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A Cinderella Ending

Ruth 4

Prayer: *Father, I just again thank you for how precious the body of Christ is and how precious it is to be able to regather, to gather before your word and to sing and to offer praise to you. Father, we again thank you for that and we thank you for your word, we thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit and we ask again this morning for that Holy Spirit's presence as we open up your word. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are at our final message on the book of Ruth. It was back in February when we started and now we're concluding and so we want to pick up with the book of Ruth where we left off just last week. If you remember, Naomi had sent Ruth to a late night encounter with Boaz that looked for all intents and purposes like a seduction. Naomi tells Ruth in Ruth 3: *"Wash therefore and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak and go down to the threshing floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies. Then go and undercover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you*

what to do." And she replied, *"All that you say I will do."* So Ruth dutifully follows Naomi's instructions. And as risky as it is, she goes to the threshing floor after a night of celebration over a fine harvest. She finds Boaz asleep and she lies down next to him. When he does awaken though, she goes off script. Instead of simply allowing Boaz to tell her what to do, she takes the initiative, and she tells Boaz that for Naomi's sake, he needs to marry her. And as I pointed out last time, this was anything but a romantic proposal. I mean it was much more a recognition by Ruth of an obvious solution to Naomi's tragic life story.

Just once again for one final time to recapitulate the story, Naomi and her husband Elimelech had left Bethlehem some ten years previously because of a severe famine. They journeyed to Moab and they lived there long enough for her two sons to marry Moabite women and then tragedy struck. Naomi lost her husband and her two sons, one of whom was Ruth's husband. It was a tragedy compounded by the fact that Naomi's two sons had produced no offspring. And as I pointed out last time in this culture if you did not have sons, you were doomed. They were not only the ones responsible for carrying out the family lines, they were also the ones responsible for caring for and protecting the women in their lives. I mean to lose a husband and to lose both of your sons was to lose everything. So Naomi decides that her only hope is to return to

Bethlehem, and she implores her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and find new lives. One daughter-in-law Orpah decides to stay. She tearfully leaves Naomi. But Ruth at this point, she has an encounter with the living God. She announces that Naomi's God will be her God and that she will live in Naomi's world even if it means abandoning her roots in Moab and casting her lot in a different land with a different God.

So Ruth and Naomi, they leave for Bethlehem knowing they have no resources whatsoever except for each other and the God that Naomi at this point is convinced has abandoned her. They get back to Bethlehem and Ruth decides that she is going to go glean in a field because they are literally facing starvation. And she just happens to glean in a field owned by a man named Boaz who just happens to be a near relative of Naomi's. Well Naomi begins to see the obvious providential hand of God as Boaz is a man of great character and stature who also happens to be Naomi's kinsman redeemer. Now, you see in Israel kinsman redeemer was a near relative who had an obligation and the obligation was to rescue a family member from losing their most important asset and that would be their land. The primary obligation for families was to hold on to the land because they believed they had been given it as a sacred trust by God and if for some reason hard times had caused someone to lose their land, the kinsman redeemer was obligated to

redeem it. And although it's never stated, it's clear that Naomi's dead husband Elimelech in some way had allowed their land to be taken. So now Ruth is gleaning in a field of a man who could change both Naomi and Ruth's futures. And Naomi then decides that she's going to become the matchmaker between Ruth and Boaz. She sees Ruth as desperately needing a husband and Ruth sees Naomi as desperately needing a kinsman redeemer and both understand that marriage to Boaz will accomplish both ends. Ruth is just a little more honest in her approach.

So when Boaz awakens in the middle of the night to find Ruth at his feet: *He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."* That was a marriage proposal. So Ruth proposes marriage to Boaz as a means of addressing not only Naomi's desperate need for someone to redeem her land but also as a means of addressing Naomi's lack of sons. In addition to the concept of kinsman redeemer, there was also a Jewish law that a man had an obligation to raise up sons for his relative if a close relative died without producing any sons. This was known as levirate marriage and it was part of ancient Israel. *Deuteronomy 25* says: *"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her*

as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

Those of us in the 21st century, we look this as incredibly bizarre but it points to the absolute necessity of sons. And so Ruth is calling on Boaz for two different obligations, one is to redeem the land for Naomi and the other one is to raise up a son through herself for Naomi. Like I said, this is not something that our culture is at all familiar with but other cultures certainly are. And you have to understand this isn't romance, this is duty. And here's where we find that Boaz is a noble man, he's well aware of his duty and he says this: *"May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask, for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman."* And again we see more evidence of Boaz's character, because he's concerned here for Ruth's reputation. I mean you remember, this is at night, Ruth has gone into the threshing room and is asleep at his feet. And he wants her to leave before everyone wakes up and sees she's at the threshing floor because he knows that Ruth is a person of noble character. In fact he tells her as much saying: *"All of my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman."* So he goes on to demonstrate the honor and the obligation that is

