



April 15, 2019
Ruth 4:13-22
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The True Kinsman Redeemer

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope you are using this message to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community and that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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Today's sermon is going to be a little bit different. We're actually closing out the book of Ruth, but it is also Palm Sunday, which means I want to be creative in the way I meld these two things together. So what we're going to do is – 1/3 of the sermon will be devoted to Palm Sunday; 1/3 is going to be devoted to Ruth 4, the close of our series, and for the last 1/3, I'm going to do my best to give you four appeals or pleas of application about what the book of Ruth can teach us and how we can apply it as followers of Christ.

Let's pray that the Lord will meet with us.

Father we've gathered in this place. I know You are honored by our gathering. I now You are present among us because You promised in Your word that these things are so. We know that when we ascribe to You glory, power, majesty, when we declare to You the things You have revealed Yourself to be, which is always good, faithful and true – God we are forming our hearts, our mouths to understanding properly the truth of who You are. So Lord thank You for that. Thank You that by Your grace, You awakened us today. Thank You that by Your grace, we have breath to breathe. Thank You for gathering us together as the children of God. Now, Lord, as we sit under the teaching, I pray that You would be faithful to me and to us. That You would sustain Your word. We know, as Jeremiah 1 says, that You see, You watch over Your word to accomplish what You want to accomplish. So we ask that You would do that. God, be with us, we ask. Encourage us. Rebuke us. Correct us. Comfort us. Love us. Do whatever it is You need to do. We'll give You the thanks for what that is, in Jesus' name, amen.

Today is Palm Sunday, also known as Triumphal Entry Day. This week marks, as I said, the beginning of Holy Week. I'd encourage you to take some time to read through, from the Triumphal Entry and through the rest of the gospel, which ever gospel you choose (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John), find the Triumphal Entry and read that and read it through. That is the Holy Week, the things that happened there.

The Triumphal Entry was when Jesus made His final descent from the Mt. of Olives in the East, and He began to go West into Jerusalem. If you remember, this is a key significance – the direction He is going. If you remember in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast out – East and out of the Garden. So the curse of sin, the curse of Adam is that they are East of the presence of God and yet what you see is Jesus at the Mt. of Olives, calling forth His disciples to bring the colt so He can ride it from the East, back into the city toward the West. That whole thing is a significant moment. It signifies that Jesus is reversing the curse. Something significant is happening here. This is something to pay attention to.

We'll read from Matthew 21:1-9, then we'll jump to Mark and read verses from Mark 11. Matthew 21:

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11:8-10 you can see this is at the end of what just happened:

⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!?

When I read that, one of the first thoughts I have is – why were the crowds and disciples saying these things? Why did they talk like that? Why were they exclaiming, "Hosanna in the highest"? and why were they claiming that Jesus was the son of David, and blessed be the name of the Lord for He is coming in the kingdom of David? Why did they talk like this? What is the significance?

If you notice, the crowds and disciples were saying two things: Jesus is the son of David, they were celebrating that. They were also praising God for the fact that with Jesus coming to Jerusalem, is also the coming of the kingdom of David. Why did they talk like that? Because they were expecting the Messiah. At this time, there was such anticipation and expectation for the appearance of the Messiah, that everyone was kind of thinking – anyone could be someone! So we read in Luke 3:15 ¹⁵ "As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ." That gives the flavor of the entire culture of the time. Everyone was wondering, could he be? Could he be? Could he be? Who is the Messiah? The fact that Jesus came from the East into the city is just the identification that

this man is fulfilling scripture. This man is no mere man. He is the Messiah. So they knew, because they were expecting the Messiah, that this could be him.

Another thing is this: they knew that the Messiah was supposed to be the offspring of David. They knew that. They knew their Davidic covenant (and we at Golden Hills know our Davidic covenant!). We've done 1 and 2 Samuel. We've worked through the covenants, so we remember 2 Samuel 7:12-13, where it reads

¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

These people knew their Bible. They knew that God had promised one day to send the Messiah, who would be the offspring of David, and with him would come a kingdom that would last forever. So when they were praising God, "Hosanna in the highest!", to the son of David and "blessed be God" because of the coming of the kingdom of David – what they were saying was, "Here is our Messiah!" Everything that God had been working towards, everything God had promised – they all find their "yes" and "amen" now! That's the beauty of the Triumphal Entry. It's a celebration that God has finally come.

