pull out some stalks from the bundles for her and leave them for her to gather. Don't rebuke her." 17 So Ruth gathered grain in the field

until evening. She beat out what she had gathered, and it was about twenty-six quarts[c] of barley.

Announcements – Sunday 15th May 2022

Focus for May – Hope. *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”* That’s how Paul ends his famous hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13. Now we often exhort each other to grow in love and faith but rarely do we work on our hope? Or maybe better said work out our hope. For the Christian, our future is secure. And we are heading toward the goal of our salvation where we will be made perfect and live in a perfect world. But that hope is not just future focused but should change how we live today. This month we want to spend time contemplating our hope, and living as if our hope is a reality (which it is). What could that mean for you this week?

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. Each term we plan to have a ZOOM meeting with encourage and coordinate the mission work of the Church. Our next meeting via ZOOM (<https://uonewcastle.zoom.us/j/82130845071>) will be TODAY from 3:30-4:15pm. We will be discussing Christianity in Afghanistan and how many Christians left Afghanistan earlier this year. The plan is that we are encouraging as many as possible to listen to the Recorded Podcast, [Escape from Kabul \(thegospelcoalition.org\)](http://thegospelcoalition.org) (it goes for approximately 1 hour but it is a truly fascinating story and well worth listening to!) and then we discussing mission work in Afghanistan and praying for the country. All invited.

Kids Spot: The Philistines’ god was a statue. The Israelites’ god is the real God. 1 Samuel 5-6 will show that God does not need people to fight for him. We worship a God who is the God of gods and the King of kings. Question of the week: How has God already fought for us through Jesus?

Song – Speak O Lord

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness

Teach us Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity

That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

And by grace we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory

Pastoral Prayer Points

Psalm 13:5-6: “But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously.”

Pray for the state and territory leaders: to be led by God as they seek peace, health, security, and prosperity for our states.

Afghanistan: Thank the Lord for the 16,500 additional humanitarian visas that have been promised to Afghans by the Australian Government. Continue to pray for hope, stability and safety for Afghans - especially Christians. Afghanistan has now overtaken North Korea as the world's worst persecutor of Christians. Pray also for the 3,000 Afghan refugees who are re-settling in Australia.

Everlasting Father, draw near to those who are suffering today. Be their comfort in their weariness, and their strength in their weakness. And for those who are weeping and mourning because of the loss of someone they love, give your consolation and loving support. You are the Everlasting Father who never turns away.

Bible Reading – Ruth 2:17-23 and Ephesians 2:1-10 (CSB)

18 She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

19 Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!”

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said.

20 “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.[b]”

21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He even said to me, ‘Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.’”

22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.”

23 So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Sermon by Jon Brown

The Riches of His Grace (Ruth 2)

In *Les Miserables* we meet an ex-convict who serves 19 years of hard labour for petty crimes that ends up leading him into deeper darkness. Only then to reenter a world that wants nothing to do with him. Hated by people, turned away from motel owners, bitten by a dog. And left with nowhere to go. He eventually stumbles upon the home of an elderly bishop who gives him a place at the table. Silverware to eat with. A bed to sleep on. The criminal is dignified by the kindness of the bishop. Who calls him, “My brother, and sir...” Each time the bishop said the word “Sir” with his gentle grave voice, the man’s face lights up. Sir to a convict is like a glass of water to a shipwrecked sailor.

The kindness shown by the bishop ends up transforming the convict. Experiencing kindness from someone changes you. But it’s hard to come by isn’t it? This world is often so cruel and cold. Because we are often cruel and cold! Where can we find kindness?

The story of Ruth happened in a cruel and cold time in Israel's history. But Ruth is about to experience an oasis of kindness in a harsh world. And we'll find where you and I can experience this kindness today.

As we walk through the drama of Ruth 2, watch out for these three features.

A discovery,
an experience,
amazement,
a transformation.

1. A Discovery (vv. 1-3)

Chapter 1 ended with the bitter and the sweet. Bitter because Naomi and Ruth had lost everything. They went out in search of life but only found death. And now they return to the promise land. All Naomi is left with is a Moabite daughter in law! Which Naomi probably saw more of a hinderance than a help! But the last thing we're told is that they arrived at the beginning of the barley harvest. Could it be the famine is about to be turned into harvest? Let's find out. Notice there's a discovery at the start of 2:1 - "Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side. He was a prominent man of noble character from Elimelech's family. His name was Boaz." The narrator lets us in on something - a ray of hope in the midst of despair. Notice we're told three things about this man. First, he's relative. Boaz is a blood relative of Elimelech, a man of the same clan. The words 'relative' suggests a possible covenant tie. A hint of some moral obligation to help Naomi. Next we also discover he is 'a man of standing'. This could mean he's wealthy or it could mean a 'man of solid character.' And we discover his name, Boaz.

