

Seeking - Finding

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2002

Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 10th of March 2002.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled Seeking, Finding and is based on Ruth chapters 2 and 3.

All of us seek different things. We go seeking for different things. My little one-year-old, she seeks out chairs.

She loves to climb chairs or anything that gets her up off the ground. She just loves climbing and climbing. The problem is she always falls down again. But she seeks another chair. She loves to climb. My three-year-old daughter, she seeks out any bit of paper she can find.

She loves to cut it out. She loves cutting up. In fact, we had an important bit of paper that we had at home. And she got to it before we could save it. So we spent the time trying to make this jigsaw puzzle of this paper, trying to work out what it was actually saying.

[1 : 1 0] We all seek different things. Some seek jobs. Some seek fortune. In fact, this church went seeking. It went seeking for an assistant minister.

And it found one. In fact, I had someone seeking me. My wife, Michelle.

When we were going out through at the end of university, I had just started working. She was still at university. Bought me a calendar one day. It was a lovely calendar. It was about Animalia. I don't know if you've seen the book Animalia.

I missed it now. You know the book anyhow. It's got these lovely animals in it. She bought me this lovely calendar. And I said, oh, thank you very much. And took it home.

Yeah, I thought, that's great. I'll stick it up on the wall, I guess. It'll be nice. She phoned me up later that night. Have you looked through the calendar? Yeah, it's nice. It's really, I like it.

[2 : 1 3] You know, lots of little animals on it. It's very cute. Yeah, it's good. She said, no, have you looked through the calendar? I'll have a look now. Any particular place I should be looking.

Oh, the 12th of December. So I'm flicking over and there's the 12th of December. And in the little square where the 12th of December is, this little message saying, this would be a good day for a wedding.

With little wedding bells drawn around it. My wife sought me out. And she found me. Oh, thanks.

Tonight we're going to be looking at Ruth and Naomi. They come seeking. And through great kindness, they find. They went seeking and they found.

If you look at the end of chapter 1, for those who weren't here last week, we see that Ruth and Naomi come into Bethlehem. The story has gone up to this point that Naomi and her husband and three sons went off to a foreign country.

[3 : 2 4] Two sons went off to a foreign country to Moab because there was a great famine in the land. When they were there, her husband dies. The two sons take two wives. And things are going along quite nicely.

Then the two sons die. And so Naomi is left with her two daughters-in-law. Foreigners. In a foreign land. And she hears that God has come to the rescue of his people.

And the famine is over. There's food back in Israel. And so Naomi sets off with her two daughters-in-law. And on the way she says, look, go back. And there's this pleading and there's this to-ing and fro-ing.

And in the end, one of the daughters goes back. But Ruth, through great devotion, and this is great. In verses 16 and 17, we hear these great words.

Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people. And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. There will I be buried. Great words of devotion from Ruth.

[4 : 26] To Naomi. And so, Ruth and Naomi head back to Bethlehem. As they come in, the women start talking about Naomi.

She looks beaten. And we hear these words from Naomi. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?

In verse 20, we see, Call me no longer Naomi. Call me Mara. For the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. Call me bitter. She is bitter.

She is empty. And at the end of chapter one, that's where we're left. They walk into town. Naomi, empty. Or so she thinks. For she has a woman of great devotion beside her.

Ruth. And we're going to see more of this in this next chapter. A couple of chapters. Well, chapter two. I wish I had more time just to pour through these two chapters.

[5 : 36] Because they're great. I had such a great week this week, pouring through these two chapters, that in the end I almost ran out of time trying to put the sermon together. Because there is just so much richness in the story.

Take some time to read over it. I can't do it justice tonight in terms of the details of the story. But take some time to read it at your leisure. Well, we start at the beginning of chapter two.

And we have this picture of Boaz. You can imagine the screen flies up. You've just had the interval between chapter one and chapter two. We're back. We're feeling refreshed. We've had our little drink and our Maltesers.

And we're back for the second installment of the play. And the stage curtain flies open. And there standing on the stage is a figure that we haven't seen before. Boaz. A rich relative, we're told.