Now, why did Jesus want to go to Jerusalem? You can see that He really wanted to go to Jerusalem, because He told His disciples elsewhere (chapter 20) that we have to go there. The question is really, why? Why did He want to go to Jerusalem so badly? There are two answers. First, the reason He wanted to go to Jerusalem was to fulfill prophecy (Matthew 21:4) "This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet." Jesus wanted to make sure He was fulfilling prophecy. But the other reason why Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem was because He must. In other words, He had to. You see, the New Testament describes the coming of Jesus very explicitly. Luke 19:10 says this: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy). Jesus Himself confessed that He came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5).

The question is – how would Jesus save sinners? How in the world is Jesus going to seek and save the lost? What was He going to do in Jerusalem that would have the sweeping effect to call sinners to repentance and save them from their sins? What was Jerusalem all about? He says He must go. The New Testament admits that His going there was purposeful. The reality is, Jesus was going to Jerusalem, knowing that He was about to suffer.

Look at Matthew 20:17-19 –

¹⁷And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Jesus says, see? We're going to Jerusalem. That's the goal. That's the plan. When we go there, it will get kind of crazy. I'm about to be delivered. I will be condemned. I will be murdered. But I will rise from the dead. That's His plan.

What's interesting is, this isn't the first time Jesus talked like this. This is the third time. If you turn back in your Bible, there is a second time He mentions this in Matthew 17:22-23

²² As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, ²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

Then look at the response of the disciples, at hearing this news. "They were greatly distressed." If you notice, the text doesn't say anything more about them asking questions. For instance, if you are distressed and the guy you're following says, "Hey, this is about to go down." You're thinking – what? You're feeling distressed. Notice that the disciples had no freedom to question Jesus. They didn't ask Him anything. No follow-up questions. No clarification.

I wonder why. Why wasn't there freedom for the disciples to dialog with Jesus? I think the answer is because this is the second time He talked about this. The first time He talked about this, it didn't go well. Mark 8:31-33, it's the first time Jesus talks about going to Jerusalem and experiencing these things:

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things

He said, "Must." Must – not maybe, not might, not perhaps, not hopefully, but "MUST." That's definitive. What He must do is suffer many things ...

and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly.

Plainly. This means He spoke in such a way that everyone understood. They were all nodding. But they were clear on what He was talking about. There is no misunderstanding here. He was speaking to them with precision and clarity. They understood it, so much so that Peter, then, took Jesus aside:

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Rebuke means to correct because you disagree with someone sharply. So Jesus says that He MUST suffer, be rejected, murdered, and rise from the dead. That MUST happen. Then,

³³ But turning and seeing his disciples,

He sees the others, and that is the indication that He is concerned for them, for what they are thinking, feeling and experiencing at that moment of Jesus being rebuked. He is concerned He then rebukes Peter:

he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Uh-oh. Jesus looks at the disciples, and having that concern for them, He realized that He must rebuke Peter. The reason He needs to rebuke Peter is because Peter's mind is not set on the things of God. Peter's mind is set on the things of man. Jesus says, "I MUST go to Jerusalem, and I MUST suffer. I MUST be delivered over. I MUST be murdered. I MUST rise from the dead."

Peter takes Him aside and says, "You mustn't! You're dead wrong! You don't have to go there, You don't need to go there, No! You're wrong!" I think what Peter is thinking is, *no servant of God must suffer. No servant of God must be rejected. No servant of God must be murdered, No servant of God must rise from the dead* (although that's the best of them.) In Peter's mind, he is thinking, *suffering and the certainty of the will of God – those are incompatible, It can't be God's will that You suffer! It's incompatible, so Jesus, You're dead wrong!*"

Brothers and sisters, one of the reasons why Larry and I try to preach with theology, because theology is simply knowing God, and you can't preach a Christian sermon without the knowledge of God (by definition). We have to preach theology with accuracy because what Peter got wrong here was his theology. He thought it was incompatible for God to be sovereign and providential, and for there to be suffering in the will of God. Incompatible! What Jesus says is, "Your idea that it is incompatible is because your mind is set on man's fallen mindset, not on the things of God. Peter, you don't understand Me, therefore, "Get behind me, Satan!"

So when I hear people say, Phil – why do you preach with clarity and accuracy about theology, it's because I don't want to hear that, "Get behind me, Satan." I want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (applause). So we as a church – this is why we can't balk at the time it takes to speak clearly and plainly and accurately about the things of God. God is God and there is no other, Speak true about Him.

Jesus says, "Peter, you've got this dead wrong."

