

Meet Ruth

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For several months now we have been going systematically through the Psalms and we've gone through Psalms 1-30 over the past year and a half or so and we will continue to do that after the first of the year, but for now and for the next few weeks, I want to do a different study and bring a different part of the Old Testament to you and I'm very excited about what lies ahead.

I don't think it's overly pessimistic to say that these are bad days in our country for those who love biblical righteousness. We live in a crooked and a perverse society which could not possibly be condemned strongly enough. Sexual perversion, abortion, violence on college campuses and political corruption are all so common that we've lost the capacity to be shocked about it anymore. Our parents presupposed without thinking about it, the meaning of man and woman. Now, celebrities change genders and receive awards for their courage. Schools and cities debate who should go into which restroom in the name of tolerance and inclusion, to say nothing about the continued perversion of God's truth from those who profess to be Christian pastors. If you measured the success of biblical righteousness in our day by outward trends, you would think that it was dying, especially as so-called Christian leaders abandon historical, biblical positions and join the parade. It's easy for us to get discouraged as we watch the headlines and watch these things unfold before our eyes and you long for a voice to speak up for righteousness that has some kind of public power and some kind of public notice and you're met with a deafening sound of crickets and silence as people just continue to let it go.

The question for us is: is there any good news in the midst of this? Stated differently: is there a perspective that provides confidence to the people of God even if the mountains fall into the sea? Well, Romans 15:4 gives us a clue as to where we should look and where we should go. It says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Now, in a society that is conditioned to love the next best thing, to view history as that which is irrelevant and simply to look forward to whatever our own desires might take us to next, the idea of looking back for truth and looking back for encouragement would seem foreign and even a little bit silly, but that's not the biblical perspective. That's not what Scripture teaches us to do. Scripture teaches us to look back to the Bible; to look back 2,000-3,000 years to what God spoke and inspired through his writers so that we would have hope going forward. We're not to be those who cut the

umbilical cord with that which gave us life and to back away from truth and to separate ourselves in the pursuit of the latest, greatest idea from the choir boy guys that have expensive dentists to give them big million dollar smiles so that they look good on their million dollar books. We don't care about any of that. What we want to do is to go back to Scripture to find the hope and the clarity and the instruction that we need in order to understand the times in which we live and to have a proper biblical perspective on these things.

So over the next few weeks beginning tonight, I want to take you to a book in the Bible, I want you to meet Ruth. The book with her name is the eighth book in your English Bible. It is one of two books with a woman's name attached to them, the other being, of course, the book of Esther. But Ruth's improbable story teaches us something vital, something that applies today and will always be true. The book of Ruth teaches us the certain accomplishment of God's redemptive purpose in history. Her unlikely triumph provides light in our dark age. It lights our path going forward. It shows us direction and gives us a certainty and confidence that we otherwise would lack.

Now, let me ask a different question: why would we, meaning you and I, why would we turn to Ruth at this time in the life of our church when we've been studying Psalms and other things? Why would we do that? Well, this is a little bit of a justification for spending a few weeks in a book of the Bible that maybe some people never get around to reading. First of all, I'm going to give you three reasons for why we would do this at this time in the life of our church here in late 2015. First of all, all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. We could turn to any passage in the Bible whatsoever, whether we go to 2 Samuel or we go to Jude or we go to Esther or we go to Amos, you could go to any passage in the Scripture and properly taught you would find food for your soul that instructed you in righteous living, the ways of God, in a way that would provide encouragement and hope to you. So there is a general affirmation that the Bible would give that any Scripture that we would study would profit us and it just so happens that Ruth is in the Bible so we can't go wrong there.

At another level, earlier in the past 12-18 months, we surveyed the books of Genesis through Judges, the first seven books of the Bible and if you haven't heard those messages, perhaps you're new to our live stream, you should go to our website truthcommunitychurch.org and look in the Scripture sections for those messages on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges, that kind of give you a little bit of an overview and a sense of what the early books of the Bible teach. Well, for those of us who were here for those times, Ruth is the next book after those seven. It's number eight, if you're keeping score, and it gives us an opportunity to reinforce and to remember some of those vital truths that we saw over the past year and a half or so, things that are vital and a crucial foundation for understanding Scripture and yet which we're all prone to forget as time goes by. This is an opportunity to reinforce some of those things that we've studied recently. The Scripture writers didn't hesitate to say that they were delighted to stir us up by way of reminder. Well, Ruth is going to give

us some reminding opportunities that will profit our souls, each one of us, as we study together.

