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Good morning. Children may be dismissed to Children's Church. And we're going to start with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for all of the many ways that you intersect with our life. We are so thankful for all the love that you have poured out on us and the blessings you've poured out on us. We pray God, as we study from your word today, please open our understanding. Help us to see what it is you're saying here and guide my words as I speak to my brothers and sisters. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we have been studying the book of Ruth and this is our third week and we've been doing a chapter a week. So we're on chapter three. And in case you haven't been here or in case you just forgotten, I'm going to give you a quick recap of what's going on. The book of Ruth takes place during the time of the Book of Judges, which is kind of a sad point in Israel's history. It's a time when the children of Israel are in rebellion. And so God has brought a famine upon the land. And so this man named Alemolech takes his wife, Naomi, and their two sons and they leave God's country to go to the pagan nation of Moab. And while they're there, Alemolech dies and then his two sons marry and then the sons die. And so we have this widow Naomi and her two widowed daughters-in-law. And meanwhile, she learns that bread has returned back in their home country. And so she says, I'm going back. And one of the two daughters decides to return with her and that daughter's name is Ruth. And so that's chapter one and it's kind of this sad start to the story. In chapter two, we begin to see God working behind the scenes. Naomi decides that she's going to take advantage of this Jewish custom where she goes out into the fields and follows behind the men who are harvesting. And she picks up the little scraps they have left over. And while she's in the process of doing this, she catches the eye of a man named Boaz. And it turns out that Boaz is a near kinsman to Ruth. And so and this is how we see God working behind the scenes, is that Ruth is being godly and loyal to Naomi and God is blessing that by bringing her into the field of Boaz, who's not only a near kinsman, but he's a good and honorable man. And he begins to kind of fall for her and and he begins to bless her. And so we start to see this relationship developing. And that's how we start chapter three. And I'm just going to read chapter three and then we're going to go through and discuss it. I'm reading from New King James and I realize that won't be the same as what you have in your in your pews, but it's mostly the same. Follow along. Then Naomi said to her, then Naomi, her mother-in-law said to her, my daughter, shall I not seek security for you that it may be well with you now, Boaz, whose young men, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore, wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor. But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be when he lies down that you shall notice the place where he lies and you shall go in, uncover his feet and lie down and he will tell you what you should do. And she said to her, all that you say to me, I will do. So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain and she came softly, uncovered his feet and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled and turned himself and there a woman was lying at his feet and he said, who are you? So she answered, I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative. Then he said, blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter, for you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now, it is true that I am a close relative. However, there is a relative closer than I stay this night and in the morning, it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you, good. Let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning. So she lay at his feet until morning and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor. Also, he said, bring the shawl that is on you and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six ephas of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city when she came to her mother in law. She said, is that you, my daughter? Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, this these six ephas of barley he gave me, for he said to me, do not go empty handed to your mother in law. Then she said, sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out, for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day. So in chapter two, we see that Naomi begins to recognize that God is working behind the scenes. She she sees that not only has now has roof gone out and ended up in the field of Boaz, this near relative, but also that she's kind of caught Boaz's eye. So Naomi gets this plan and she says, here, you are going to offer yourself to to him to be become his wife. You're going to say, please do your duty as a close relative and redeem me, redeem my family. So she has this plan and she gives her all these instructions about go and wait until he's gone asleep and keep track of the place where he was. And then when it's dark, sneak in, uncover his feet and lie there and wait for him to tell you what to do. Now, that whole thing kind of sounds weird to us. You know, that's not really a part of our culture. But I just want to point out