The reason I think Peter thinks that suffering, as a part of the will of God, is incompatible with the sovereignty and providence of God is because, when Peter starts preaching in the early church (in Acts 2 and 3), part of his sermon is the correction. Look at Acts 2:23 Peter is preaching he says, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pains of death because it was not possible to be held by it."

His next sermon, Peter preaches in Acts 3:18. "But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He thus fulfilled." In other words, God spoke through the prophets and said (Isaiah 53), "My will is that the Messiah will suffer, and what God has prophesied, He has fulfilled in Jesus."

Then you see early church praying together in Acts 4:27. They said,

Truly in this city, they were gathered together against Your holy servant whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.

Jesus had to correct Peter's thinking. It was indeed the sovereign plan of God that Jesus would suffer, that Jesus would be rejected, that Jesus would be murdered, that Jesus would rise from the dead – in order to save sinners. To think that suffering and pain and calamity are not part of God's sovereignty is dead wrong, according to Jesus.

So the sovereignty of God is essential to the gospel. This is why we've been honing in on this, and emphasizing it so much. We see in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 the most succinct explanation of the gospel, when the apostle Paul writes:

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

In accordance with the scriptures – in accordance with what God said would happen.

The fact that Jesus' death, burial and resurrection for our sins – was in accordance with the scriptures. It means it was God's plan to promise and fulfill scripture and that He had a sovereign and eternal plan to do it. So the very nature of the gospel – what is essential to it – is the sovereignty and providence of God. The gospel is not "good luck." Like all this just happened to come together. In fact, the gospel is the good news of the redemptive plan of God from eternity past, to rescue sinners from the wrath of God, to save them to become His own people by the crucifixion and resurrection of His one and only Son. That was what God was up to.

How in the world does that connect with Ruth? Palm Sunday is a great celebration that the king has come. The promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled! Jesus is the Messiah. He has come from the East to the West. He is reversing the curse. He is coming to Jerusalem. He must come in order that He may die and rise again and thus secure eternal redemption to save people who will be reconciled to God and each other. That all had to happen, and part of that having to happen – is the book of Ruth.

Remember, if there is no King David, then the people couldn't shout, "Hosanna in the highest to the Son of David!" Yet, if there was no Boaz and Ruth, there could be no King David. If there is no Ruth and Boaz, and therefore no King David, then there certainly can't be a King Jesus. So God was orchestrating everything under His sovereign plan to redeem a people.

What that means for us as Christians, Brothers and Sisters, is so awesome! We as Christians, there is always a connection between the ordinary things of your life and the amazing work of God in human history. He is accomplishing His eternal purposes through your ordinary life, whether or not you realize it. That's awesome! That means you wake up tomorrow, if you're a Christian, God has something purposeful in your life, eternal in your life, significant in your life – don't wake up tomorrow going – bleh! No! Wake up and say, "God is going to do eternally significant things today, just by me driving in my lane on the freeway, Just by my showing up at work and working hard." Ordinary conversations. God is doing things and you don't even realize it. Praise God. Your life is not inconsequential.

Ok, let's go to Ruth 4. Remember, Ruth and Boaz get married. She becomes his wife. It says he went into her and the Lord gave her conception. She bore a son. I love this. Look. Ordinary things – marriage, a whole gaggle of people got married this weekend, none of whom you'll probably ever meet. It's just ordinary stuff. Not only that, but it's ordinary stuff like sex. Then you look at it – "The Lord gave conception." It's Yahweh, working in ordinary things. So Ruth bears a son.

Look at the women in 4:14-17:

¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. ¹⁷ And the women of the

neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

When you look at this, the women give a blessing. Normally, when blessings are given, they are put in the positive, that is, we bless Yahweh, we bless God for this thing – a positive thing. We bless God, we thank God for a job, for a child, for a house, for food. Yet the blessing here (v 14) is in the negative. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without ..." Notice the negative words. The author is trying to get us to see something in the blessing itself. It is unorthodox. It is not ordinary. There is something significant in the blessing. What is it? In verse 20-21, Naomi said:

²⁰ She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹ I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty."

So in Naomi's mind, she is thinking, *God, You took everything from me and now I'm empty. I got nothing.* And the women of the town say, "No! Blessed by Yahweh, because He has not left you empty. Do not, at this moment, Naomi, determine the end of the story before you know it. Your present circumstances are not the end of the matter."

So Naomi thought, *Oh no! I'm doomed!* She is saying, Yahweh has done this! He has left me empty! I can't go on with life! He has ruined my life. There is no hope for me.

And the women go – oh, yeah? God wasn't done with your story yet, so don't claim today when you have no idea what tomorrow holds.