But Ruth and Naomi haven't yet discovered yet! They are still in a desperate state. Notice Ruth asks Naomi, "Will you let me go into the fields and gather fallen grain behind someone with whom I find favour (or grace or kindness.)" Ruth asks Naomi if she can go and glean. Picking up the leftovers from others. The modern equivalent to gleaning would be like someone who goes through rubbish bins. Ruth and Naomi are destitute. But God in His kindness had made provision for the poor in Israel. Naomi tells her, Go.

And so Ruth sets out. What will she find? Remember these are the days of the judges. Bad times. Ugly times. Ruth is putting herself out there. She is stepping out in faith. Ruth trusts in the covenant God's provision for people like her. The Lord said poor people could glean. So Ruth is trusting in the Lord, and the Lord directs her steps doesn't he! (Proverbs 16:9)

Check out verse 3, Ruth happens to be in the portion of field belonging to Boaz - who was a relative - in case we missed it! What a coincidence right? But check out what happens next! Lo and behold, Boaz turns up! What will he be like? Let's find out about Ruth's experience.

2. An Experience (vv. 3-17)

Notice in verse 4, the first thing Boaz says “The Lord be with you.” Things are looking good! Here is a man of God! A rare thing in the days of the judges! And he takes an interest in Ruth doesn’t he? “Whose young woman is this?” Not who is this, but whose is she? The men reply, “the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab.” She is from MOAB. She’s an outsider! Who has come to pick up the scraps. And then Boaz turns to Ruth, and speaks to her. What’s he going to say? Go away? No. “Don’t go....” Are his first words. “Don’t go and gather grain in another field, and don’t leave this one but stay here close to my female servants.” “Don’t go. Don’t leave. Stay close...” No one will hurt you. You will have plenty to drink. The young men won’t hurt you but will help you. This is next level kindness! And not surprisingly she falls down and says, “Why have I found grace in your sight, so that you notice me? Even though I’m a foreigner.”

Boaz has treated Ruth with such dignity hasn’t he? But he doesn’t stop there. “I know your story” he says. And then he speaks a blessing over her life v. 12, “May the Lord reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” It’s an expressing of next level kindness. Of God’s provision and protection. It’s an experience of the riches of God’s grace through this Man isn’t it. But Boaz isn’t done yet! He doesn’t leave her out in the field. But notice in verse 14, he brings her in. “Come over here, and have some bread and dip it in the vinegar.” He gives her a seat at the table. He is lavishing kindness and grace on Ruth - the Moabite. Ruth set out thinking she would just get the scraps. But ends up with a seat at the table! Reminds me of the prodigal son who sets out back home thinking he will be a servant in his father’s house. But ends up getting the royal treatment! And we’re told at the end of verse 14, “She ate and was satisfied and had some left over.” And then Boaz tells his harvesters to purposely drop bundles of grain for her.” The immeasurable kindness of Boaz has caused Ruth to go from empty to full. From famine to harvest!

And what’s Ruth’s response?

3. Amazement (v. 10 and v. 13)

Ruth is stunned isn’t she! Stunned by grace. Shocked by kindness. She falls down, and says “Why me?” I’m a foreigner. I’m an outsider? It’s a humble response isn’t it? Grace and humility go together. Ruth knows who she is. And where she comes from. And that she could never have earned this kindness. And didn’t deserve it.

Ruth could have burst out with this hymn:

Praise him for his grace and favour
 To our fathers in distress
 Praise him still the same as ever
 Slow to chide, and swift to bless
 Praise him, praise him, alleluia!
 Glorious in his faithfulness (Henry Lyte).

And the last thing we see in this chapter is...

4. A Transformation (vv. 18-23)

Chapter 1 finished with Naomi going out full and coming back empty. Chapter 2 finishes with Ruth going out empty and came back full. Ruth recounts her grace-filled day. And how the Lord directed her steps to Boaz. And her experience of God's immeasurable kindness through Boaz. And there's a change in Naomi isn't there? Check out verse 20, "May the Lord bless him because of he has not abandoned his kindness to living or the dead!" Naomi knows with Boaz there is hope! And tells Ruth to stick close with him. This change of events has changed Naomi's heart. Her heart was full of bitterness before, but now it's full of thankfulness! God's grace can do that.

