

## **Ruth Chapter 3 18th October 2020**

prepared by Rev Kim Shorley

Whilst in this moment we may be gathering on our own we also know others gather alongside us and so we sing

### *Singing the Faith* **27 Jesus, we are here**

Jesus, we are here, x3  
we are here for you.

Saviour, we are here, x3  
we are here for you.

Master, we are here, x3  
we are here for you.

Spirit, we are here, x3  
we are here for you.

Redeemer, we are here, x3  
we are here for you.

Patrick Matsikenyiri (*b.* 1937)

### **PRAYER OF PRAISE** Psalm 99 (*NRSV*)

- 1 The Lord is king ;  
**let the peoples tremble !**  
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim ;  
**let the earth quake !**
- 2 The Lord is great in Zion ;  
**he is exalted over all the peoples.**
- 3 Let them praise your great and awesome name.  
**Holy is he !**
- 4 Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity ;  
you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
- 5 **Extol the Lord our God ; worship at his footstool.**  
**Holy is he !**
- 6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,  
Samuel also was among those who called on his name.  
**They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.**
- 7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud ;  
**they kept his decrees, and the statutes that he gave them.**
- 8 O Lord our God, you answered them ; you were a forgiving God to them,  
but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

9 **Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain ;  
for the Lord our God is holy.**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

The Lord reigns!  
**The Lord reigns!**

Majestic God, do we tremble in awe before you?

*[silence]*

The Lord reigns!  
**The Lord reigns!**

Worthy God, have we raised your name in praise?

*[silence]*

The Lord reigns!  
**The Lord reigns!**

Sovereign God, have we executed justice?

*[silence]*

The Lord reigns!  
**The Lord reigns!**

We bow before you, holy God.  
Forgive us.  
Cleanse us.  
Free us.  
Redeem us.  
In the strong name of Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

### *Singing the Faith* **156 From the breaking of the dawn**

- 1 From the breaking of the dawn  
to the setting of the sun,  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
Words of power, strong to save,  
that will never pass away ;  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
For your covenant is sure,  
and on this I am secure :  
I can stand on every promise of your word.
- 2 When I stumble and I sin,  
condemnation pressing in,

I will stand on every promise of your word.  
You are faithful to forgive,  
that in freedom I might live,  
so I stand on every promise of your word.  
Guilt to innocence restored ;  
you remember sins no more.  
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.

3 When I'm faced with anguished choice  
I will listen for your voice,  
and I'll stand on every promise of your word.  
Through this dark and troubled land,  
you will guide me with your hand  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
And you've promised to complete  
every work begun in me,  
so I'll stand on every promise of your word.

4 Hope that lifts me from despair ;  
love that casts out every fear  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
Not forsaken, not alone,  
for the Comforter has come,  
and I stand on every promise of your word.  
Grace sufficient, grace for me,  
grace for all who will believe.  
We will stand on every promise of your word.

Keith Getty (*b.* 1974) and Stuart Townend (*b.* 1963)

### **RUTH CHAPTER 3:**

#### **Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing-Floor**

3Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. <sup>2</sup>Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing-floor. <sup>3</sup>Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing-floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. <sup>4</sup>When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.' <sup>5</sup>She said to her, 'All that you tell me I will do.'

6 So she went down to the threshing-floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. <sup>7</sup>When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came quietly and uncovered his feet, and lay down. <sup>8</sup>At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! <sup>9</sup>He said, 'Who are you?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin.' <sup>10</sup>He said, 'May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. <sup>11</sup>And now, my daughter, do not be afraid; I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. <sup>12</sup>But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. <sup>13</sup>Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act

as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do so. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.'

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, 'It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor.' <sup>15</sup>Then he said, 'Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.' So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. <sup>16</sup>She came to her mother-in-law, who said, 'How did things go with you, my daughter?' Then she told her all that the man had done for her, <sup>17</sup>saying, 'He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, "Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed."' <sup>18</sup>She replied, 'Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.'

## REFLECTION

We come to the midpoint of the Book of Ruth, and you may have noticed that the text is doing something strange with time. Chapter 1 hurried over a time span of at least ten years, whilst chapter two gave us a 'day in the life of a gleaner' and here at Chapter 3 our focus is the events over one night. This in itself is significant in the developing theology of Ruth. Length of time is no indication of importance. While all-time belongs to God and is significant, a short and decisive episode can accomplish what weeks, month or even years failed to do.

Whilst the seasonal gleaning was Ruth's idea; this second plan, coming at the end of the harvest, is more desperate and comes as Naomi recognises Ruth's (and her own) need for a more permanent resolution regarding their security. Whilst Naomi's physical famine of chapter 1 has been replaced by plenty in chapter 2 the need for marriage, security and descendants (longed for in 1:8-9) remains elusive. The morality and motivations of the characters remain blurred. Is Naomi concerned or careless about Ruth's reputation? Is Ruth a willing participant, or a victim? Is Boaz a righteous redeemer or hapless fool? All such readings (and more) are possible.

The contrast between Ruth and Boaz's second encounter and their earlier meeting is stark (2:8-13). Instead of a midday meeting, it is night; instead of many witnesses, there are none. Awakened from sleep, Boaz is confused and remains 'in the dark' about what is going on (as we the reader are) especially as to how much of Boaz Ruth "uncover" as the writer of this text skillfully plays with words full of double meaning and euphemisms galore. As he struggles to identify his midnight caller he asks 'Who are you?' Here Ruth goes against Naomi instructions at verse 4, to wait for Boaz to tell her what to do, and not only she identifies herself by name, but also identifies her (and Naomi's) legal needs by reminding Boaz of his stated wish that Ruth be rewarded by the God 'under whose wings you have come for refuge' (2:12) and asks that Boaz identify himself as "next-of-kin" by spreading his cloak over her.