that there was nothing immoral or weird going on there, that that was that was a very normal thing to happen. And Ruth didn't really know what to do, which is why Naomi was spelling everything out. You need to do this and this and this. Wash yourself, dress real nice and follow these steps because that was the proper way to pursue Boaz. And the first thing I kind of want to point out here and it's something that's kind of easy to miss, but I think it's something very important for us is the fact that Boaz was there. We see him there starting in chapter two. He's still there in chapter three. Boaz is out there with his men working in the fields, working in the threshing floor. And there is a very Christ like premise that we can learn here, and that is good leaders lead by example. Good leaders lead by example. We've all probably at one point or they had bad managers, bad bosses who say, go and do this or that, and they don't help you. They don't show you how they just tell you what to do and then they expect to just sit back and let you do all the work. And we don't like those kinds of bosses. We like the bosses who get out there and roll up their sleeves and are right there with us. And that's a godly principle and that's something that we see Jesus doing and that's something that we see Boaz doing here. I've worked. I worked at Chuck E. Cheese twice in my life. I've some of you know that I told that story about how when I they had me dress up as Chuck E. And I'm six foot two without the mask on. And so once I have that big old mask on, I was a really terrifying Chuck E. Cheese. But I worked there two times and the first time I worked there, it was the best job I've ever had. And the second time I worked there, it was the worst job I've ever had. I mean, it's top of the scale, bottom of the scale. All right. And I really didn't expect the second time to be so bad because I enjoyed the first time so much. The first time I worked there, I would come in during the day right as we were opening and I would take tickets and I go and I fill all the machines and make sure that all the tickets were coming out. And I'd take tokens and I would just test every game. Which is great. And and, you know, if there's coin jams, I have to open the little devices and get the coins unstuck. And and then I did that in like the hour before we opened. And then once the doors were open, I would stand at the door and I would stamp kids hands so that when a kid comes in, they leave with the parent who has the matching stamp. You know, the kid number 14 goes with a parent number 14, some security there. And it was great. And then every once in a while, some kid would come up and say, this thing stole my my token and I would just reach in my pocket and give him a token. And here you go. And I saved the day and run over and fix the coin jam. It was fantastic. And so I was kind of expecting that the second time around. The second time around, the first time it was over here in Castleton, Indiana. And the next time it was over in Colorado. And they didn't want to hire me because I told them I was just looking for a summer job. But they said, if you stick the whole summer, we'll hire you. And I said, OK, all right, that's that's fine. And I got in there and the first problem that I faced was every single person who had been there longer than me was my boss. Anyone with any amount of seniority could tell me what to do and could get angry with me if I didn't do it. And so I would have three or four people saying, do this, do that. And then the first person would come back and say, why didn't you do this? And I said, because they said to do that and just way too many chefs. And and so I would be in there and I'd be fixing machines and running around and stamping hands. And I was working in the evening, so it was a lot more hectic, a lot more people coming through in the evening. And and then finally, finally, the last group of kids would leave and we'd let them out. And and now I have to go through and like wipe down every machine. And and, you know, clean out all of the tables and the cake that's been ground into the carpet. And that wasn't the bad part, actually. I mean, that sounds awful, but it's like I can wipe down machines, whatever. That's fine. The bad part was is that because I was in the busy section of the building, I was the last person to get started cleaning up. And as I'm getting started, everyone else in their sections is just finishing up. So I'm there cleaning. And and all these other people who've been bossing me around all night just go sit down at a table and start chit chatting while I'm cleaning and mopping and vacuuming. And and they would stop from their chit chatting to come over and say, we really want to get out of here, Matthew. You need to hurry up. And I'm like, OK, I'm going as fast as I can and they go back to their talking. And then the boss, the manager, the charge of the whole restaurant is over there shooting hoops in the basketball game and only stops to come over and tell me, we'd really like to go home. You need to hurry up. Horrible, worst experience. And I quit after two weeks and I felt kind of bad because I told them I'd stick out the whole summer, but they forgot to tell me how awful it would be. So I think it was fair. But that was a that's the that's the example of just how how awful it is when you have a boss or a manager