

Basingstoke and Reading Methodist Circuit

14th June 2020 – 10:30am.

Bible month – week 2 – Boaz

Introduction –

Good morning. Our service today is the second service in the Bible Month series on the book of Ruth, where we will be reading chapter 2 and looking at the character of Boaz. My name is Chris Marsh. I am a local preacher in the Basingstoke and Reading Methodist Circuit. You are most welcome to join me, whether you are a regular member of Wesley, someone who has been following our weekly on-line services or just happened to come across this service on the web.

Hymn – StF 385 – Holy Spirit we welcome you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUIXBmT-JNk>

This is not in Hymns and Psalms – so an alternative hymn would be H&P 281 Come Down O love divine

1

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!
Move among us with holy fire
as we lay aside all earthly desire,
hands reach out and our hearts aspire.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

2

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!
Let the breeze of your presence blow
that your children here may truly know
how to move in the Spirit's flow.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

3

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!
Please accomplish in us today
some new work of loving grace, we pray —
unreservedly — have your way.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

Christopher Alan Bowater
(b. 1947)

Reading – Ruth 2

Hymn – StF 256 – When I needed a neighbour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrJ190HIk1w> Recital

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0AVOs-V_BE Instrumental

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYHwI4A6dqM> Extra verse – Prison

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym8yOdCFGpC> single voice

This is not in Hymns & Psalms – so an alternative hymn would be H&P 190 Christ is Alive

1

When I needed a neighbour, were you
there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you
there?
And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter,
were you there?

4

When I needed a shelter, were you there,
were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?

5

When I needed a healer, were you there,
were you there?

2
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there,
were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?

3
I was cold, I was naked, were you there,
were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?

When I needed a healer, were you there?

6
Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be
there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.
And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter,
I'll be there.

Sydney Carter
(1915–2004)

Have you ever found yourself doing the right thing for all the wrong reasons?

I have. Let me tell you about it. A number of years ago I unexpectedly had the opportunity to attend Spring Harvest in Minehead. I had a fantastic time and was eager to attend again the following year, which I did. That year I saw an advertisement in the daily "Spring Harvest News" for people to attend Spring Harvest for free, as a volunteer. Well, knowing that it would be difficult for me to justify the expense of attending again, I followed this up, thinking only of the fact that I could go for free! I was successful in my application and attended the following year as a steward, a job which has long hours and times of hard physical work. I have been a steward now for 10 years and was absolutely gutted when Spring Harvest was cancelled this year because of coronavirus. I have said that, for me, the day I go to Spring Harvest is the best day of the year. Why? Because not only have I been able to see and be involved in some of the marvellous acts of the Holy Spirit which I would not have normally been in a position to see, I have been assisting others in doing the same.

I wonder about the motives of Boaz. When I look closely at the story, I'm not sure if he did the right thing for the wrong reason, or even the wrong thing for the right reason!

You see – a foreign woman turns up and starts gleaning in one of his fields and he is immediately overly protective of her and is incredibly generous towards her.

- He tells his men to leave her alone. This is not just saying that they shouldn't bother her, but probably that they should not molest or assault her, suggesting that there was a risk of her being sexually harassed.
- He allows her to glean as much as she likes – even telling his men to drop barley stalks for her.
- He allows, nay even encourages, her to drink his men's water (One of the few times in the bible when a woman is invited to drink the men's water – usually it is the woman who has to provide water for the men to drink!)
- He provides her lunch
- He allows her to thresh the barley she has gleaned and she takes home about 13 kilos of grain!

Now, there may have been rules about caring for foreigners in their land, but this all seems a bit over the top.

So, what is the background of this foreigner? She is a Moabite woman – from the tribe of Moab – the son resulting in the incestuous affair between Lot (Abram's nephew) and his eldest daughter. Therefore she is not a member of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses and the Israelites had encountered the Moabites before they had entered the Promised Land. In fact, the Moabites had tried to persuade the Israelites not to do so and thereafter the relations between the two nations were very mixed, sometimes warlike and sometimes peaceable. There were, however, Israelite rules that said that Israelites and Moabites should not marry but this seems to be interpreted that Israelite women should not marry Moabite men, the other way round seemed to be more acceptable.

So here we have a Moabite widow of an Israelite man. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that she had been disowned by her own family for marrying a foreigner, so she has moved with her mother-in-law into her late husband's homeland. At least here she could be near what was called a Guardian-Redeemer. This is a legal position as set out in Leviticus Chapter 25. What this appears to say is that, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, each family was allocated a plot of land that was to be theirs for ever. If the family got into financial difficulties, their Guardian-Redeemer was, effectively, expected to purchase the land on a sort of lease. The whole nation had been instructed to farm the land in seven year cycles and at the end of the seventh cycle all property was to be returned to its original owner and all debts cancelled. It transpires that, all this time, Naomi's family had some land in that area.

Of course, we do not know whether Boaz was aware of this situation from the start or not. He did, however, as we will see in Chapter 4, later use this to his advantage. He was not the senior Guardian-Redeemer in Ruth's case, but he, probably incorrectly, advised the senior Guardian-Redeemer that he would also have to marry this Moabite woman, which he was unwilling to do and so passed on the responsibility to Boaz.