This "next-of-kin" as the NRSV translates from the Hebrew word *go'el*, is muddled by our modern use of an 'In Case of Emergency' contact name, and is better understood as the one with the right (and responsibility) to redeem, and it used more intensively in Ruth than in any other biblical text.

Whilst we today recognise that God is the ultimate redeemer: the one who releases us from captivity or bondage, for Boaz the Jewish law (as recorded in Chapter 25 of

Leviticus) made redemption a more practical task: with the closest relative or next-of-kin taking on the responsibility to restore what is at risk of being lost, whether relatives facing debt and slavery, or family land about to be sold.

Boaz sees Ruth as a worthy woman, (V11) but the existence of a closer kinsman adds a whole new dimension (and possibly a chapter) to this story. For now however Boaz instructs Ruth to remain with him and the tension between midnight and morning is left to the reader's imagination. Perhaps the silence suggests Boaz does not take advantage of the situation. Or perhaps we are meant to understand that this sexual encounter is entered into willingly by both parties and will result in marriage and a child that lives. (That a child will be the result of the encounter is further suggested by verse 15 in the pouring of grain into Ruth's cloak, until it filled out.)

On Ruth's return Naomi asks of her identity, not in name but of status – is she (as they had planned?) now betrothed to Boaz? How much of what happened Ruth actually tells Naomi is unclear, but the physical presence of the abundance of grain gives Naomi a glimpse of her own redemption, a future in which she (as a grandmother) is satisfied and full. Like the trajectory of many lamentations within the Hebrew Bible, Naomi's feelings of abandonment and anger are beginning to shift to hope and joy.

For now all they can do is wait, to learn how the matter turns out (v18). This metaphor is of a lot cast to find out which of two alternatives to take, and whilst chapters 1 and 2 both ended with an author's comment, a hint that everything was going to work out in the end no such assurance is given, making Naomi's (final) words – for she and Ruth will no longer speak to us through the text – the cliffhanger on which chapter 3 closes (and fans of EastEnders may even hear the drum roll for the "doof, doof, doof..." moment as this scene fades out in the mind's eye).

All these centuries later, we who know this story well, know that although Boaz turns out not to be the closest next-of-kin, it is he who redeems the land at risk of being lost; and how in the birth of Obed not only is Naomi redeemed from being forgotten, but also the 'outsideness' of "Ruth the Moabite." Even greater is that from Jesse, the child of Obed, King David is born: which results ultimately in the birth of Jesus, whose life, death and resurrection continues today to offer redemption to all, even those we might still name as outsider's.

### **FOR CONSIDERATION & CONTEMPLATION:**

As you read or re-read this chapter, what parts of the text (or reflection) jump out at you at this time?

Like earlier chapters Ruth's identity remains a key factor: If you were asked, what would you say your identity was? What does your identity as a Christian mean to you and to others? How is redemption more than a case of 'In Case of Emergency: Break Glass' activity?

### *Singing the Faith* **338 There is a Redeemer**

- 1 There is a Redeemer,  
Jesus, God's own Son,

precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
Holy One.

*Thank you, O my Father,  
for giving us your Son,  
and leaving your Spirit  
till the work on earth is done.*

2 Jesus my Redeemer,  
name above all names,  
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
O for sinners slain.

*Thank you, O my Father,*

3 When I stand in glory  
I will see his face,  
and there I'll serve my King for ever  
in that holy place.

*Thank you, O my Father,*

vv. 1-2 Melody Green (b. 1946)

v. 3 Keith Green (1953–1982)

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October marks the start of One World Week, and ends on United Nations day (24<sup>th</sup>). The theme for 2020 is: It's our world. Let's make it better

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer we pray let your Kingdom come: **Let your will be done**

We pray for people who are really struggling at the moment: for all who are frustrated, all who are fearful; for those who are under pressure in work and for those whose working lives have been put on hold, with all the consequent strains and anxieties. We pray for households where lockdown means loneliness, or stress, or low spirits. We pray for those who are ill and those who are recuperating. And we pray for the bereaved. We pray for help, for strength, for hope.

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer we pray let your Kingdom come: **Let your will be done**

We pray for the world. We pray for leaders and governments, in this country and worldwide. We pray for those who offer an alternative point of view, for loyal and constructive opposition. We pray for those who voice or shape public opinion. We pray for justice and fairness in our public life. We pray for a willingness to listen and to understand. We pray for compassion and kindness, from all and for all.

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer we pray let your Kingdom come: **Let your will be done**

We pray for the Church, for the People of God across the world; for our own Methodist Connexion; for our Circuit; and for the churches we ourselves know best. We thank you for all the creative ways that worship and pastoral care has been sustained over these past months. We pray for the members of our churches who are still unable to attend services, whether in building or through the use of technology and thank you that there is nothing in earth or heaven that can separate us from your love.

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer we pray let your Kingdom come: **Let your will be done**  
*Singing the Faith* **706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness**

- 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts.*  
*Shine through the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.  
*Christ, be our light!*
- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.  
*Christ, be our light!*
- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.  
*Christ, be our light!*
- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.  
*Christ, be our light!*

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

## **BLESSING**

We go into the world in the name of God the Creator, whose awesome strength empowers us,  
in the name of Christ the Redeemer, whose tremendous love transforms us;  
and in the name of the Holy Spirit, whose gentle presence guides us into the light.  
Amen.

Please be assured that we are still here if you need anything at all during this time.

Circuit staff can be contacted by calling 01933 312778 for Rev Lesley Dinham / 01933  
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