The final reason and this really isn't as important. It may sound odd to you, but it's important to me and I want to share it with you to just kind of give you a little bit of insight into the life of a preacher. Back in 2008, seven years ago almost to this day, I was doing a lot of work on the book of Ruth. I purchased several commentaries to fill out my library on the book of Ruth and I had done a lot of reading and a lot of writing in preparation to teach Ruth back when I was in that other state, wherever that was. It's been so long I hardly remember anymore. Wherever that was, providence directed me in another direction. It sent me to something else at that time and I never was able to teach on Ruth as I had planned to do and so as I stand before you tonight and with these next several weeks in front of us, I have a deep sense of unfinished business of what was started several years ago and I want to finish it and I am confident that if I am faithful to finish the business that was begun several years ago, it will prove to be a blessing in your lives as well. So I'm looking forward to that.

When it's all said and done, here's what's going to happen: when we study Ruth together in the full context of biblical revelation, you and I are going to end up standing in awe at the power and the wisdom of God and the certainty of his ability to accomplish his redemptive purpose. Ruth teaches us that through a wonderful piece of literature, a wonderful biblical narrative that is an endearing story on its own terms standing alone, but then when you read it in the bigger picture of biblical revelation, you are stunned at the magnitude of what it teaches and I want us to have the ability and the time to go through that. We will be renewed in our confidence. We will be renewed in our hope; and we will turn our attention back to the world in front of us that we are living through and in all of the degradation of what we described earlier, we will be able to view that from a sense of being above it, understanding it, seeing through it, knowing that the ultimate accomplishment of God's will is certain. It cannot be thwarted and being united to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it can only come out well for us in the end.

Don't you want to live life from that perspective? I do and Ruth will help us to do that. It will give us the sense of assurance that God is mightily at work, even in our own wicked society – but watch this – even though his work may very well be completely hidden from our eyes. Here's the thing: God's purposes are always at work, that's the meaning of the doctrine of divine providence that God is at work in absolutely everything that happens whether it be a minor detail such as what a church chooses to study at its mid-week study or in the magnitude of world events and the rise and fall of nations. God is in perfect sovereign control of all of that and he is always working out his will in everything that happens.

Now, you and I on the front end of this going forward, we are not able to see all that that means. We don't know the significance of seemingly chance encounters that we might have with a man on the street or what takes place in the church or where you choose to live at any particular time in your life. But what you see from the book of Ruth is that the details that seem inconsequential to us may be the very thing that God is using to

accomplish things of incalculable eternal importance going forward. One pastor has said that God is doing a thousand things in everything that he does and we cannot plumb the depths of the mind of omniscience. We cannot begin to scratch the surface of understanding even why God has brought you and me here together in this church at this time in our lives. We don't understand the consequences of that. All we need to understand and all that we need to do is to be faithful to our role in it and know that in a realm that we cannot see, in the realm where secret things belong to the Lord, God is doing things that go beyond all that we could ask or think and we need to love him and be confident of him to that great degree.

Now, here's what I want to do. That's why we're studying the book of Ruth here tonight and in some days to come. Let's step back for a moment. Let's step back and remember some basics to set the context as we meet Ruth in the flow of redemptive history. Go, first of all, to the book of Genesis in Genesis 12. I know I've probably had you turn to Ruth immediately but I just wanted to see if you were paying attention, I guess. I don't know. Get you used to that place so that you can turn to it quickly in the future and I would encourage you going forward as you're all so faithful to be here week by week, take some time over the next few days and read through Ruth two or three or four times. Let it get familiar to you. Let it sink into you and that will make our future studies on Tuesday evenings all the more valuable to you as the word is God is cycling through your mind.