driving him rather than romance by saying this, he says: "And now it is true that I am a redeemer. Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I. Remain tonight, and in the morning, if he will redeem you, good; let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then, as the Lord lives, I will redeem you." And then he does something else, something else extraordinary. He tells Ruth: "Bring the garment you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley and put it on her. Then she went into the city. I mean he loaded her up with an enormous amount of grain which was wealth at that time. So Ruth returns to Naomi a second time, this time with a cache of grain that's twice the size of the cache that she had brought the first time. Boaz tells her that he doesn't want her returning to her mother-in-law empty-handed. So Ruth shows this huge gift to Naomi and tells her that all of the events that had taken place that night. And Naomi responds by saying: "Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest but will settle the matter today." Well Ruth now knows she's going to be marrying soon. She just doesn't know to whom. She has no idea who this closer relative to Naomi's is but she knows that Boaz is going to address the issue immediately.

And so chapter 4 opens up the very next day, it's got Boaz coming to the city gate, and he's assembling a group of witnesses. This

is Ruth 4:1, it says: *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. Now Boaz is going to lay out the situation for the kinsman redeemer. This unnamed redeemer has his opportunity to purchase Elimelech's land which on the surface appears to be a great deal. After all he's the only one that's entitled to purchase it and so he can increase his holdings most likely at a bargain price. So again we pick up. It says: Then he, that's Boaz, 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." You see Boaz here, you have to understand, Boaz clearly understands the art of the deal. He understands that when it comes to presenting this deal, you have present the good news first then you let the bad news be known. And it's only when Boaz explains to the man that this is a package deal and it also includes the Moabitess Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi that he begins to understand the amount of*

strings that are attached to it. Again picking up, it says: *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." 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."* So the unnamed redeemer understands that redeeming the land now has an extraordinary cost and he withdraws his offer. It says: *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 Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, 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."* Well, what Boaz has just done, he's committed himself to both the kinsman redeemer and the levirate obligations and he says before witnesses that he's now going to assume the financial responsibility involved in purchasing Elimelech's property and along with that he is willing to marry Ruth as the next in line in order to perpetuate Elimelech's line acknowledging that should Ruth bear a son that he would be the heir to Elimelech's line. Again we pick up. It says: *Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May*

the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and 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."

And again they're talking about Rachel and Leah. Between Rachel and Leah there were eight sons that were born to Jacob. These literally are the matriarchal mothers of Israel. And Perez, Perez was the original town father of Bethlehem itself. Tamar bore Perez to Judah. Perez was considered the father of the Bethlehemites which was a subset of the tribe of Judah. And again it says this:

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to 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 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 neighborhood 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. And the book ends, it ends with the genealogy of David. Just to conclude, it says: Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, ram fathered

Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Now it's only when you start to look at this genealogy do you realize how close David's line came to complete non-existence. And it's then that you realize all of the dots that had to have been connected in order for Jesus's line through David to be complete. You know, if there wasn't a famine in Bethlehem, Elimelech and Naomi would never have gone to Moab. And if they hadn't gone to Moab they wouldn't have had sons who sinfully married Moabite women. And if they hadn't died and left Naomi without a husband and sons, she wouldn't have been desperate enough to return to Bethlehem with Ruth in tow. I mean it's very easy looking back to see how critical every single one of these events were. And if any of them hadn't taken place, Ruth would never have stepped onto that field of Boaz in Bethlehem. Boaz would have never taken on the role of kinsman redeemer, he would have never even met Ruth. And the person named Obed would have never seen the light of day. See, all of the events that took place were all part of the natural flow of history but you see, God is at work within the flow of history to accomplish his purposes. And there was only one exception to the flow of history in this entire story in all of these events and it was the confrontation that Ruth had with the living God. Do you

remember Naomi was beseeching her daughters-in-law to do what was reasonable considering their circumstances. They were to go back to Moab, to the people of Moab, to the gods of Moab. And daughter-in-law Orpah tearfully agreed and that's the very last that we hear from her. But Ruth, Ruth took a different turn and she insisted in *Ruth 1:16*: *"Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."*