Remember, brothers and sisters, we are not ultimately in control of our lives. God has numbered our days. Therefore, if God has numbered our days, then they perhaps exceed tomorrow. So don't bemoan today if you don't know what God has in store for you tomorrow.

I love this because it is great pastoral encouragement. Recently someone came and we were chatting. They were recently diagnosed with cancer. They came and said, "I just need encouragement. I'm devastated by this news." And I said, yes, rightly so. But let me tell you – God has never promised that He is going to heal your cancer. Not in this life. But what God has promised is that He will comfort you. He has promised to be with you, no matter what. I want to remind you that God has also promised that we will one day get new bodies. The new bodies we'll get are going to be eternally free of cancer. No more pain, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more death. So one way or another, you are ultimately in the hand of God. Whether or not He takes your life here, He is going to give you new life there. You'll be resurrected! So cling to the promises. Cling to His comfort. Cling to His presence. Cling to the final and ultimate promise that you will walk again. You will live again. You will never be in pain again. (Applause).

I once heard a pastor say, "The road to glory is never a straight one. But God sees to it that we do get there." I love that.

We see from this that Naomi is encouraged by everything the women are saying, and by everything that's happened. The women take the son and name him Obed (which means servant). We know that it wasn't Naomi's son, but in that culture, families were so close that even a grandson felt like a son.

This chapter ends with the genealogy, leading us up to King David.

As we close this service, let's get to the application.

I want to make four pleas, four appeals to you, the church, from the book of Ruth by way of application. I think these four pleas, these four application points, these four things we see in the book of Ruth – if we as a church would prayerfully pursue these things and ask that the Spirit would apply them in abundance, God is going to do things in us and through us that we never thought or imagined possible. So here are the four things:

- 1. Shine the light of self-sacrifice for others. Serve others sacrificially. In so doing, let your light shine that all men may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

Remember, Ruth took place at the time of the judges. That was its backdrop. We read in Judges 21:25, “²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” That means that in the midst of the backdrop of Ruth is individuality, self-absorption, selfishness in a proportion not yet seen in the Old Testament. There was immorality running around rampant, because of the rampant individuality. Everyone was their own god. They were the master of their own destiny.

In that moment, in that backdrop, there are two people who rise up and shine brilliantly as examples: Ruth and Boaz. We see in Ruth and Boaz, they stand out in their culture because they precisely do not live like everyone else lives. They do not live for themselves along, instead they sacrifice themselves in the service of others. We see it in Ruth 1:16, remember where Naomi is trying to convince Ruth to go back, to get out of here. Go home. Remember what Ruth says? You better shut your mouth, Naomi! (that's my translation). Ruth says,

Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following, for where you go, I will go. And where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, your God, my God. Where you die, I will die and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts me from you.

She says, I'm sacrificing my home, I'm sacrificing my land, I'm sacrificing my language, I'm sacrificing my customs and the things I'm comfortable with – because I'm pursuing you, Naomi. I'm going to love you. I'm laying it all down to serve you.

Not only that, but Boaz was willing to marry Ruth, a Moabite woman, a widow, barren. He doesn't give a rip about what marrying her, and if they were to have a son, what that would do to his income. He just knew he wanted to serve Ruth. At great sacrifice to himself.

Remember, brothers and sisters, a disciple of Jesus is self-sacrificing. We seek to serve others. So Ruth and Boaz are a beautiful picture of discipleship.

Right after Jesus tells His disciples that He MUST go to Jerusalem (in Luke 9), right after He says He MUST go and experience all these things, the very next words out of Jesus' mouth are these: “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Self-sacrifice and self-denial are requirements for discipleship. In other words, if you will not crucify yourself and deny yourself, you cannot be a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, if we are self-absorbed and put ourselves first in all things, and all we think about it how to benefit ME – you cannot be a disciple. You may like Jesus from afar. You may appreciate the Christian subculture, but you are not a disciple.

That's why Paul writes (Ephesians 2:14) "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation." Paul qualifies that as saying, "...among whom you shine as lights in the world."

Do you want to shine like a light in the world? Here is what you do: (v 17) Paul says, "Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and I rejoice with you all." Paul was saying, "I don't grumble, I don't complain because grumbling and complaining are the evidence that you don't believe that your present circumstances are under the purview of God's control and grace, His sovereignty and providence. *You're not in control, God, so I'm complaining to You. I hate this, God!*

Paul says don't do that. Instead, let your light shine by submitting yourself to the sovereignty and providence of God and be willing to pour yourself out in the service of others. Paul says, I do this and I rejoice. I'm glad to do it.