This is an amazing story of kindness isn't it. It's a story of the riches of God's grace, which finds its fulfilment in the gospel. Let me show you how.

1. A Discovery

Our chapter started with a discovery of a Redeemer for Ruth and Naomi. The gospel is about discovering that there is a Redeemer, Jesus God's own Son. There is hope. There is someone who can rescue us. Not just a couple of people, but for all people - as many as would believe in Him. And what's this Redeemer like?

2. An Experience

Boaz lavished his grace and kindness on Ruth didn't he? And Boaz's grace points us to Jesus' grace. Jesus Christ came full of grace and truth. Grace heaped upon grace. And In Christ we experience the riches of God's grace. Check out what Ephesian 2:4-5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even the we were dead in our trespasses and sin made us alive with Christ, by grace you have been saved...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." The gospel is about experience the immeasurable riches of God's kindness in Christ Jesus. Ruth was a Moabite. An outsider. With nothing to bring to the table. But that didn't stop Boaz! And in the same way we are by nature outsiders. "We were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel. And foreigners to the covenant promises, without hope. And without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

In Christ, God has heaped his grace on us. In Christ we experience next level kindness. He hasn't just given us the scraps but eternal riches in Christ. God has taken an interest in you. He has handpicked you. He has adopted you. Wiped away all your sins through the cross. Given you an eternal inheritance. Poured His Holy Spirit into us. Given us brothers and sisters in Christ. In Christ we go from emptiness to fullness. From famine to harvest.

And the riches of God's grace is available to anyone. All you need to do is turn to Christ and admit your need for it.

3. Amazement

Ruth was stunned by grace. How much more should God's grace should ignite our hearts! Ruth fell over and worshipped because of Boaz's kindness! We also should fall over and worship God who has lavished his grace on us in Christ. Ruth cried out, "Why me???" "I'm an outsider!" And when we understand and experience God's grace, "Why me?" Is fitting isn't it? Why me Lord, I'm an outsider. I was dead in sin. But now I have been raised up with Christ. I was far away from you. But now I have been brought near by the blood Christ. God's grace and humility go hand in hand. John Newton wrote Amazing Grace because he knew it saved a wretch like me. And it's when humility and grace meet that worship happens. And it leads to...

4. A Transformation

God's grace can change the hardest heart. It moves us from bitterness to thankfulness. It changes your whole outlook on life! Like it did for Naomi. Like it did for the ex-convict in *Les Mis*. How does the ex-criminal repay all the undeserved kindness of the bishop? He robs him of his silverware, disappearing into the night. And then sometime the next day the officers bring the thief back to the bishop's house. And say, "We caught this man with this bag...and he said..." "Yes, yes," the bishop interrupts, "he told you that the silverware had been given to him by a kind old priest..." "But my friend," says the bishop turning to the thief, "Why didn't you take the silver candlesticks I gave you too?" The officers release the criminal. And then the bishop goes up the confused criminal, and places the candlesticks in his hands. And says, "My brother, you no longer belong to evil...It is your soul I buy back from you, and I give it to God..." And the rest of the story is about how Jean Valjean becomes the man the bishop declared he would become.

Here's the point: it was the undeserved kindness that softened the hard heart of Jean Valjean. It's the same for us: God's grace and kindness is what softens our hard hearts. God's grace is what ignites our hearts to live for Him.

It's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (change). I was listening to the incredible conversion story of Christopher Yuan. Christopher is from a Chinese Christian family living in America. His father had multiple doctorates. And it was when Christopher was just weeks from finishing his doctorate, that everything fell apart. He was living a double life. By day he was a high achieving academic, by night he was out selling drugs at gay night clubs. And he was arrested. All his friends abandoned him. And he called his mum from prison. Expecting condemnation from her, he was stunned when all she said was, "Son, are you okay?" Christopher experienced God's kindness through his mum. And eventually this led him to repent. And now he lectures at Moody Bible Institute.

God uses his people as vehicles to deliver his kindness to others. A church should be a refuge of kindness in a cruel world. We want to be an oasis of kindness in a harsh world. A place where outsiders can come in and be treated with dignity, grace and kindness.

Song – I Stand Amazed in the Presence

1 I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how he could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

3 He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them his very own;
He bore the burden to Calv'ry,
And suffered and died alone. [Refrain]

Refrain:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be;
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

4 When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of his love for me. [Refrain]

2 For me it was in the garden
He prayed, "Not my will, but thine;"
He had no tears for his own griefs,
But sweat drops of blood for mine. [Refrain]

Ephesians 1: - 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. **4** For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. [c] **5** He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.

Grace be with you. Go in peace. God bless you.