For now we want to set the context and remember some very vital things that we saw in those survey messages some time ago. Remember that in the book of Genesis we saw that God made promises to Abraham. He promised Abraham that he would give him a land, he would give him a nation, even though at the time Abraham was a solitary man with Sarah, without a child, and he had simply come out of paganism to follow God. Here he was a man on his own and God makes these stupendous promises to him. Look at Genesis 12, for example. You could also see this in Genesis 15 and Genesis 17. But we'll go to Genesis 12:1, "The LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'" Now, that's a stupendous promise and if you put yourself in the sandals of Abraham being on the receiving end of that, you've just stepped out of paganism and God makes these great promises to you, it's hard to comprehend the magnitude of what that would entail, but it didn't depend on the strength of Abraham in order to bring these things to pass. What guaranteed that certainty of the deliverance of these things was the power and the wisdom of God to accomplish his redemptive purposes with certainty.

Look at Genesis 13:5-6. As time developed, Lot went with Abram. "Lot also had flocks and herds and tents. And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together." So Abraham was a wealthy man. He had these resources to draw upon and it came time for God to start to deliver on them and yet as the years turned into decades and the decades turned

into centuries and the centuries eventually turned into millennia, there were times where the fulfillment of these promises seemed remote, even unlikely, where the line of Abraham seemed to be threatened. And without turning to all the Scripture passages, you'll remember these items of history, biblical history, as it unfolded. God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on an altar. Well, if he does that, the line is gone, what happens then? Jacob's descendants went to Egypt, only 70 in number. They left the land and went into Egypt. Where is the fulfillment of the land promise ever going to happen when the whole family and only 70 of them at that, go to a foreign land? How is God's purpose going to be accomplished? How is God going to fulfill his promise to Abraham under those circumstances? Well, fast-forward 400 years and the people are in slavery to Egypt, crying out under the bondage of harsh taskmasters. God calls them out, sends them on their way and Pharaoh's army has them trapped, backed up against the Red Sea, descending upon them. What is going to happen? The future is in grave danger at that point. You know what happened, God opened the sea and they went through and Pharaoh's army was drowned behind them, but even on the other side, God had to judge them in the wilderness so that all of them but two fell dead in the wilderness over 40 years because of their disobedience to Yahweh.

So just with those little bits of illustration, you see that in different manners and in different ways at different times, their very existence was threatened. From a human perspective, and this is what I want you to do, viewing it from inside their human perspective as the water is in front of them and the army is pressing down upon them, as they are wandering in the wilderness and day after day dozens of people are dying around them under the judgment of God, from inside that human perspective, there must have been times where it seemed like it was utterly unlikely, if not impossible, that God would actually deliver on the promises that he had made to their patriarch. There was nothing by way of external circumstantial encouragement to make them think that this was actually working out; that it was prospering along the way. Just as we look about us in our sick, degraded society, at least here in America, and we see wickedness is winning the day, what do we say about that?

Based on their external observations, the people of Israel could have well concluded that it was unlikely that they were going to survive at multiple times in their history and yet God led them into the land, didn't he? And yet they flourished under Joshua for a time. So things start to be looking up, but it's only a generation or two after Joshua that the whole thing goes south again and in the book of Judges, which we surveyed, the people fell into a cycle of decline in the book of Judges that was utterly contradictory to the momentary success that they enjoyed under Joshua's leadership and the elders who survived him. Looking at it humanly speaking, that's really important, looking at it humanly speaking, you see a lot of failure, a lot of threats, a lot of sin and there just doesn't seem to be, where is the visible evidence that this is actually going to come to fruition and be fulfilled?

In Judges, they were idolatrous people. Look at Judges 10:6, all of this by way of review and reminder. Judges 10, the seventh book in your Bible. Judges 10:6, giving us a little snapshot of Israel in those wicked days of the judges. Judges 10:6 says, "Then the sons of

Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroath, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him." In this period of judges, in this snapshot of that 300 or so year period there, idolatry rampant among the chosen people. Where is the purpose of God being carried out then? Where is the certainty of God's redemptive purpose being accomplished in the midst of his own chosen people falling into such varied idolatry?

The book of Judges describes them at times as being wicked, violent people. Look at Judges 20:4 and, again, I'm just giving you little quick cameos here, little snapshots to just kind of set the context for the book that we actually want to study here tonight. Judges 20:4, "So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, 'I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin. But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died.'" So the people of God ravished a concubine. She's dead. What did this Levite do? "He took hold of his concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the land of Israel's inheritance; saying they have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel." The sheer violence and the decadence that is represented in that one brief passage is just incalculable. These are not sanctified people as we would define sanctification in New Testament terms. They were degraded, debased, violent, idolatrous people carrying the name of God's chosen upon their mantle.