or a leader who doesn't lead by example. And it applies in the business world, but it also applies in our spiritual life. There's so many times that we have spiritual leaders who say you need to behave a certain way and and and put yourself to a certain standard and and yet they don't hold themselves to that standard. And we, of course, we see it in politics and in everything else, but. But it's it's it's really bad when we see it in the church. And that's why Jesus talks about dealing with the plank in your own eye before dealing with the speck in someone else's eye. That that's all around the same principle of leading by example. Take care of yourself first, get yourself right first and people will follow you just because of who you are and how you live. And you won't you don't even have to tell them they will see and they will be inspired by you and inspired by your example. And some of the best leaders didn't even intend to become leaders. They just forged ahead and people just fell in behind them. So there's a principle of good leadership, which is lead by example. And we see Boaz doing that here. So Ruth comes in, does exactly what her mother-in-law says. There's Boaz and his men eating and drinking and celebrating. Then they all kind of get tired and they all lie down and Ruth notices where he lies down. And so when it's when it's dark and everyone's asleep, she comes over as instructed and uncovers his feet and just lies down there and waits. And it's the middle of the night and it's dark and and then later on, doesn't say how much longer, but it was at midnight that we know he finally woke up. He noticed she was there and she explained the situation. You are close relative and now will you please redeem me? And he says, blessed are you that you didn't go running after these young men. Blessed are you that you stayed and you waited for me. It was the wise thing to do. A couple of weeks ago, Jim Fresh said something to me and it just it just made me so happy because the question he asked me proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that he has been so serious in his Bible study. And that always excites me when I know you guys are reading and studying your Bibles. I told him about Ruth and and this stuff that's happening at the Threshing floor and he said, Matt, why does the Threshing floor keep appearing throughout the Old Testament? And I was just amazed that he said that because you you won't notice unless you are seriously studying the Old Testament, you won't notice it, but the Threshing floor keeps appearing. This the Threshing floor, we keep coming across that. And the Threshing floor is a place where obviously they they thresh. And what that means is they take all this grain they've been picking and they they beat it and they crush it in order to kind of break open the the seed from the husk that's holding it. And then they do a thing called winnowing where they throw that broken stuff up in the air and the heavy kernels fall back down. But the wind carries the useless chaff away so they keep tossing it up and eventually they just have this pile of kernels left and all of the husk has flown away. And this process of crushing and winnowing all takes place at the Threshing floor. So on the one hand, the Threshing floor has a significance in the Old Testament as this place of being crushed and being refined. It is a place where pressure and turmoil happens. And out of that, the good is refined from the bad. But there's something else that we can notice about the Threshing floor in the Old Testament. This was pointed out to me, I think this was another thing pointed out to me by a man named Bobby Connor. And I want to make sure I give credit to all the good teachers I've had. The Threshing floor in the Old Testament is always a place of encounter. And many times it is a place where we encounter God in the Old Testament. And I have lots of examples. Second Samuel 24, that chapter is the story of where King David, he numbers the people. In other words, rather than trusting in God to be their strength and to defend them, to be their strength, to be their defense, he numbers the people to see how this is how strong we are. This is what size army we have. So this is about what size army we could go up against if we ever had to fight. And that was a sin because he took his trust from God and placed it on his numbers. And so God said, you get to choose your punishment for this sin and he gives him three options. And what ends up happening is this plague sweeps through and kills. It's an angel who's carrying a plague, kills 70,000 of the Israelites. And finally, God says the angel stop right there. And the place where he stops is at a Threshing floor. And that is where David goes and he buys that Threshing floor. He's like, I'm going to set up an altar to God right here. And the guy says, well, then here, just take the Threshing floor. It's yours. And David says, no, I will not give as a gift something that costs me nothing. And so he pays for this Threshing floor and he puts up an altar there because that is the place where God relented in his destruction, in his punishment. David encountered God at that Threshing floor. And on an interesting side note, that altar, that place was where Solomon built the temple later on. In 2 Samuel chapter 6, we remember the story they were carrying the ark, some oxen were pulling the