

Irish band Rend Collective, one of my favourite bands in their song, No Outsiders, wrote this, You are our refuge.

You have no borders.

When I was a stranger knocking at your door, you took me in with no questions and no conditions.

When I was a sinner running from your grace, you called me friend.

You called me friend.

There are no outsiders to your love.

We are all welcome.

There's grace enough.

When I have wandered, Lord, your cross is the open door.

There are no outsiders.

I'm not an outsider to your love.

The book of Ruth is a parable of redemption.

It's a story about foreigners who get to become family, of outsiders who become insiders, of refugees who find refuge.

And it's a story of a guardian redeemer who saves a person, such that a modern reader of the story, post the resurrection of Jesus, will think immediately, this is pointing me to the story of Christ.

This morning, as we look at this wonderful story of Ruth, we'll see God's provision in the ordinary and a whole bunch of other really great ideas that are so encouraging.

So let me start in chapter two, verse one, God's provision in the ordinary.

Now, Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelech whose name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Molebite said to Naomi, let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone whose eyes I find favour.

Naomi said to her, go ahead, my daughter.

So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters.

As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

Just then, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters.

The Lord be with you.

The Lord bless you, they answered.

Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, who does that young woman belong to?

The overseer replied, she is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi.

She said, please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.

She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.

If you missed last Sunday because you were away, or you were here and you experienced our fire evacuation, you wouldn't have heard the sermon unless you were here last Sunday night.

But can I encourage you to catch up on it?

It's online, you can listen to it or watch it.

It was a great message.

Ben made a point to show that Naomi and Ruth were in a really tough situation.

So Naomi was married, had two sons, there was a famine in the land.

They ended up going from the area of Bethlehem to Moab, which is across the Jordan, towards what we would know as Jordan in the East.

And it was tough.

The husband and the two sons died.

And so Naomi, the mother, is left with two daughters-in-law, foreigners, Moabites, and one of them stays, and one, named Ruth, comes back with her mother-in-law to the homeland, to Bethlehem.

And so it's a challenging situation they find themselves in.

And so then we're introduced in verse 1 of chapter 2 to a man named Boaz.

Now his name means, in him is strength.

He's described as a man of standing, which means a high moral character.

And this is the narrator planting a seed already that God is behind this scene.

God has provided somebody who is of a worthy character to look after Ruth.

In verse 2, Ruth requests permission to glean, to take food from the edges of the field.

Who's familiar with why she would ask that?

So it's from the Old Testament.

It's in the Mosaic Law.

God has a heart for the widow, the foreigner, the poor.

And this is exactly Ruth.

And if you had land, you were to leave the edges of your harvest for the poor, the foreigner, and the widow to come and glean, because the grace of God is such that he wants to look after the vulnerable.

And so, then we come to this verse 3, this great line, as it turned out, as it turned out, in Hebrew, it means, her chance chanced upon.

Her chance chanced upon.

The narrator is winking as he writes that, because there's no chance here.

God is doing a work, and God is providing for this young, vulnerable woman.

Nothing is actually chance.

God is doing a work of grace.

As it turned out, means the Lord planned it.

Verse 4 to 7 emphasizes what we might call ordinary obedience meeting divine guidance.

Have you read the book yet?

Have you read the book of Ruth?

It ends in a really wonderful way.

We find out that Ruth marries this guy, Boaz.

And they have a child, and the child's name is Obed, and Obed has a son named Jesse, and Jesse's son is David, who is King David, and the line of the Messiah is this line.

So it's a very significant meeting that is happening right now.

Ruth meeting Boaz.

How does this monumental Bethlehem located meeting occur?

Well, there's another meeting that happens in Bethlehem many years later that has a lot of angelic guidance surrounding it when Jesus is born, but not so here.

It's just a poor, widowed foreigner humbling herself, following the teachings of the law.

She lines up for God's faithful provision to the needy.

It's interesting, isn't it?

Such a significant encounter, Ruth meeting Boaz, but it's absolutely ordinary.