So the period of judges, realizing that there were cycles and that God raised up some men to kind of arrest the cycle for a period of time, we understand that, we're just not delving into that here tonight. The pattern in the book of Judges was that when God withdrew his hand, the nation fell into a depraved chaos without national or spiritual leadership to provide a way forward.

Look at Judges 21. It ends on this sad note. Judges 21:25, a verse that is descriptive of our own day when it says, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." So from the perspective of humanity, looking at it from a human perspective, things were pretty bleak during this time in the period of judges: false religion, immorality, violence among God's people. This is not what you would expect based solely on what was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. If you just started there and that was all you knew, you would expect this flourishing spiritual dynamic taking place among his people and yet that was not what marked things nationally as Judges records for us.

So if you go back and you compare the promises that God made to Abraham: great nation, great blessing, a land to come, "It's going to be through your seed that I bless all the nations." You look at those promises and then you compare what happened and in the days of Judges what's going on? The inconsistency almost fractures your mind. It was horribly bleak in a way in which we can sympathize today. Righteousness in the biblical sense at a severe discount. The hand of God not being too visible and evident as you look on the national scene and that was with the chosen people. I mean, here we are in the

United States with no promises to call our own, but we can sympathize with the society that we found in the book of Judges.

Beloved, all that was background. Introduction, you might say, for a 15 minute message maybe. It's in the day of Judges, it's in that horribly bleak spiritual condition, it is precisely there that we meet Ruth. Look at the book of Ruth in chapter 1, verse 1. The opening verse is in some ways the second most important verse in the entire book of Ruth because it tells us the context of what we're about to read. It says, "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed." Oh, is that important! You see, if you just read Ruth in isolation and you didn't pay attention to the historical context that we just reviewed, you would miss the importance of that, but in those days of spiritual decline, in those days of national depravity when violence and idolatry and immorality marked the people as a whole, in those days is when the book of Ruth takes place. That's interesting and based on what we've seen, you say, "Well, there must be more trouble ahead if this is in the days when the judges governed and that's a bad period. Maybe there are bad things further ahead."

Well, let's see what happens as we continue on in verse 1. By the way, there are no points to this message. There is a point to the message but there's not the typical three points that I lay things out for. This is just an introduction to meet Ruth in. Ruth 1:1, "In the days when the judges governed, there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab," which is east of Israel, "with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there." There is a certain sadness to that aspect of the story. Here they were members of God's chosen people, a man of Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and they leave the land of promise to go to the cursed land of Moab because there is a famine in the land of Israel. We'll look at this all more next week. But anyway, they enter into the land of Moab and remain there and so from the perspective of the promises of Abraham, here's a story illustrating what's going on and the people of God in the land that God promised to Abraham, are leaving and abandoning it because of the famine.

Verse 3, it doesn't go well for them there. "Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband." Now, we plan to examine this passage more closely next week, God helping us, but for now just let the historical situation that we just read about sink into your mind and what's happening here. In a time of national depravity, of complete unfaithfulness to God, one Jewish widow is in a heathen nation with two foreign daughters-in-law, and as the story unfolds, one of them goes back to her home.

Beloved, just try to squeeze your mind back into the situation and view it from inside the reality that existed at that time from a human perspective. Here is Naomi, a widow with a foreign daughter-in-law and no children of her own and no future whatsoever. There are

no outward circumstances whatsoever to suggest that God was at work in that situation and certainly nothing to suggest that his hand of blessing was actually upon them in the midst of those times. It was completely dark and those of you that have suffered the loss of loved ones and you know that feeling of separation, well, multiply that, if you can, in your thinking of being in a foreign land where even your people are not with you. You are utterly alone. You would resist, you would be offended by, you would find abrasive someone who would come along and say, "God is greatly at work in your situation," as you are weighing under the grief of all of that.