Someone of high standing. And then before we've got a good glimpse of him, the light goes out on him. We don't hear from him for a little while. And the story goes back onto Naomi and Ruth.

[6 : 38] And Ruth says, I'm going out. I'm going to go out into the fields and start gleaning for us. Now gleaning was a part of the Israel culture. It was a process set up there to protect, to look after the widows and the poor.

What would happen is in a field, you would have all the grain there and the people would come through harvesting it. And those who were the poor widows would come behind and pick up anything that was left behind.

They were called gleaners. So Ruth goes out gleaning. She goes out into the fields, trying to find someone who she may find favour upon.

And she heads out into the fields. We see here, it just so happens, by coincidence, that she goes to Boaz's field.

A close relative that we know, but Ruth doesn't know this at this stage. And so she starts working in the field. Well, it just so happens that Boaz should turn up.

[7 : 40] And he goes, who's that woman over there? He noticed that there's this woman in the field doing the gleaning, picking up behind. And he asks his foreman, who is this? And the foreman goes, oh, this is Ruth. She's the one who's come with Naomi.

She's a Moabite. Well, Boaz very quickly calls her over and says, look, go into my field, but stay close. Stay close to the workers there.

Pick up, you know, make sure you gather all the things on the ground. And not only that, make sure you stay close to the women. They'll look after you. I've told my men not to harm you.

And not only that, if you get thirsty, come and have some of the water that is there. The young men will serve it to you. So she goes out and gleams.

What a great kindness. Well, at mealtime, we see later on, kindness is shown to her again. Boaz calls her over and says, look, come and share in some of the bread that we have here.

[8 : 43] Come and dip it into the sour wine, which is just like a dipping sauce. Come and share some of the food that we've got. And while she's there, she comes over and sits right beside the workers there.

Right beside them. She's in the midst. It's like she's a family member now. She comes and sits there. Boaz goes over and pours beside her a pile of parched grain.

Some seed to eat. It was like some wheat that had been heated up over a fire. That they could eat. And so we see there that she eats. And she keeps on feeding until she is absolutely satisfied.

And what's left over? She puts away. And stores. Well, she gets up after she's eaten and starts to move away.

And we see there that then Boaz goes even further. He tells his man, look, instead of her gleaning behind, let her glean in amongst you. Let her pick up the stuff.

[9 : 46] In fact, not only do that, throw some on the ground for her as you're going along. Take a few bundles out and just throw it on the ground for her to pick up. Such extravagance.

So, Ruth goes out. And he says, by the way, make sure you look after her. Don't complain to her. Don't get bitter or angry with her. Do not rebuke her. We see in verse 17.

She gleaned until evening. And then she beat out all that she had gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley. Now, we see that this is, in terms of trying to work this out, the people have looked back through, trying to work out how much this is.

And it equates to roughly about 13 kilograms of wheat. A fair amount. For someone just picking up what's left behind. In fact, we see in other places that the actual wages for someone who's been working in the field, a servant, he would get about half to one kilogram as a day's wages.

She has got 13 kilos. Almost half a month's pay in just one day. Well, we see there that she goes home and goes to Naomi and says, Look what I've got.

[11 : 07] Naomi can't believe it. Where? Who is it? What great kindness? How did this happen? You can just see her just looking at all this grain.

How did it? Who? She says, It was Boaz. It was Boaz.

Naomi's. Well, Naomi's, all of a sudden, she starts, the mind starts turning. She knows the secret. He's a close relative.

He's actually a Kingsman's Redeemer. Now, this is again another part of the Old Testament. You may not know. But in the Old Testament, the Kingsman's Redeemer was someone who was a close relative that was there to look after the other relatives if they came in hard times.

So if you were someone that lost your husband, had no way of providing for yourself, or you were a family that lost all your property and you had no way of looking after yourself, or whatever it happened to be, you needed justice done.

[12 : 15] Then your Kingsman's Redeemer, who was a close relative, it was his responsibility to come and fix the problem. It was a part of the Old Testament set up there.

It was called the Kingsman's Redeemer. Naomi knows that Boaz is a Kingsman's Redeemer for her. He is a close relative.