ark of God's ark of the covenant. And it started to kind of wobble and tip and a man named Uzzah, I think, Uzzah reached out to steady it to make sure it didn't fall over. And because he touched the ark, God struck him dead. That was at a Threshing floor. Uzzah encountered God at a Threshing floor. First Kings chapter 22. This is at a time when the Israel that the Israel has split from Judah. So they're now two different kingdoms. I'm sorry, I did not mean to bang my microphone. Two different kingdoms and the king of Judah comes down to the king of Israel and king of Israel is like, hey, we're thinking about going up against these guys. I think it was Syria and will you go with us? Will you go with us into battle? And all my prophets are telling me we should do it. And the king of Judah says, well, do you have a prophet of the Lord telling you this or just your prophets? And he's like, well, we've got one prophet of the Lord left, but he never tells me anything I want to hear. And this prophet of the Lord shows up and says, no, no, go on, you'll be fine. And and the guys like speak the truth. And he's like, you're going to be destroyed is what happens. And he said, see, I told you he never says what I want to hear. Well, the place where those two kings sat and listened to those prophetic words from God was at the Threshen floor. And remember in the story of Judges six, God is having Gideon lead an army. And Gideon wants to make sure he's heard from God. He's not quite sure. So he has this whole story of Gideon's fleece and he's like, God, I'm going to lay this fleece out. And if it's wet in the morning, but the ground around it is dry, I'll know that's from you. And that happens. And he's like, well, just to be certain, God, tomorrow morning, I want the fleece to be dry, but everything around it to be wet. And the next morning that happens. That place where Gideon was laying out the fleece was at the Threshen floor. Gideon met God at the Threshen floor. The point of all this is that. When you're at the place in your life, in your spiritual walk, where you are being crushed, where you are being threshed, where God is trying to separate the good from you from the bad in you. This is the place where you're going to encounter God. If you are facing circumstances and situations that are testing you and that are trying you and that are bringing to the surface all of the bad stuff that you didn't want to deal with. Be faithful. Do what Ruth did. Lay down at the feet of Jesus and just wait. And it got late and it got dark, but she continued to lay there and she continued to wait. And when everything was at its darkest at midnight, that's when Boas noticed her and turned to her and took care of her. And then what did he give her? Six Ephas of Barley. You remember when she was following along back in chapter two and she was running around gathering the stuff he had left behind. She managed to gather one Ephah of Barley, which we said that was about five to ten gallons. Depends on who you ask. Now she here she's got six Ephas of Barley, which is 30 to 60 gallons of Barley. When you go through that threshing experience, if you are faithful and if you wait on God, you will be blessed and you will grow so much more than all of your running around and trying to learn and pour stuff into your own heart. And God will feed you, but it's at that moment where you get threshed, where he separates the good from the bad, that he will pour on the blessings, where he will give you incredible new revelation, incredible new level of depth and relationship with him. And Boas blessed her and said, you know, you could have run after all these other young men. They're still strong and young and handsome. He's like, but you but none of them could have given you the six Ephas of Barley because none of them owned the field. They didn't own that grain. And when we are in that threshing floor experience, we have a tendency to to go out to find the quick fix, the easy fix. But the easy fix will never satisfy you and bless you the way God will if you will just wait on him. So Ruth takes all that stuff home and Naomi says, sit still and wait and see what happens because he's going to take care of this by the end of the day. And next week we're going to talk about chapter four, where we hear the conclusion of this whole matter. We hear about this closer kinsmen. We'll talk about who he is and whether or not he's going to try and redeem Ruth. But for now, we're going to have our time of open worship. And, you know, as we sit here, if you are feeling like you're in a time that you are being pressed and crushed and threshed, then just take this moment to say, God, I'm I'm sorry for looking for comfort and peace from any other source. And now I just lay it all down, God, and I'm waiting here at your feet. Please come to me and speak to me and feed me right now. And the father, we thank you that you will never leave us or forsake us. We thank you that the good work that you have begun in us, you are will finish. And we realize that in order to finish that work, sometimes it means we must be crushed and threshed and. Just had some of that bad stuff and is brought to the surface. But we thank you, God, that that we can rely on the fact that you are using that to make us better. So please help us just to wait at your feet. And come quickly and faithfully to us. In Jesus name, Amen.