Why did Boaz do all of this? I wonder if his overriding motive was that Ruth was very attractive and he fancied her!

For whatever reasons Boaz took those actions, what he did do was to take care of a stranger, not only that, a foreigner, living in his neighbourhood. That stranger was going through tough times (let's face it, she had lost her husband, her brother-in-law and her father-in-law and was now living in a foreign land with, possibly, the only other person in the world whom she trusted, but who couldn't provide for her)

I can't help but look at the actions Boaz took whilst dealing with a foreigner and compare them to the actions we would take. It may have been slightly different for Boaz as the nations of Israel and Moab did share some common ancestry and spoke the same language, but there had been many years of separation and relations were not necessarily cordial. I realise, however, that in the current times whilst on the surface there may appear to be equality in our relationships with all people, underneath the surface there is an air of fear and distrust on all sides. This has come to light only too obviously with the current state of affairs in the USA following the death of George Floyd. Although we think it can't be like that in the UK, there is an underlying fear in all communities that it is no different here, as the recent demonstrations in London and elsewhere have shown.

I hope that you, along with me, will stand and affirm the rights of all people, regardless of who they are or where they have come from and will do all you can to make sure that no one suffers unnecessarily, especially at the hands of another person, whatever their background or the colour of their skin. After all, don't we believe that we all share a common ancestry; all being descendants of Adam and Eve and, therefore, are all children of God?

Also, when we look at the story of Boaz, we see that he saw a situation and acted upon it.

What do we do? We take a long time deliberating over what we think God wants us to do and then, once we have finally got round to doing it, we get despondent when we do not see immediate results. In our reading, Boaz acted and God used his actions, regardless of what reason he had taken them. Also, Boaz would not have seen the long-term, or even middle-term, results of those actions. For Boaz and Ruth had a son – Obed, who had a son called Jesse who was the father of King David, the greatest leader Israel even had, and, of course, twenty eight generations later, David had a descendant called Jesus.

So what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for all the signs to be right before we do anything? But we shouldn't be waiting, we should just use our gut instincts, get on and do something and let God use the results. Let's face it;

- it is always the wrong time to do the wrong thing,
- It is always the wrong time to do nothing,
- It is never the wrong time to do the right thing, even if we don't do it for the right reasons!

Hymn – StF 249 (H&P 145) – Jesu, Jesu

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWSxiNERzn8> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjBZd4MaMP8> Best two I could find

Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.

1

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
master who acts as a slave to them.

2

Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
neighbours are black folk and white,
neighbours are nearby and far away.

3

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love.
All these are neighbours to us and you.

4

Kneel at the feet of our friends,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.

North Ghanaian song
adapted by
Tom Colvin
(1925–2000)

Prayers

We pray for God to favour us, our families and friends, our neighbours and the entire world just as he favoured Ruth, that we may serve Christ Jesus in one another and love as he loves us.

Let us pray for God to comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, soul, mind and spirit.

We pray for those that are unwell, those suffering from mental health problems, those facing financial difficulties, those struggling with isolation, those without faith, children returning to school and those that will not be attending school for the foreseeable future.

Gracious Lord, give them courage and hope in their trouble and bring them your joy of salvation.

Let us pray for those who serve the needy including all medical staff; doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, porters, cleaners, and all key workers such as; teachers, police, supermarket staff, pharmacies, waste collectors, farmers, drivers and all those whose work bring them In contact with others.

Let us pray for all churches throughout the world. For peace during this unprecedented time. For the fulfilment of Gods mission at the challenging period. For all ministers of the Gospel, and our circuit Superintendent minister Rev David Shaw. For Christians to unite in Christ as we continue to worship remotely. Father Lord, strengthen and guide us to live together in your love and reveal your glory in the world.

Let us pray for the entire world, as the spread on Covid-19 causes extensive anxiety and panic across the world. For those ill at home or in hospital. For those grieving and those that have lost loved ones during this pandemic. For children that have lost their parents.

God of glory, comfort them with your presence form the anxiety and fear, sustain them by your promises and grant the world Your peace.

Let us pray for all those in authority and all leaders, for our own country and government, for those involved in making executive decisions. May God grant them wisdom and direct them to ways of justice and peace.

Let us pray for justice and peace, love and forgiveness in the world as we face the challenges of inequalities, racism, injustice and discrimination. We pray particularly for the death of George Floyd in America.

Merciful God, you continually call us to care for each other and to live with mercy and love. As our tears flow and our anger rises, remind us that we are to love as you loved us. Your way teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our soul and with all our mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second commandment is to love our neighbour as ourself. Unite us in this grief, draw us nearer to one another and move us to action.

Let us hold this moment of love and unity close to our hearts that we may pull apart injustice and reveal in us righteousness, mercy and love for all people.

All this we ask in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

Hymn – StF 564 (H&P 745) – O Thou who camest from above

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1NLdF1L6-8> Westminster Abbey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=an3tH6Pk9F0> Worcester Cathedral (Clearer)

1

O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

2

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

3

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;

still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up thy gift in me —

4

Ready for all thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley
(1707–1788)

Blessing –

Now may the peace of the Lord be with you; now and always.

May the Lord bless you,

May the Lord keep you

And may God's face shine upon you always,

And give you peace.

Amen.