Here is someone that might be able to provide for all their needs. to bring the wholeness that she really desires. Ruth says, by the way, I'm allowed to glean there until the end of the harvest.

That's about two months. He said that I could work there amongst them all. I can keep on gleaning and for a whole two months of harvest. There probably would have been one month of wheat and then probably a month of barley.

The two months. Imagine how much she could have collected then. And we see at the end of chapter 2, they were seeking to be over the famine.

[13 : 21] And the end of the famine has come for both Naomi and Ruth through great kindness. Yet they're not whole.

There are possibilities there though. We're told at the end of the chapter. There are possibilities. And we see right at the very end, just in that very last line of chapter 2, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth still lives with her mother-in-law. She's still at home there. There's still no children. They're still not completely whole.

So then we go into chapter 3. In chapter 3, we see here Naomi decides that she's seeking to find some rest. She's going to find someone to marry for Ruth, to provide some security there for her.

So she goes out seeking to find a husband. A bit like my wife, I guess. And it wasn't even a leap year, I might say. So she hatches a plan.

[14 : 24] Part of the harvesting time was the winnowing. What would happen is they would bring their great bundles of grain down to a very hard place, and they'd lay it on the ground. And what would happen is a cart would go around on this very hard surface, normally a rock or something like that, or an animal would walk around on it.

And what would happen is as the animals or the carts with the heavy wheels walking around on the grain, what it would do is it would break off the husk, the outside shell that was holding the grain inside wheat.

And so what they would do then is they would get these forks, and they would throw the grain up in the air. And with the wind, the wind would catch what was light and would blow it away. So all the chaff would start blowing away, and all the stalk and all that that was no good would blow away.

But the heavier stuff would fall down, the grain. And that was the process of winnowing. Well, Naomi notes that it's winnowing time.

It's the end of the harvest. And she notes that Boaz is just outside of Bethlehem. Probably not far. It's probably a place that's just suited for winnowing, just outside Bethlehem.

[15 : 33] She notes that he's going down there that night. So she says to Ruth, Righto, let's get you dressed up. We're going to put the best clothes on you. We're going to put a little bit of perfume on.

We're going to make you so you look very attractive. So they get her ready. And then she tells Ruth, When you get there, note the place that Boaz lays down at night time.

Note where he goes. And then after he's gone to sleep, and everyone's gone and it's all quiet, find that place where he is.

Lift up the blanket where his feet are, and lay down at his feet. Just lay there. And she says at the end of that, And he will tell you what to do.

We see that in verse 5. She said to her, All that I told you, Oh, sorry, Verse 4, And he will tell you what to do.

[16 : 45] Well, She accepts all that Naomi has told her. She dresses up, And she goes down to the place outside of Bethlehem. She notes where Boaz is.

She notes that he's eaten and drunk. And he's in a content mood. And he goes down and lays down. And at night, About midnight, We're told, She uncovers, Oh, sorry, She lays down at his feet, And uncovers his feet with a blanket, And just lays there.

About midnight, He stirs a little bit. Part of the thought is here, That by the uncovering of the feet, It would make him cold. Making him stir at a later point.

When it's later on, When everyone else has gone to sleep, And they can talk in the dark, And with no one listening. So she uncovers his feet. Well, he stirs.

He's startled, We see in verse 8. And he sees at his feet, A woman. He said, Who are you?

[17 : 57] Turn over the page. And she answered, I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your cloak over your servant, For you are the next of kin. Here we see, Ruth, At the feet of Boaz, Asking Boaz, For his hand in marriage.

He's asking her, For him to put over his cloak over her, To take her in, In a symbol of marriage. You can feel the tension, Can't you?

What is he going to do? Get up and get out of here! What's going to happen? Look in verse 10. He said to her, 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. And now, My daughter, Do not be afraid, For I'll do all that you ask.

For all the assembly of my people know, That you are a worthy woman. Boaz, In this last, This other act of kindness, Says that he will bring about the marriage for this woman.

[19 : 07] And just when we start hearing the wedding bells, And things are great, Boaz drops a bit of a bombshell. He says, But now, Verse 12, Though it is true that I am a near kinsman, There is another kinsman, More closely related, Than I.

