

# Preserving the Name

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well friends, I wonder if you'll stand and pray with me.

Father God, we thank you for the wonders of your word and we pray tonight that you would open them to us by the work of your spirit, that we might understand you more, understand your purposes in your world and bow before your son.

And obey him. We pray these things in his name. Amen. Friends, please sit down. Now before I begin tonight, I just want to tell you that I'm beginning a little experiment.

In my own personal Bible reading, I've been using a new translation of the Bible called the Holman Christian Standard. Actually, it's not that new, but its most recent version is new, published at the end of 2010.

And in order to give it a real try out, I've decided to preach from it for a little while. It's a more literal translation, but also a translation that's designed to read well.

[ 1 : 0 7 ] So I'd value your feedback on it and see what you think. I'm going to do this probably at all services for a little while. That'll put us in a little void, you know, because sometimes I like you to look up verses in our existing translation, because that's what you've got in front of you.

But at other times, every Sunday, I'll have the passage printed out for you so that you can follow it from the main passage. So I'm keen, like I said, to have any feedback that you have.

I'd love to hear from you whether it works or not. And with that said, let's get underway. Now, I thought I'd begin today by telling you a little bit about myself and my family.

My name, as you know, is Andrew Reid. Both names are solidly Scottish. But my whole name has an even more Scottish feel to it.

My whole name is Andrew Sutherland Reid. Now, my middle name tells a story. My middle name is the maiden name of my grandmother. And all of my brothers, unfortunately, or should I say fortunately, well, anyway, I didn't ever like Sutherland.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] But all of my brothers bear that middle name, Sutherland. It was my parents' way of preserving my grandmother's maiden name.

That is preserving her name. And for my parents, and particularly my father, this was very important. Now, in contemporary society, we have lost, I think, much of the importance of names and of preserving names.

But in many cultures, names are very important. A person's name in a culture is often their identity. But it's much more than their identity. A person's name is often tied up with their place in the world.

It's linked to their deeds, their achievements, their reputation, and their honor. And it's also linked to progeny. After all, it is your descendants that will give someone's name an ongoing existence.

This is true in the Bible. And hence, and I've just lost a page. It's a terrible disaster for a preacher. I have a page missing.

[ 3 : 16 ] Especially for me, who, unlike Jono, is very loose on, and there's nothing I can do about it. So let's just press on.

Can I have an outline, Jono? No, it's all right. I can preach it. So friends, names are very important. And I want to show you, by getting you to turn with me to Genesis 2 and 3, I'm now flying like Jono, you see.

So open your Bibles at Genesis 2 and 3. Now you might remember in the Bible that in these first two chapters, human beings are created good by God.

They're created good by God. They're created to live in His presence. They're created to have harmony with each other, harmony with God, harmony with the environment into which He has placed them.

And do you remember that by chapter 3, they have begun to fall. God has a purpose for His world. That purpose is tied up with Him and living with Him.

[ 4 : 20 ] In chapter 3, they sin. And in chapter 3, disharmony enters the world. Disharmony between them and God. Disharmony between them and each other.

Disharmony between them and the environment into which He has placed them. And that is the situation we get to at the end of chapter 3. But at the end of chapter 3, God also begins to describe how He is going to deal with this situation.

Have a look with me, if you could, at Genesis 3, verse 15. It is a very important verse. It is a verse that will set the scene for much else that will follow.

Have a look at it. Chapter 3, verse 15. We read these words. God speaks to the serpent and He says, I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed.

And He will strike your head and you will strike His heel. You see, here are humans disobeying God. God punishes the serpent who tempted them and who lied about God.

[ 5 : 28 ] He punishes the woman. He punishes the man. And He punishes them from His presence. But here in verse 15 are strong hints of hope.

And in one of the strongest hints, God says, Here is what I am going to do. I am going to pursue my purposes through a seed. And this seed will do this.

And you, the serpent, will try and do that. I wonder if you can see what is being said here. The serpent has been an enemy of God's blessing for His people. This serpent has led humans away from God's purpose for them.