And so we ask the question why did Ruth make that decision? Well it's because God had chosen to fix his love on her. See Ruth was given the gift of faith and Orpah was not. And don't ask me why God gave faith to one and not to the other because I have absolutely no idea. I just know that God says in *Ephesians 2:8*: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Well Ruth had faith and it was as the scripture says, a gift of God, not of works. And if you remember the definition we spoke of, faith is a gift of God characterized by a certainty of conviction that produces appropriate action. And we look at Ruth and we see that she had that gift. She demonstrated her conviction and her plea to Naomi and she followed up that

conviction with the action of actually walking with Naomi into Bethlehem. And we drew a huge distinction between faith alone and the works that genuine faith always produces, pointing out that we are saved by grace through faith, not works and that works are merely the proof that faith is real. I mean just as breathing acts as proof of life, so do works act as a proof of genuine faith. And Ruth clearly demonstrated her faith. But here's the question: Just who was it that Ruth placed her faith in? I mean faith alone is most definitely not enough to save you. I mean we say it as faith alone in Christ alone that saves. You can have all the faith in the world, if it's in the wrong object of that faith, it's going to gain you nothing. I mean you could have faith that tells you if you fly airplanes into the twin towers, you go directly to heaven, but you won't get there. Faith must have an appropriate object of faith. We know that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said in *John 14*: "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" But here's the problem. Ruth didn't know Jesus from Adam. Neither did Naomi, neither did Boaz. I mean if you asked any of them who Jesus of Nazareth was, they would have shrugged their shoulders, looked at you sideways and say, "I have no idea." They couldn't have had any idea because Jesus wouldn't be born for over a thousand years. We tell everybody and I repeat it often that God became a man, that he lived out his life perfectly and that he laid down his life at the

cross so that we could by faith appropriate his righteousness as our own. That's the gospel. Our faith is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. But what was Ruth's faith centered on? How did Ruth get saved, I mean, if she didn't know Jesus from Adam? How did anyone in the Old Testament get saved for that matter? How did Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or David or Moses? I mean none of the Old Testament patriarchs had any clue who Jesus was. So when God says in Romans 10:13: *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"*. How does that apply to those who lived like Ruth or Naomi or Boaz lived in the days before Jesus was born? Well the New Testament represents the fulfillment of something. It was the fulfillment of a covenant that was laid out at first in the Old Testament. And there God pointed out that the only way for sin to be paid for was with the shedding of innocent blood. He made a covenant and the covenant stated that when God called a man named Abraham, he made an agreement with him that he would become a great nation and that in him all the nations of the world would be blessed. And the ultimate blessing that God was speaking about was the birth of Jesus born directly from that line of Abraham. Jesus would be the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant, the ultimate sacrifice for sin. And God made it clear in the Old Testament that the only way for sin to be ultimately dealt with was through the shedding of innocent blood, and he stated it way back in the book of Leviticus. In *Leviticus 17* he says: *The life of*

the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. See the point of the sacrifices in the entire sacrificial system was to paint a picture over and over and over again that sin required blood atonement. The point of the Old Testament sacrificial system was to paint a picture of what Jesus was ultimately coming to earth for, that he would be the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin, that his blood would be the final and ultimate payment that forever and all time would satisfy God's perfect justice. We know that. What was it the Old Testament saints believed in if they didn't believe in a Jesus they never even heard about? Well, they believed in God and they believed in his provision for sin. See in the Old Testament it was an elaborate series of sacrifices that painted the picture over and over again that without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sin. And again God is setting the stage for Jesus to come to earth as one final blessing, the final installment of an agreement that God had made with Abraham that he would bless the entire world through him. Jesus Christ was that blessing and he was born to make the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

So how did the Old Testament saints get saved? Same way everybody gets saved, by faith, by believing in God and his provision for sin. *Hebrews 11 says: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped*

for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. Now in the case of the people of old, it was their conviction that God would somehow cover their sins by this act of sacrificing an animal. Now they couldn't have known at the time that God's ultimate answer was Jesus Christ and so their conviction of things not seen was that God would atone for their sins through this act of faith. I mean they trusted in some mysterious way that God would pass over their sins because by faith they had engaged this Old Testament ritual of animal sacrifices. But that raises a big question and the question is this: Where was the justice in just an animal sacrifice paying for my sin? Again this is the issue that Paul wrestled with in the New Testament. This is what he said in Romans. This is Romans 3. He says: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Do you get what Jesus is saying there? I mean he's telling us that God put Jesus forward as a propitiation by his blood. Propitiation is that which appeases wrath. And what God is telling us there is that it may have looked in the Old Testament that God was simply