There is another person in town, Who is closer. Whose responsibility is to look after Ruth, And to bring about her wholeness, Bring about marriage for her, And children, And security.

There is someone else closer than her. And Boaz says, I will sort this out in the morning. Lay down, Go to sleep. And she does.

But very early in the morning, So as not to do anything inappropriate, Or to be caught by people, And have people gossip. She gets up early. Boaz pours, Six measures of barley, Into her apron.

And helps her, Put on her back, And sends her on her way back, To Naomi. And Boaz heads off, To deal with the matter, That he said he would. As Ruth heads towards Naomi, Naomi sees her.

[20 : 24] You can just imagine it, Can't you? She's probably had such a restless night's sleep. There was Ruth down there, Great risk. Anything could have happened. She was probably, You know, Tossing and turning all night, Wondering what was happening.

And there she sees her coming towards her. She says, In verse 16, She came to her mother-in-law, Who said, How did things go with you, My daughter?

How did it go? Are you married yet? Are things sorted out? And Ruth tells her, All that has happened. And then shows her, The great lot of barley, At the end.

She recognises in the end, That Boaz would deal with this, And deal with it properly.

We see there, That Ruth explains, That she took the barley back, And said, Do not go back to your mother-in-law, Empty handed. He was a woman that was empty, But she comes back, Ruth comes back, Filling her emptiness, Through Boaz.

[21 : 37] And Naomi says, Just wait. Don't be impatient. Boaz is going to sort this out today. And that's where we're left, At the end of the chapter. But we know, That Ruth will be married.

They came seeking, And they found, Through great kindness. Let's have a bit of a close look, At this theme of kindness. It's a theme, That was actually hinted, In chapter 1.

We noted there, In chapter 1, That kindness comes from God. We see there, That Naomi says, When she's talking about, To her two daughters-in-law, To go back to their mother's house, And may the Lord deal kindly with you.

Naomi recognises, That kindness comes from God. We saw there, Just a little glimpse of it, In chapter 1. But here in chapter 2 and 3, Kindness is just there, Abounding.

It's extravagant kindness. If you turn to chapter 2, Verses 8 and 9, There we see Boaz, Showing tremendous kindness. Let me read it for you.

[22 : 43] Then Boaz said to Ruth, Now listen my daughter, Do not go and glean in another field, Or leave this one, But keep close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field, That is being reaped, And fire behind them.

I order the young men, Not to bother you. If you are thirsty, Go to the vessels, And drink from what the young men have drawn. What a great kindness.

Don't go too far, Stay close to my women. Come and be a part of my group. Be like if you're a part of my family. Of particular kindness, Is this mention of, The young men will draw water out for you.

As we look back through the Old Testament, It was normally the woman's place, To draw water out for men. Or if not, A foreigner to do it. But here is a woman, Who was a foreigner, A Moabite, Being served water, By the young men.

What kindness. In verse 14, We see that at mealtime, Boaz says to her, Come here and eat some of this bread, And dip your morsel in the sour wine.

[23 : 49] So she sat beside the reapers, And he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, And she had some left over. Great kindness shown by Boaz again.

In verse 16, We see there that as she goes to get up, He tells, He tells, Tells the young men there, That you must pull out some handfuls of grain.

This is going beyond, What was required in the Old Testament. This is extravagant kindness, Shown to this foreigner, A woman.

And at the end, We see the great kindness, With this great 13 kilos of wheat that she has. At the end of chapter 3, We see the continued kindness of Boaz, Where he will sort out marriage for her, That he will bring about security for her.

And then right at the very end, In verse 15, To show what he means, To show that he can do it, He pours six measures of barley, Into her apron.

[25 : 03] Great kindness. Note the way that this kindness, Is also seen in the way that, That Ruth starts as an outsider, And gets closer and closer.

She becomes closer and closer, Into the family, Into Israel. In chapter 1, We see that she is a foreigner, A Moabite. At the end, At the end of that chapter 1, We see her moving towards Bethlehem, Tied very closely, To Naomi.

But in this chapter, You can just see her being, Drawn closer and closer. At the mealtime, We see her in the end, Sitting beside, The workers.