Who has discovered that God is constantly guiding their steps?

Who knows that God does it mostly in the ordinary?

It's normally very ordinary.

In fact, if you were to sneak into the upper room, the John 13 upper room, and you thought, I've heard that God in human flesh is here.

Where will I find him?

Is there a fancy chair somewhere that he's sitting on?

No, you'd be looking around up here.

You'd have to look down and you'd find this guy in the dust on his knees, serving his disciples, washing their feet.

God turns up in strange ways, doesn't he?

And so often he brings his guidance into our lives in the midst of the ordinary.

A wise man once said, our job as followers of Jesus is to find something worth saying.

It's an ordinary pursuit in a way.

It's just find something worth saying.

Don't chase the platform to share it.

Let God give you a platform to share.

You find out what is worth saying.

And of course, that's ultimately the gospel.

I think it's the same with finding your life partner.

I think God is really wanting us to do our best in the ordinary to become the type of people with a character that God would say, you know what, I could really use you.

And I'll line you up with this person that is going to be your life partner.

I know it's not as simple as that.

It doesn't feel as simple as that often.

But that's what's happening here.

Ruth is doing what she needs to do.

Can I encourage you with this truth?

Never underestimate mundane rhythms of obedience as a platform for God's providential guidance.

Can anyone agree?

Never underestimate mundane rhythms of obedience as a platform for God's providential guidance.

God provides here in the very much in the ordinary.

And then we find God's kindness in redemption.



It's quite a bit of text today.

I encourage you just to sit in it and listen to it because it's what this book is about.

It's a wonderful story.

So Boaz, verse 8, to repeat some of what Tony just read out.

Boaz said to Ruth, My daughter, listen to me.

Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here.

Stay here with the women who work for me.

Watch the field where the men are harvesting and follow along after the women.

I've told the men not to lay a hand on you, and whenever you're thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.

At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground.

She asked him, Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me a foreigner?

Boaz replied, I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before.

May the Lord repay you for what you have done.

May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my Lord, she said.

You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant, though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.

Boaz's first words to Ruth are soaked in grace, aren't they?

My daughter, listen to me, verse 8.

The familial address, but it's given to a Moabite outsider.

He addresses her as family.

Boaz instructs her to remain in his field, stay close to his servant girls, and drink from his jars.

Each of these commands reverses Ruth's social standing.

The foreigner becomes an insider.

The needy one receives protection.

The thirsty drink freely.

It's quite a nice gospel summary, isn't it?

The outsider becomes an insider.

The vulnerable becomes safe.

The thirsty get filled.

And it's all for free.

This is meant to lift our eyes up and see God, isn't it?

Boaz acts as a living embodiment of God's covenant mercy, his steadfast love, the great characteristic that God is known for throughout the whole Bible, his hesed love, his steadfast, unfailing love.

Boaz is treating Ruth the way God would have treated her.

Amen?

That's the wonder of the story.

Ruth is overwhelmed in verse 10.

She falls face down.

She says, Why have I found favour in your eyes?

Remember, it's like a parable.

We're meant to see ourselves in Ruth and to see God in Boaz.

God is a kind redeemer.

Boaz is very kind, isn't he?

He's so kind.

Ruth can't work it out.

Why have I found favour in your eyes?

I would put it to you that that question is a question that every grace aware Christian has asked.

God, why me?

I know it's not because I'm so smart and I worked it all out, you know?

Who's the God of the universe and who is the saviour?

That's not why we got saved.

It is an act of kindness and mercy.

Do you know that God never stops being kind?

This is so important to just stop and think about.

In God's wrath, the punishment he pours out on those who reject him, he's kind.

He's the kindest being in the universe.

I'm not saying that to reject God and have an existence without God is something good.

I'm not saying that, but God is kind.

He is good.

He is holy.

He is love.

He is powerful.

He is all knowing.

But he's kind.

Amen.

What does it mean for you to know and remember God is kind?