But God says, A day is coming when this will be reversed. You see, the reversal will come by way of an offspring or a seed of this woman. The seed of this woman, the offspring of this woman, will strike the head of this serpent.

And from this moment on in the Bible, there is a massive interest in offspring. A massive interest in seed. And therefore, a massive interest in names.

[ 6 : 33 ] Because names will show the direction. In fact, it is not an overstatement to say that the book of Genesis is about this very issue. It is about where will a seed come from.

Because if you find where the seed comes from, then you will see where God's rescue is going to come from. Genesis is therefore about producing offspring that will bring about God's purposes.

Let me show you how this works out. Open your Bibles. Flip over a few pages to Genesis 12. Take a look at the first few verses of Genesis 12. For here, God gives great promises, three great promises to Abraham.

I wonder if you can see those promises. You should be able to because we have often mentioned them. The Lord said to Abraham, Go out from your land, your relatives and your father's house to the land I show you.

And I will make you into a great nation. And I will bless you. And I will make your name great. And you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you. And I will curse those who treat you with contempt. And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

[ 7 : 35 ] Now, can you see the three promises? Promise number one, land. I will give you a land. Promise number two, children, nation, progeny. Promise number three, blessing.

God will be a blessing to Abraham. And Abraham will be a blessing to all families on earth. God's purpose, you see, in chapter 12 is exactly the same. He still wants blessing as he did in Genesis 1 to 3.

But from now on, that blessing will come via this one man and his children. Now, you can see this in Genesis 22.

Flip over to Genesis 22. And most of us know the story of Genesis 22, even if you don't know that that's where it is. Abraham and Sarah have been struggling to have children. Finally, that child arrives.

His name is Isaac. And then one day, God incredibly says that Abraham should take his son. He should go to a mountain nearby. And he should prepare.

[ 8 : 32 ] He should sacrifice his son. And Abraham prepares for the event in chapter 22. Then you might remember in the nick of time, God stops the process. He commends Abraham for his faithfulness and obedience.

And in the process, God's messenger to Abraham speaks to Abraham in verses 16 to 18. Have a look at it. Genesis 22, 16 to 18.

Look at what God says. By myself, I have sworn. This is the Lord's declaration. Because you have done this and not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you.

And I make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the sand of the seashore. Your offspring shall possess the gates of their enemies.

And all nations on earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command. Can you see all the references to the world, to offspring, to seed?

[ 9 : 28 ] God is clear. God's purpose is for blessing the world. His means for that blessing is Abraham's offspring. This is where God is going in his world.

This is God's purpose in his world. With that in mind, turn to Genesis 38. Things have progressed. Isaac and his wife have produced children with a little bit of difficulty, like mum and dad.

They have produced two sons, Jacob and Esau. We have been told that of those two sons, God's purposes will flow through Jacob. Jacob has 12 sons and one daughter through two wives and their handmaids.

Later in Genesis, we will learn that the future ruler of the people of God will come from one particular tribe, Judah. I wonder if you can see what's going on. We started with Genesis and God having a purpose for all humanity.

That purpose was focused on Adam and Eve's children. In chapter 12, we found God going a bit further and narrowing down that purpose.

[ 10 : 33 ] In chapter 12, we found it's focused on the children of Abraham and Sarah. Now what happens is it's focused even more closely. It's focused on children from Judah.

And that's where this story comes in. Take a look at it in your Bibles. Judah takes a wife for himself. They have children. And Judah finds a wife for his firstborn.

That is the one through whom his seed will come. That woman's name is Tamar. But then what happens is Judah's firstborn dies because of wickedness.

We're not told exactly what it is that he does, but he dies because of wickedness. Now in the ancient world, there were systems in place to enable a man's name or his line to continue. And so they put those systems in place.

In the case of Judah's family, the obligation was that the next son in line would sleep with the wife of the firstborn son and give her children.

[ 11 : 34 ] However, using coitus interruptus, Onan avoids his obligation. God disapproves of this. And Onan pays for it with his life.

Anyway, Judah gets a bit worried about all of this. He thinks, you know, if this keeps happening, I'm going to keep losing my line of sons and there'll be nothing left. My line will be dead. He gets a bit worried. And so he holds back his next son from Tamar.