passing over sins based on ritual animal sacrifice. You know, just trust in his provision of an animal sacrifice and your sins are forgiven. Well that's not a hundred percent accurate. You see, God covered those sins in the Old Testament but they still had to be ultimately dealt with. I mean Naomi's sin, whether it was leaving Bethlehem or refusing to trust God when things got difficult or even when she tried to talk Ruth into seducing Boaz, those sins would all be covered by her placing her faith in the shed blood of an animal. That's how folks got saved in the Old Testament. Again *Hebrews 11* says: *For by it -- that is by faith -- the people of old received their commendation.* What Paul is telling us here in the New Testament is that God's justice would never allow him to simply cover over sin merely by the ritualized shedding of blood. And what God is saying here is that when Jesus acted as our propitiation for sin, *when he who knew no sin, became sin for us*, it wasn't simply an act done in the present. It was an act that reached all the way back in time to Adam and all the way forward in time to the very last day that this earth is in existence. And on that day 2,000 years ago all sin in the Old Testament and the New Testament in the near and the distant future including this very day in 2020 and every other day that God grants to this world, all of that collected sin of his sheep was gathered and collected and quantified and objectified and placed on the head of the ultimate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. And there at the cross

the sins of all of the saints of the Old Testament who had placed their faith in God's provision for sin, they met all of the sins of the present day New Testament saints and their sins including all of the infighting of Jesus' own disciples as well as the sins of all of the sheep that he had gathered within his public ministry, those sins of the old and the new covenant met with all of the 2,000 years of subsequent sins that have taken place including the very sins that you and I have committed this very morning, including also the sins that you and I will commit tomorrow and the next day and every day until Jesus himself returns, all of those sins past, present, and future were collected and placed on the head of Jesus Christ who publicly became our propitiation that day. God had indeed passed over previous sins in the past knowing the future and the cross would one day bring a day of reckoning. And that's why Paul says God put forward Jesus Christ as a propitiation, a sacrifice that would satisfy God's wrath *to show his righteousness at the present time* -- and of course Paul is saying about his time, the time of the cross. That was the present time -- *so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*. And so what he's saying is for six hours as Jesus hung on that cross, the wrath of God past, present and future was poured out on him. And that God didn't pass over Naomi's sins in the past simply because she would believe in an animal sacrifice, he saved those sins and covered those sins and placed

them on the head of Jesus. And the sins that you and I commit get placed in the very same way. And so we say is it any wonder that Isaiah says of Jesus in *Isaiah 52:14*: *His appearance was so disfigured that He did not look like a man, and His form did not resemble a human being.* See Jesus was the ultimate end to the covenant that God made with Abraham thousands of years before and it included a promise that out of Abraham's loins would come the very savior who would rescue his people from their sin. You know we look at the gospel of Luke and there in the gospel of Luke is this genealogy of Jesus, and we see a covenant and it goes from Jesus all the way back to Adam and there part of the way in we see Abraham and all of the covenantal blessings that took place between Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all of it ends in Jesus. But there right in the middle, right before the birth of David we see this little four-letter word "Obed." Obed, the son of a Moabite woman and a Bethlehemite named Boaz. A son who was given all the rights and privileges of Naomi and Elimelech's stake in Israel who in turn would protect and keep his mother Ruth and grandmother Naomi while demonstrating the miracle of God's providential care. That care hasn't changed as of today.

As I said it was the second week in February when we started the book of Ruth. Little did we know at the time what the next five months would bring: A pandemic followed by an economic collapse

followed by widespread riots. Well, turns out there are real similarities between our present day and the days of Ruth. *Judges 17* says: *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* The prophet Isaiah sums up exactly what we see every night on TV. He says: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!*

Back in Ruth's day people wondered what we wonder. Where's God in all of this? And why hasn't God shown himself and demonstrated his love for his people? I mean it's a question that we ask an awful lot today. It was a question that Naomi asked and Ruth answered in her day. But you know in some ways that makes the book of Ruth a very dangerous book. See, Ruth's story reads like a Cinderella tale. And for many, many people things work out in this story all too well. Ruth the widow meets up with prince charming Boaz, Naomi has a son and an heir, everyone lives happily ever after. That's not the way that it often works in real life. You see God's primary purpose in all of this was not actually the individual happiness of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, but the continuation of the covenantal promise that God made to Abraham. And it so happened that in meeting that covenantal promise God was able to work all

things together for good in a way that all of us could easily see. Well sometimes, maybe most times, things don't work out so neatly in this life. I've said it many times in this series, the book of Ruth gives us this unique ability to flip to the back of the book to kind of see what actually is happening. We don't have that ability and so we have to look to God for how we are to handle difficult times and there we learn two very basic principles from Proverbs 3 that we saw at the very beginning of this series. The first principle is this: We need to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. So how do we do that? Well, we look to scripture and in scripture we see how others did it in the midst of their heartache and their crisis. We find out the best way to trust God is to draw back and to try to get ahold of the big picture in my life. And so we ask ourselves where am I now? And where was I when I first encountered God and what has God done in my life in the past and based on what he's done for me in the past, what can I be confident he's going to do for me in the future? That's what David did. In *Psalm 40* he says *I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.*

And the second thing we do or don't do is we lean not, not on our own understanding. And David again in *Psalm 40* reaffirmed that

when nothing makes sense and when the enemy is whispering lies in your ear, it's time for us to mentally double down and trust not in circumstances or situations but in the God of all circumstance.