Out of his kindness, he sent Jesus to rescue us, to die in our place, to redeem us from sin and death.

He did it because he's kind.

And this is what Titus 3, 4 to 6 says, but when the kindness and love of God, our Saviour, appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

God is so kind to us.

Amen.

When Leanne and I were early in our marriage, we were at a church and I had become the pastor there.

And we went out for a dinner at an expensive restaurant.

And it wasn't something we got to do very often.

We were a young, young married couple in ministry.

We just didn't have much money.

But there was something going on.

I can't remember what it was.

Something very significant, worth a big celebration.

And we were at this meal at this restaurant in Cronulla.

And it was wonderful.

And we met this couple who we'd only met, I think, once before from the church.

And they were actually engaged to be married.

And they were there.

We had a very brief conversation.

And then they left.

And we had a beautiful meal.

And you can imagine what happened.

We were about to leave and pay the bill.

And they said, oh, that's been paid.

And we were just sort of a bit confused.

It was a really expensive bill.

And the person said, no, your friends have paid it in full.

What do you do with that situation?

You said, no, let me pay double.

I am paying myself.

I will not have it.

Now you say, oh, thank you.

And then you get in touch with them later on and say, thank you so much.

That was so kind.

That was so gracious.

That's the gospel, isn't it?

That Christ has done the task that God set him.

He has paid for our sin.

He has demonstrated the Father's kindness in his redemptive work.



Ruth never asked for special treatment, but she received it.

God is like Boaz.

Well, in fact, Boaz is like God.

The outsider was becoming the insider through God's provision in the ordinary, his kindness in redemption.

And if we just backtrack and focus on verse 12, we see God's refuge in relationship.

Verse 12, Boaz said, May the Lord repay you for what you have done.

May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

The verb, the Hebrew word *kasor*, translated refuge, means to entrust yourself completely in another one's care.

It's the language actually of covenant intimacy.

In Israel's story, God made big promises to them.

It's covenant language, the relationship between God and Israel.

It's like, I'm going to be your God, and you're going to be my people, and there's a way I want you to live, but I promise you, I'll always be there for you.

And you can find refuge under my wings.

Like a majestic eagle is powerful, and I'm powerful, this is God's sort of language, but an eagle will look after its chicks.

And you can come and find refuge under my covenant-loving relational wings.

What picture is that really looking at in the history of Israel, finding refuge under big, powerful wings?

Anyone think of where that is pointing to?

The cherubim in the temple.

Does anyone remember how wide one...

So there's two cherubim either side and just sort of above the arc of the covenant.

Anyone remember how wide the wingspan, the literal wingspan in the temple, of one cherubim, one big angelic bird is?

Nine meters.

So, the two cherubim in the temple are pretty much covering the full auditorium.

So can you see how for an Israelite, when they hear the language of come and find refuge under my wings, there's a powerful sense of protection.

But it's not just this sort of metaphor of a bird, it's...

No, it's the God of Israel, the Holy Creator.

You are safe in His relational promise.

And this is what is being offered to Ruth.

I want you to come into the family and be safe, find refuge under the wings of the Almighty.

Where do you seek shelter in life storms?

Practical question.

Where do you seek shelter?

Some of us have been Christians for years and you sort of know what you are meant to say.

But where do you really find it?

Jesus said these beautiful words in Matthew 11, Come to me, if you need shelter, come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

You will find refuge, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

But you have got to do that literally, don't you?

You have got to get to the point where you acknowledge, I am actually out of options.

I am done.

I need a Saviour.

I need a shelter.

I am tired, burdened.

I need rest.

And Jesus says to that person, come to me, come to me and drop your tools and find refuge in me and with me.

Do you reckon Ruth feels vulnerable?

She's so vulnerable.

What struck me as I read the text is that Boaz just sort of throw away line, hey, Ruth, stay here.

I've said to the men, don't lay a hand on her.

What if he hadn't have said that?

What a vulnerable human being.

Does that mean people would lay hands on her?

Of course it does.