And so Tamar thinks, well, you know, there's a way to sort this out. She takes things in her own hands. You see, she's committed to producing children for Judah's line.

And in her zeal, she disguises herself as a prostitute and tricks her father-in-law into sleeping with her. And she becomes pregnant by him.

And Judah accuses her of immorality and calls for a just punishment. Tamar then reveals herself to Judah and reveals that Judah is the father.

[ 12 : 35 ] And in verse 26, Judah says, She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her my son Shelah. Now, please hear me. I don't think that either Judah or the writer is commending the way that Tamar has gone about the process of getting children.

But in doing so, she has lined herself up with God's purposes. You see, producing children for Judah is producing children for Abraham.

And producing children for Abraham is producing children for Adam and Eve. And producing children for Adam and Eve has its goal in what?

A descendant who will strike the serpent's head. And this will, in turn, accomplish God's great purposes of blessing the world and bringing them back to him. So, let's move now a little long in history.

And Israel has been rescued out of Egypt. By the way, don't worry. We will get to Ruth chapter 4 eventually. Israel has been rescued out of Egypt. And they've now become this great nation.

[ 13 : 48 ] And they're finally entering the land that God promised to Abraham. The first city they go to and they go against in war is the city of Jericho. And we're told the story in Joshua 2 and 6.

And in Joshua 2, what happens is some spies go out and they reconnoiter the land. And the spies are sheltered by a woman. Now, she's a prostitute.

And her name is Rahab. And in Joshua chapter 2, verses 8 to 14, she acknowledges that the Lord is the creator, the God of the heavens and the earth. And what she does is she lines herself up with this God.

And she recalls how this God rescued his people out of Egypt. And she asks that this God, that she might be shown extravagant love and kindness. She uses that very same word that in Exodus 32 and that word that we've been using the last three weeks is used.

She used that word, hesed. And she asked for God to show that to her. She asked that she and her father's house will be saved.

[ 14 : 58 ] She asked that her father's line might be preserved. And the spies agree. In chapter 6, we're told that after the destruction of Jericho, she and her, sorry, during the destruction of Jericho, she and her father's household are saved.

God shows extravagant love to them. She, a foreigner and a prostitute are amazingly integrated into Israel. You see, Rahab was a woman who knew that God's purposes are tied up with Abraham's descendants.

And so when she had opportunity, she lined up with that and with those purposes. She sided with God and God loves people who side with his purposes. Now, let me tell you one little extra detail about Rahab.

There is some dispute about it. And although it's not without difficulty, did you hear Rahab's name mentioned in Matthew chapter 1? It speaks of Rahab who married a Jewish man.

And the Jewish man's name was Salmon. And together they had a son. And their son's name was Boaz. And this is the very same Boaz who just happened to come along in Ruth chapter 2.

[ 16 : 14 ] Remember the Asluck would have it? He just happened to come along. And this is the Boaz who has acted like God toward Ruth and Naomi in the succeeding chapters.

And I can't help wondering, it's just this tantalizing possibility that he learned such extravagant love from the stories about Rahab.

His grandmother, if that's how the text works out. You see, she knew that this was the nature of God. And she had experienced it at the hands of the people of God.

And perhaps when Boaz saw this young outsider, this Moabites, this outcast from Israel, he remembered his grandmum. Now we don't know this from the text.

But it's a tantalizing possibility, isn't it? In case, but in any case, let's pick up the story in Ruth chapter 4. In chapter 3, you might remember that Boaz uttered an oath in the Lord's name that he would redeem her if other kinsmen would not.

[ 17 : 21 ] So open your Bibles. Oh, sorry, the back of your sheet there. Have a look at chapter 4. It contains a court scene. And it happens at all the usual locations, that is the city gate.

And there Boaz sits waiting. Lo and behold, as though by chance, the other kinsmen comes by and Boaz corners him. And he relates the situation to him.

And I should point out here that I'm not sure that our translations get it right here. You see, I don't think Naomi is selling the land. I think she's asking the court to give its use over to a kinsman redeemer until the next Jubilee year.