Right there in the midst. In chapter 3, We see her lying, At Boaz's feet. See the way that she is included. What a great kindness, Shown to this foreigner.

But note how the kindness, Flows onto Naomi, This woman of emptiness. Note the way that she is filled. Note the way that she came, Looking for food, And at the end of chapter 2, She has plenty.

[26 : 22] In chapter 3, She seeks marriage, For Ruth. Ruth. And at the end, We're told, That Boaz is going to sort it out. Although we don't know, Whether it's going to be Boaz, Or someone else.

We'll find that out next chapter, Next week. But we know, That he's going to deal with it. Why such kindness, To Ruth? Stop thinking about it.

Why? Why show such kindness? In fact, Back in the Old Testament, They were told, That they were not to associate, With the Moabites. Not to bring them, Into the assembly, Of God.

But here is, Boaz, Showing great kindness to her. Well I think from this text, There are two reasons, Why, There is this great kindness shown. The first reason, Why Boaz shows great kindness, Is very clear for all to see.

And Boaz makes it clear to her. In chapter 2 verse 10. You see, Ruth asks the same question, Why show me great kindness? Verse 10, Then she fell prostrate, With her face to the ground, And said to him, Why have I found favour in your sight, That you should take notice of me, When I am a foreigner?

[27 : 34] Why show kindness to me? In verse 11, We see, That Boaz answered her, All that you have done, For your mother-in-law, Since the death of your husband, Has been fully told me.

And how you left your father and mother, And your native land, And came to a people, That you did not know before. May the Lord reward you, For your deeds, That you may have a full reward, From the Lord, The God of Israel, Under whose wings, You have come for refuge.

Boaz notes, The reason why he acts so kindly, Towards her, Is because of the great kindness, She is shown to Naomi, She is selfless, Towards Naomi.

Look at the way, At the end of chapter 2, She even gives, The parched grain, That grain that was fried up, That she ate for, Ate from at the meal time, She brings that, And gives it to Naomi, And says, Here look, Here's some more food.

She is devoted, She has got such kindness, We see it in chapter 3, Verse 10 as well, You might want to flip over there, Chapter 3, Verse 10, When he realises, That it's not Ruth at his feet, He says, May you be blessed, By the Lord my daughter, For this last instance, Your loyalty is better, Than the first, You have not gone, You have gone after young men, Whether poor or rich, He notes, Boaz notes, Her kindness again, She hasn't gone, Seeking riches, Or passion, Boaz notes, Her kindness, And asks, That she be rewarded for it, The second reason, Why I think kindness, Is shown towards, Ruth and Naomi, Is due to God, Last week we saw, So strongly, The way that God worked, In the background, The way that he just,

[29 : 34] Brought about, The different situations, Naomi even recognises it, In the end, That it is God, Who is the one, Who has brought about, The things that are happening, God is the one, Who is sovereign, In all these things, Well today we don't see it, As clearly, Or mention it as clearly, But it's there, God is the one, That brings about, This kindness, Towards Ruth and Naomi, Have a look in chapter 2, Verse 3, Chapter 2, Verse 3, Oh sorry, Not chapter 2, Verse 3, Chapter 2, Oh sorry, Yes it is verse 3, And she went, And she came and gleaned, In the fields, Behind the reapers, As it happened, She came to the part, Of the field, Belonging to Boaz, As it happened, Just by coincidence, Fancy that, She turned up, At Boaz's field, Well who would have guessed,

Hey, Out of all the fields, She could have gone to, She ends up, At Boaz's field, Well isn't that, Just a great set, Of coincidences, If we look in verse 4, We see there, The way that Boaz, Talks about the Lord, When he calls out, To his reapers, The Lord be with you, And they answered, The Lord bless you, God is the one, Who is behind, These coincidences, God is the one, Who is there, Is it any coincidence, That Boaz, Is a redeemer, A kinsman redeemer, Is it any coincidence, They come back, At the time, Of the barley harvest, Look at the way, That God is working here, Working powerfully, The second way, That we can see, The way that God is working, Is the way he answers prayer, Flip back to chapter 1, Verse 8, I'm sorry, There's a lot of flipping here, But this is just so exciting,

Chapter 1, Verse 8, Naomi says, To her two daughters-in-law, As she's going back, May the Lord, Deal kindly with you, She prays that Ruth, And the other daughter-in-law, That God will deal kindly with them, God is answering that prayer, Look at the great kindness, That is shown, Here is God answering prayer, That Naomi prays, In chapter 2, Verse 12, We see there, Boaz, Saying to Ruth, After she asked, Why have you dealt this great kindness to me?