This is a person who is in a very scary situation, powerless, stateless, impoverished, and she is finding refuge under the wings of Boaz.

And ultimately, this is a picture of God's love, His grace, His kindness.

There is refuge for you today in the family of Jesus.

Hallelujah.

There is.

It's available to you.

I don't know if you know that, but it is.

The outsider gets to experience God's abundance in provision.

At mealtime, verse 14, Boaz said to her, Come over here, have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.

When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain.

She ate all she wanted and had some leftover.

As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her.

Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up and don't rebuke her.

So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening.

She's just working hard.

Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah.

She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered.

Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

Her mother-in-law asked her, Where did you glean today?

Where did you work?

Blessed be the man who took notice of you.

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working.

The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz.

The Lord bless him, Naomi said to her daughter-in-law.

He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.

She added, that man is our close relative.

He is one of our guardian redeemers.

Then Ruth the Molebite said, he even said to me, stay with my workers until they've finished harvesting all the grain.

Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, it will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed.

So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth is experiencing God's abundant provision, isn't she?

Did you sort of hear that line in verse 14 and remember something else in the Bible?

She ate all she wanted and had some left over?

Jesus did that, didn't he?

He took the bread and the fish and multiplied it and 5,000 people got their fill and there's 12 basketfuls left over.

This picture of abundance is the way God provides.

Verse 18 says Ruth had leftovers to give to her mother-in-law.

The abundance of God's provision is to give away to others.

And then there's this really interesting line where Naomi says, that man is our close relative.

He's one of our guardian redeemers.

Are you familiar with this idea?

The guardian redeemer in biblical theology is a close relative who has the right and the responsibility to look after a family member in trouble or distress.

In Israel's covenant law, the guardian redeemer performed several key roles.

And I think I've got them on here.

I'll just race through them.

They were to redeem property.

So if somebody had to sell land because of poverty, the guardian redeemer had a right and a responsibility to come if they could and buy back the land, to restore the family inheritance.

Redemption of people.

If a family member got sold into slavery, the guardian redeemer had a right and responsibility to redeem them, to buy them back, to be an avenger of blood.



If there was a case of wrongful death, the guardian redeemer had a legal duty to pursue justice.

And then continuation of family line.

If a man died childless, his brother or near relative was to marry the widow, to preserve the family name and the inheritance.

So the guardian redeemer is a very powerful and important responsibility and has a great right.

They're not merely a rescuer.

They were a covenant restorer who acted to preserve life, land and lineage according to God's law.

The beautiful thing is that God calls himself the guardian redeemer.

He says in Isaiah 43, Do not fear for I have redeemed you.

I'm the redeemer.

I've called you by name.

You are mine, the guardian redeemer.

It's what Jesus does for us, isn't it?

It's his right and responsibility.

Isn't he wonderful?

Isn't he good?

Isn't he trustworthy?

Isn't he like the firstborn son who takes responsibility?

He does what he's called to do, our Lord Jesus.

He redeems humanity from slavery, Galatians 3.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, curse it is everyone who is hung on a pole.

Can you see?

He's the guardian redeemer.

It's like, I'm stepping up, Lord.

I'm going to do that, because in your law, the way you designed it was there was a guardian redeemer who had the right and responsibility to save.

That's Jesus.

And he restores our lost inheritance, Ephesians 1, having also believed you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.

Jesus is our guardian redeemer for all who would put their faith in him.

There are no outsiders to God's love.

Amen.

There are no outsiders to God's love.

Sometimes I feel like the people that feel most like outsiders are the ones that were outsiders, became insiders, became followers of Jesus, but you've failed such that you live your life with your tail between your legs, thinking, oh Lord, hopefully I'll sneak in, but I don't feel like I belong.

Can I just encourage you if you're a person who has failed?

You're included.

There are no outsiders to his love.

If you have failed him, he has demonstrated his love for you while you were still sinners.

Well, I was still a sinner.

Ben mentioned it at the start of the service.

Christ has died for us.