As the story unfolds in the book of Ruth and, as I said, we'll look at this more in the coming weeks. We'll go through Ruth verse-by-verse in one way or another. Here's Naomi, without hope, embittered at life, and she takes Ruth with her and returns to the land. You know the story. I'm going to assume you know the story well enough to know that in desperate poverty, Ruth gathers grain in a field for subsistence living, just to live hand-to-mouth, and gathering up grain with her own hands, by her own work in a dangerous situation. Beloved, as you read Ruth, you realize that in the humble labor of that foreign woman in an unknown to her land, God did something to advance the promises that he had made to Abraham a millennium earlier. It's incredible. It's incredible. From all outward human appearances, this was a forsaken woman in a forsaken national time and all that she had to look forward to was poverty and sadness as she remained loyal to her mother-in-law. Yet, as the story unfolds, you see that God was at work, most certainly advancing his redemptive purpose and the fulfillment of the promise that he made to Abraham. He guides Ruth to the field of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi's deceased husband. Boaz shows kindness to her. They get married. They have a son.

Look at Ruth 4:13 understanding that I'm skipping over all of the good stuff. Not all of the good stuff but leaving for future times of study what we're going to look at more closely just to give you the overview of the book. So in the midst of these desperate national circumstances, Ruth finds favor in the eyes of a wealthy relative of her deceased father-in-law. They get married. Verse 13, "Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son." They named their son Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Obed's son, Jesse, the grandson of Ruth and Boaz had a son. You say, "So what? That's what people do. They get married, they have babies and the generations continue on. Pastor, would you please get to the point." Well, by the time you get to the final verses of Ruth, even within the story, several generations have come and gone but God's redemptive purposes were as sure as ever. God does not mark time like we do, beloved. God does not mark circumstances like we do. God is completely unhindered by the disobedience and sin of man to accomplish what he designs to accomplish. God, when he made promises to Abraham some 4,000 years ago, had the complete power, ability and knowledge that was necessary to carry them out to perfect precise precision and he did it in the course of human history.

Look at chapter 4, verse 22, the most important verse in the book of Ruth. Verse 21, "to Salmon was born Boaz," there's our guy, "and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born

Jesse, and to Jesse, David." Oh my, David! David, the future king of Israel! That David. The greatest king of Israel, before the coming of the Messiah, came into the world humanly speaking through this marriage between Boaz and a foreign woman who had no hope. From their marriage came a line that eventually led to David. How does that happen? It happens because God is powerfully at work. His hidden hand at work in human interactions to direct men who don't even realize what he is doing, to accomplish his will. And that David was the one from whose line the greater son would come, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at the book of Matthew now, chapter 1. My intention is to preach an entire sermon just on this genealogy which might sound funny. That's certainly not seeker friendly. "Come out next week and we'll preach on the genealogy of Jesus." That'll drive them away. Not people like you who love God's word. But to realize that in these genealogies are profound theological statements about the power and the purpose of God if we just respect God's word enough to read it and to take it verse-by-verse.

Look at this, remembering the period of the judges, remembering Ruth in her poverty, remembering her working with her fingers in the barley fields just trying to get tonight's meal and realize what was actually happening from the perspective of God at that time. Matthew 1:1, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers." You go on, verse 3, 4 and come to verse 5, "Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king." As you follow the line as it goes down to verse 16, "Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah."

Why is Ruth important? Well, a lot of reasons that we're going to see, but what I want you to see for tonight is that the true historical story of Ruth is tied directly to your own redemption, to your own salvation. God sent his Son through a human line. He was born into the line of David and where did David come from humanly speaking? Trace it back. Trace it back through his father Jesse. Through Jesse's father Obed. Go to Obed's father Boaz and there you find a capsule picture of the power of God to accomplish his purpose in salvation. And get this, in a time where anyone looking at what was happening at the time would wonder if the purposes of God had been utterly extinguished and yet what is really going on? What's going on from God's perspective is that he is greatly at work in seemingly chance circumstantial decisions by inconsequential people like Ruth, choosing one field instead of the other to go to glean in, owned by one man instead of another, and it just so happens that these two people come together and from their line and subsequent generations comes David, and following David over the centuries and over the following generations comes the Messiah.

Beloved, no human being coordinated that. No human being would even pretend to write that. The movies would reject the script as being ridiculous. And yet the Christ that followed in that line is the Christ that was lifted up on the cross for your salvation. The certainty of that outcome was not contingent upon human cooperation. God was at work

throughout it all. Men on that day saw Ruth gathering grain in the field, God was advancing salvation. God was in the process of fulfilling his promises to Abraham.