Boaz says, May the Lord reward you, For your deeds, Here is Boaz, Praying that she will be, Rewarded, That God will show kindness, Towards her, And what do we see straight after?

There is Boaz, Being the answer to his prayer, Showing great kindness, To Ruth, And Naomi, If you flip over, To 3, Verse 10, He prays again, May you be blessed, By the Lord, May you be blessed, May you be blessed, Well how can she be blessed anymore?

[32 : 58] Boaz is going to sort out the marriage problem, They've been saved from the famine, What other blessing could possibly come, To Ruth and Naomi? I can't tell you at this moment, But if you come back next week, You'll find out, I hope I've whet your appetite, Because it's very exciting, To see how will God bless, How will God answer this prayer of Boaz again?

Look at the way that God answers prayer, The way that he works in coincidences, How are we going to apply this to ourselves tonight?

Have you stopped, To consider the great kindnesses, That have been shown to you? Just stop and reflect a moment, Think of where you live, Think of the family that you have, The house that you live in, Think of all the great kindnesses, That have been shown to you, Think about the freedom that we enjoy here in this country, But think about also the incomparable riches, That God has shown you, In his kindness, That is seen through Christ, For God sought us out, Just like in the parables, We see there that Jesus, Talks about God seeking us out, Those that are lost, And he brings us back into his family, Like the lost coin, The lost sheep, The lost son,

Think of the great kindness, That God has shown you, In bringing you back into his family, Perhaps you may not know that great kindness, But there is a God, Who seeks to have you, In a relationship with you, What great kindness, Think, Just reflect a little bit more about this, Think of the coincidences, That came about for you to be, As a part of God's family, Perhaps it may be, That you have a Christian family, Perhaps someone told you, Just by chance, That you happen to be at a university, Where someone told you about Jesus, What are the coincidences, That are out there, Of God showing his kindness to you, Stop and reflect about them, Just a little, Think of the way that God, Has so kindly dealt with you, Think about the prayers, That have been answered, About you, Praying that you might,

See God's kindnesses, Who are the people, That have been praying for you, That you might be here tonight, Hearing about God's kindnesses, Have you thanked God, For this great kindness, Have you stopped and praised, Our great God, Because he's certainly worthy of it, Let's turn it around a little bit, Who are you showing kindness to, The New Testament talks about, The Christian virtue of kindness, Who do you show kindness to, Are you loving the foreigner, The Moabite, The one who is outside this church, Outside your friendship group, Who are you praying for, Because we can see from this story, That God answers prayer, How are you using your money,

[36 : 49] And your time for God, Are you showing extravagant kindness, To those around you, That God may bring about kindness, In other people's life, During this week, I taught my little daughter, How to play, I spy of my little eye, And I say to her, You know, I spy of my little eye, Something that's pink, And so she'd be seeking around, Trying to find what was pink, And she'd see a flower, The flower, And then after a while, She got the hang of it, I spy, In my eye, That tree, Um, The tree over there, Yeah, Yeah, That's it, She didn't quite get the idea, Of the seeking and finding, My prayer is, Is that we will seek,

A greater understanding, Of God's kindness to us, And that our lives, Will reflect, That great kindness, That God has shown in us, Let me pray, Father, We do indeed thank you, For the great kindnesses, That you have shown us, The way that you've worked, In our lives, The way that you've answered prayer, Father, We thank you for the book of Ruth, Which teaches us about these things, Of your great kindness, The way that you work, In people's lives, The way that you answer prayer, Father, We pray that you will help us, To be people who are kind, That live lives to please you, That we will be people, That recognize that you are sovereign, In all things, We pray that you will help us, To tell others, Of your great kindness,

We pray this in your son's name, Amen.