He has paid for our sin.

And if we have failed, he has paid for our failure.

Can I encourage you?

We come back to him and fall on your face before him and ask for mercy and receive it.

There are no outsiders to God's love.

There is a God in heaven who wants to treat you the way Boaz treated Ruth.

Hallelujah.

God wants to give his provision in the ordinary.

Where is God asking you to obey him in the mundane routines of life?

In this season you're in.

Whereas you're saying, obey me in the ordinary, and I'm going to bring my fingerprints in there and do some stuff that's extraordinary.

I'm going to lead you in the path that you're seeking out, but I need you to obey me in the ordinary.

There is provision, but you find it so often in the mundane.

Kindness in redemption.

How has God showed his rich kindness to you through his redeeming work in your life?

Have you started becoming a person who doesn't really think he's that kind?

I promise you, he's kind.

He knows what you're going through, and he's a kind dad.

Amen?

He's kind.

His kindness has been shown in redemption in Jesus.

Refuge in relationship.

How has God provided a safe refuge for you in the storms of your life?

How has he?

Can I encourage you?

Tell someone how he did it.

Testify.

Tell someone who loves Jesus, and tell someone who doesn't love Jesus.

Just testify that there's a refuge, a relational refuge, where you know you belong and you're completely safe.

It's found in the Gospel.

And there is abundance in provision.

How has the Lord provided above and beyond your expectations?

How has he?

Sometimes we need to stop, don't we?

And just do an inventory of what he has done in my life.

Anyone in a position where you're needing God to provide?

Well, we're very self-sufficient, aren't we?

In the West, particularly in the Northern suburbs.

We got it, Lord, we've got it.

Now, there's a few of us who are like, Lord, I need you to provide.

And he will provide.

His provision is abundant.

Amen?

Who's found that?

Who's found that?

That he goes beyond and above and beyond what we expect.

I feel like some of us here today need to hear that.

That's all you need to hear.

Ask him for what you need.

You know one of the great questions that Jesus asked that we sometimes forget?

He'd come up to people and he would say, what would you like me to do for you?

Isn't it just a beautiful question?

Sometimes we think, oh, he would never.

No, you go looking.

Look in your New Testament.

It happens multiple times.

Jesus comes up to people and says, what would you like me to do for you?

You're allowed to pray for what you want.

Just talk to the Lord.

He will guide you.

You think you want that, but I'll show you what you really need.

And I'll provide what you really need in abundance.

Maybe you could say a quiet Amen as I finish reading out Wren Collective's lyrics.

You are our refuge, you have no borders.

When I was a stranger knocking at your door, you took me in with no questions and no conditions.

When I was a sinner running from your grace, you called me friend.

You called me friend.



There are no outsiders to your love.

And this is the essence of John 3.16, I think.

God so loved the world that he gave, his only son.

That whoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We're all welcome.

There's grace enough when I have wandered, Lord, your cross is the open door.

There are no outsiders.

I'm not an outsider to your love.

And that's what we're going to find as this story progresses, that Ruth becomes an insider and wow, what an insider in the lineage of the Messiah.

Lord God, thank you that your presence is here with us.

And you know, when we think Lord about the cherubim, they are pretty impressive, how you designed them in the temple.

But of course, Lord, they're just nothing compared to the greatness of our God, whose wings we can come under and be completely safe in.

Thank you Lord God, that your promise of unfailing love is enough.

That whatever we're going through right now, we can come and bring it to you and say, Lord, I need a refuge.

Would you give me the peace that I need?

So Lord, Holy Spirit, I pray for my brothers and sisters here, for those who need peace, that you would bring it in such a way that transcends understanding, that is very hard to even comprehend.

Lord God, would you bring the peace we need?

The confidence that by faith in Christ, we are part of the family.

Lord, for those who are still on the fence, I pray you would draw them to your love.

Draw people that are watching this later online or right here today.

I pray you would draw them to a place of acceptance of your love.

In the name of Jesus.

Amen