So what does God do in unrighteous times and in impossible situations? He overrules it all. He overrules impossible situations, in part working through obscure human vessels in the mundane details of life in a way that no man could coordinate. The ways of God are inscrutable, but he always accomplishes his purposes and when he does it through weak, unassuming, human vessels, there is only one thing that can be said in response and that is: to God alone be the glory for what we have witnessed.

Now, let's flash forward 3,000 years to today as we sit here today in the light of our miserably wicked society. The same God that was on the throne in the days of judges working out his purposes in obscure human detail, that God then is the same God today and he is the same God today working out his will and his purposes in the mundane details of the lives of his people that go unnoticed by the media, that go unnoticed by society, but in the midst of his people, God is working out his purposes. In the midst of people, common, ordinary, Christian people just like you and me. The corruption of our day no more hinders God now than it hindered him back in the days of judges.

His purpose is certain. Christ will return one day in glory. God will accomplish everything that he desires, even though we don't see it. Notice this and let this humble you, quiet your heart, give you patience and give you perspective: the significance of what happened in the life of Ruth and Boaz was not manifested for generations. They were happily married and people congratulated them and Naomi had a grandson to hold and that was all really cool, but the ultimate significance of it remained to be unfolded days and years and generations after they were gone. Beloved, we need to have the same sense of perspective and patience and trust knowing these things now on this side of the cross. We need to have that same sense of patience. We don't need to get all worked up about the politics of what's happening. We mourn over the wickedness of our society, but we view it from a perspective that says, "God is sovereign and though I can't see it or point it out, I know that somewhere, somehow, God is certainly and powerfully carrying out his purposes even in the midst of every visible contradiction that you could imagine."

The truth is that you and I do not know the ultimate significance of our lives and we can't begin to measure it by what's happening around us now. We don't know what happens in the generations after we're gone in the lives of your own progeny or in the lives of those that you affect. We just don't know and that's okay. Rather, we just step back and we say, "Thank God that he is sovereign and in control of this and I can trust him to work out his purposes and apparently the way that he works out his purposes is in mundane, often unnoticed, acts of simple faithfulness and loyalty and obedience to Scripture and I can just live out my faithfulness and trust God to use that however he sees fit." You don't have to go out and see a miracle or be a miracle or do a miracle. It doesn't have to be flashy for you to have a confidence that God is at work in the midst of your very ordinary, faithful life.

We don't need strobe lights and glitter falling down from the ceilings. We don't need loud pulsating music to manifest the presence of God at Truth Community Church. The presence of God is manifested by and through your faithful lives. The presence of God is manifested through his word and as we are faithful to his word and we are faithful to our individual responsibilities, we can have confidence that somehow God is going to work out eternal purposes that go far beyond all that we could ask or think. And maybe when we get to eternity, we'll get a glimpse of it, and if we do, we won't congratulate ourselves, we'll give glory to the God whose hand was so mighty and powerful through such human weakness. Beloved, the God of Ruth still reigns. Let's you and me be strong and courageous.

Let's pray.

Our God, it's just a taste of what's yet to come in the book of Ruth. We bow in awe and wonder, speechless at your ability to accomplish your will and to work powerfully through human weakness and ordinary human faithfulness to accomplish what you desire. Oh, we understand, Father, you're not limited by the works of our hands and what you do goes beyond it and yet somehow you work through us to accomplish your will. We thank you for that. We thank you for the assurance that it brings to us. Father, raise up from our midst and in our midst a body of people corporately and individually who are strong in these wicked times in which we live, who do not tremble in fear at the next bad news report, at the next catastrophe that takes place, at the next advance of perversion. Father, give us the strength and confidence and certainty of your overriding sovereignty, that we are confident in what you are doing, that you have included us in your plans and therefore the outcome most certainly will be good to your glory and you will not forget us in the process.

God, we bow before you. We are humbled in the presence of such greatness. Greatness that can speak worlds into existence out of nothing. And perhaps an even greater greatness, that quietly, imperceptibly and yet powerfully, certainly accomplishes your will as men go about their daily lives. Transcendent purposes being accomplished in the ordinary run of life. We stand in awe of you. We kneel and bow before you and, Father, we draw great confidence from the certain accomplishment of your ultimate purposes. We look at this world not with fear but with courage because we belong to you through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

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