At which time it would revert back. Anyway, after a lengthy speech, the kinsman redeemer utters a very short reply in verse 4. He says, yeah, I'll redeem it.

And then Boaz explains the little hitch to the arrangement. The land, you see, doesn't just come with Naomi. It comes with the Moabites, Ruth.

[ 18 : 24 ] And that in itself raises issues because not only is she a Moabites, but there's another difficulty with this woman. And you see, with Ruth comes the obligation of raising up children to a limeleck through Ruth.

And with Ruth comes the obligation to maintain the dead man's name. And his inheritance of the land, in the land. And it's this that the kinsman redeemer sort of thinks, hang on a moment.

I haven't realized all of this. He doesn't want to put his own inheritance at risk. You see, there might be a conflict between them. And so he gives the right of redemption back to Boaz and goes through some elaborate ritual where they sort of have to, you know, do certain things.

And we already know what Boaz is going to do, don't we? After all, he's bound himself by oath in the Lord's name. And you don't want to take the Lord's name in vain.

After an oath and not pursue it. So he gives the right of redemption back to Boaz. We know what Boaz is going to do. And he takes on the responsibility of kinsmen.

[ 19 : 25 ] And his mother has experienced, his grandmother has experienced this extraordinary kindness. So he extends extraordinary kindness and takes on board this woman as wife.

And the people all witness it. They pronounce a blessing in verse 11. And they pray that the Lord might make Ruth like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel.

And then they recall, do you notice who they recall? Tamar. Remember Tamar? Judah? They recall Tamar. And they pray that through the Lord's gift of children, the house of Boaz might be like the house of Perez.

And this Perez is the son that resulted from Tamar and Judah back in Genesis 38. It's an incredible thing. By the way, I should tell you, Tamar's a Gentile.

Now, in the closing verses of the chapter, we're told of the end result. In verse 13, Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz. The Lord continues to bless them. The Lord enables her to conceive.

[ 20 : 27 ] And again, the people rejoice and rejoice they might. Because the boy, the child was a boy. And the child's name was Obed.

And Obed was the father of Jesse. And that makes him the grandfather of David. I wonder if you can see what's going on here. In chapter 1, Ruth decided she'd align herself with Naomi and with Naomi's God.

In other words, she chose to align herself with God's purposes. And now, Boaz has chosen to align himself with God's purposes. And they've done it by preserving Elimelech's line.

And in doing these actions, God has accomplished far more than that, though. He has brought about his great purposes through David. With that in mind, I want you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 1.

Matthew 1, which none of you coveted Chris's job tonight, did you? Reading all of those names.

[ 21 : 29 ] He did very well. There was just one or two little stumbles that I thought extraordinarily well. So, let's have a look at it. Genesis 1, Matthew 1. The genealogy of... Do you remember what it says it is?

It's the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. The genealogy, in other words, of the one who would stomp on the serpent's head. The genealogy of him who would defeat the evil one on the cross.

He is the one who is the son of David, the son of Abraham, the one descended from Abraham, from Isaac, from Jacob. He's descended from Judah and Tamar. He's descended from Salmon and Rahab.

And he's descended from Boaz and Ruth. That is how Matthew begins his gospel. He records all the skeletons in the family closet.

Doesn't he? You see, he records outsiders whom God has used in his purposes. There are prostitutes. There are people guilty of incest.

[ 22 : 29 ] There are Canaanite women. And there is a Moabites. All. Now, if you were rolling out your family history, you might exclude those little bits, mightn't you?

They didn't have to be in the genealogy, but they are. The story's not finished, though. Turn with me to Matthew 28. Matthew 28 is after the death of Jesus.

It's in the aftermath of his death of Jesus, the Messiah. And the verses I want to concentrate on are verses 16 to 20. The disciples go to a location that Jesus has directed them to.

And they see him. They worship him. And Jesus says those wonderful words in verses 18 to 20. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age.

[ 23 : 31 ] I wonder if you can see what's going on here. I think we read these verses and miss it, because we haven't read chapter 1 in the genealogy. We've skipped over it. But listen to it.