Psalm 40, David says: *Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust, and does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.*

I was reading that, I thought back to the early parts of this series back in February. We had just come back from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and there we talked about meeting another Naomi whose name was Evelyn Husband. If you remember her husband Rich was the godly believer who just happened to be captaining the Columbia Space Shuttle when it disintegrated upon reentry. Both of these women had lost their husbands and both of them had their own Naomi moments. We have Naomi's recorded right here in scripture. Evelyn's was recorded in her book *High Calling* and she wrote this. She said: "I have lost all sense of politeness with God. I have cried and wept and yelled at Him." But she also added: "I know He's big enough to handle it. He has drawn me closer than I ever thought possible. He has held me close to His heart and let me cry for as long as I've needed."

So our question is when things feel like they're spinning out of control, are you willing to trust God enough, that he's big enough

to handle it? You see I think it's a huge relief to know that God says in *Psalm 46* that *he is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*. Now understand that's not help getting you out of trouble, that's not help getting you around trouble, that's not help having you avoid trouble. Our God is a very present help in trouble. I mean I wish all of our troubles could end like Naomi's troubles did with a genuine Cinderella ending. The fact is her ending is much more the exception that proves the rule. Far more normal is the way that God was a help in Evelyn Husband's trouble. And let me just repeat what she said:

"Time and again, what the Lord said in the Bible has proved faithful and true. *Isaiah 53:3* tells us that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with our grief. He really does know how I feel. *Psalm 147:3* declares that God 'heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.' *Revelation 21:4* says, 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain' in heaven. *Matthew 11:28* states, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.' *Psalm 56:8* reminds us that God keeps track of our sorrows. He has collected all my tears in a bottle and has recorded each one in a book. Verse after verse reflects God's love for me and helps carry me through painfully dark days. Although I am lonely for Rick and will be for the rest of my life, I am never alone; I will never be

alone. God is always with me. I know that I will see Rick again in heaven, but I still mourn for him and miss him terribly. There are days that my heart feels it's literally going to break because the pain is so deep, but because I have put my hope in Christ, I am assured of the eternal hope of heaven."

You see what she's saying here? What she's saying is the trouble doesn't disappear and the pain certainly doesn't disappear and that it's not about what disappears, it's about what appears when troubles come. It's what we've watched these past few months as the troubles came to Ruth and Naomi and we then saw the grace of God. I've said it before and I'll say it again, you don't get boiling oil grace until you are thrown into boiling oil. And it is only those who are in that oil who can say to us on the outside what Eleanor Husband said. Again let me quote her. She said: "People have asked me if I blame God for what happened, and I always tell them no. God has a plan for each person's life; I may not understand that plan, and it may grieve me, but I am not bitter toward God. He has been too good to me, to Rick, and to our families. I have a long history with God, and I cannot turn my back on that history of God's faithfulness, provision, and grace. He has always loved me when I was unlovable and continues to love me today through the greatest sadness of my life. He has carried me through dark times and continues to carry me through the darkest

of days without Rick."

You know over the last few weeks I have heard dozens and dozens of dire predictions about how things are going to go now and in particular how they're going to go in November. And I say exactly what Eleanor Husband said because I believe it with all of my heart, it was true for Naomi and Ruth and it's just as true for us and that is no matter what happens, God has a plan. Nothing has ever taken him by surprise and nothing ever will. He has loved you before you were born and he will continue to love you through any and all troubles you face. And what he wants from us is the very same thing that he wanted from Ruth and Naomi in their time of troubles. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* Let's pray.

Father, I recognize that these are interesting times, difficult times and there's a lot of panic and a lot of fear. Father, I thank you for this story of Ruth and Naomi and Boaz, for the story of how your providential care worked. And Lord, we just, we know that there's lots of places and things and people that we can point to who didn't have Cinderella endings but we also know that every single case will have in the end a Cinderella ending. We pray for the grace and the strength and the wisdom and the patience to be

able to trust you in each and every day, each and every thing and each and every day and each and every encounter we have knowing that you are sovereign, you are the lover of our soul and that you will care for us. And I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.