It is incredible. Can you see what is going on? Who is it that the disciples are to go to? They are to go to all the nations.

We are back in Eden, in other words. God's view has always been that the whole world would be blessed. That is what he had in mind from the very beginning. And Jesus has accomplished it.

And so when God incorporated outsiders like Rahab and Ruth, he was just doing what he always had in mind. Little snapshots of where he was heading in the world. And when Rahab's son Boaz shown kindness to Ruth, he was part of God's purpose that would eventually bring all outsiders in.

It's an incredible thing, isn't it? Here he is just being a good, generous man, a godly man. He extends kindness to this foreigner, this woman. And it's a snapshot of what God is doing in his whole world.

[ 24 : 35 ] Extending kindness to the whole world. Can you see now how Boaz is like God? Because he got what God was like. He understood and he mimicked it.

Isn't our God wonderful? Aren't his ways incredible? Is he not worthy of all our worship that he should just be working his purposes so intricately through history?

I want to close today by just reflecting a bit on what has gone on here. See, I wonder if you've noticed something in the last four weeks. There's something astounding about Ruth. And I wonder if you saw it.

I wonder if you noticed the lack of the miraculous. Did you notice it's just not there? There's nothing sort of really stand out miraculous. When you read the book, you know God's at work, don't you?

I mean, we patently know God's at work here. But the people who are active in the book often didn't seem to know that he was. They were just normal people. They were just going about life being godly.

[ 25 : 45 ] They were deciding, I'm going to line myself up with God's purposes. And through their choices, God is at work. Through their choices, God brought about his purposes in Jesus Christ.

Friends, this is what living the Christian life is about. It is not about the spectacular. It is not about the flashy and the glossy.

It is about normal people like you and me. Making choices. Struggling with the choices we need to make. It's about us making decisions to line up with God and his purposes.

It's about choosing to obey God and marry within the faith, for example. It's about following God's rules for our households. It's about deciding to rear our children as Christians.

It's about refusing to exasperate our children. It's about deciding to work it out with a spouse when we feel like throwing in the towel. It's about acting ethically as a student.

[ 26 : 47 ] Acting ethically at work. It's about sharing the gospel with our neighbour. It's about sharing our wealth with the impoverished. It's about praying for peace in God's world. It's about remembering those in prison for the sake of the gospel.

It's about getting out of bed every morning and giving the day over to God as his day. And saying, the decisions I make today are going to reflect your character. With that in mind, I want to finish with some words from Paul from Titus 2.

Don't look it up. Look it up later on, Titus 2, 11 to 14. See, Titus 2, 11 to 14 makes it clear that the Christian life is about decisions. It's about choosing to follow God.

And choosing to live a godly life. That's what the Christian life is about, friends. Don't think it's all about these other things. It's really fundamentally about choosing to follow God. That's what it is to be Christian.

To follow God in the love of Christ. And for the love of Christ. With that in mind, Paul says this. For the grace of God. That's that word. The Greek equivalent of that word.

[ 27 : 52 ] Chesed. For the grace of God has appeared. With salvation for all people. Instructing us. To deny godlessness and worldly lusts.

And to live a sensible, righteous and godly way in the present age. While we wait. For the blessed hope. And the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

He gave himself. For us. To redeem us from all lawlessness. And to cleanse for himself of people for his own possession. Eager to do good works.

Can you hear it all? God's grace has appeared. That teaches us. To be godly. God's great generosity in Christ.

Teaches us. To be like Boaz. And to go about life. Living that way. Now can you see why all the commandments are summed up in these? Because. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart.

[ 28 : 54 ] With all your soul. With all your mind. With all your strength. And you should love your neighbour as yourself. Because your love for God is expressed that way. If you love God you will love your neighbour.

That's why Jesus says. When it's all boiled down. It's not that simple. It's not that difficult really. It's hard to live. But that's what it's about. So let's go into the world and do that. For he gave himself for us.

To redeem us from all lawlessness. And to cleanse for himself. A people for his own possession. Eager to do good works. Let's pray.