So if we as a church want to be lights in a dark culture, we cannot be self-absorbed. We need to become selfless. Discipleship itself hinges on that, and in the service of others, being selfless, we will let our light shine as we serve and love and willingly, gladly pour ourselves out for others. So I plead with you, church, let your light of selflessness shine in the service of others.

2. Take risks to love others for God's sake. For the sake of God, for His glory, for the joy of others, take risks to love them. When Ruth left Moab, she left her land, her family, her language, her customs, her comfort. She left everything. The only thing she knew for sure was that she was going to be with Naomi, and that Yahweh was going to provide. That's it. Everything was a risk. Everything.

Boaz, when he married Ruth, he had no idea what would happen. He had no idea how it would financially imperil him. He had no idea whether or not she would be able to bear a son. She was barren for ten-plus years, but you know what? Both Ruth and Boaz risked for the sake of love. For the sake of love, I will take the risk.

We as the disciples of Christ, have been set free to love others well. When we repent and believe the gospel, our sins are blotted out. We are forgiven. We are reconciled to God and reconciled to one another. In so doing, God frees us from the condemnation of sin. God frees us from the penalty of sin. God frees us from the slavery of sin. God frees us from the fear of death. But what are we to use our freedom for? Galatians 5:13 –

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Flesh – that's sin and selfishness.

The freedom that we've received in the person and work of Christ, is a freedom to risk loving those around us. To serve those around us. Let us not use our freedom in Christ to proclaim self-absorption and self-interest, where we say *self-denial is not what God asked me to do! God, in Christ, He is all about "self-care."* *I have to drink my herbal tea. I have to take my time-outs. I have to take my naps. Even if it means I don't help my kids with their homework. I need me time.* No. We have to take risks because there are people in this world who are not worthy of

love, but you are not asked to evaluate their worthiness, and then love them. You're just told to love. Love.

So brothers and sisters, let's take risks to love others for God's sake.

3. Embrace ethnic diversity in order to conform our hearts to God's heart for the nations. The fact is, Ruth was a Moabite, not an Israelite. She was not Jewish. And she became an ancestor of Jesus, the Messiah (Matthew 1:5). She came from Moab with Naomi because Yahweh had visited Israel and had given them bread.

Remember, we preached this – that there was no bread in the House of Bread. God did that – so Elimilech and Naomi, Chilion and Mahlon – they all left for Moab. Then while they were in Moab, Mahlon, Chilion and Elimilech all died. And then God visited His people and there was food in Israel again. God did all that. When they came back to Israel, we see that even the movements of people from Israel to Moab, Moab to Israel – all of that is a part of God's sovereign and providential work.

The apostle Paul even says as much (Acts 17:26) that "God made from one man, every nation of mankind to live on all the faces of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling places." God is the determiner of these things. God is the sovereign ruler of these things. God is providentially moving peoples upon the earth. If that's true then, it has to be true today – that God is working. Even the movements of people around the earth.

It is amazing that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the risen Savior, crucified and resurrected for the forgiveness of sins – Jesus Himself, in His genealogy in Matthew, is revealed to be a multi-ethnic person. At least because of Ruth.

Think about this, brothers and sisters: the man named Caiaphas, who was the high priest at the time of Jesus, he and others were debating about what to do with Jesus. They were thinking they had to get rid of Him – to kill Him. Because if they killed Jesus and got rid of Him, at least they felt they could save their nation (Israel). So Caiaphas does this in John 11:50. He says, "It is better that one man should die for the people, than the whole nation should perish." Then it says, an editorial comment (v 51), "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only – but also to gather into one, the children of God who were scattered abroad."

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to save sinners and the sinners, whom God seeks to save, are from all the nations. I've read this – every time I preach I at least quote it – Revelation 5:9-10 – about heaven:

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,
"Worthy are you [Jesus] to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."

God sent Jesus to shed His blood for the purchasing for people from every walk of life. If that doesn't indicate to us that God's heart is for the nations, I don't know what else would convince you! But the reality is this: the blood that was spilled to purchase people, a multi-ethnic people –

we have to realize that the blood itself was multi-ethnic blood. The blood itself, and what the blood accomplished, speaks to the fact that God's heart is for the nations. Multi-ethnic.

Remember when Jesus came in at the Triumphal Entry. He was riding on the donkey. He comes in. He does all of that, then the next day He goes to a nearby town. In the morning, the first thing He does is to come back to Jerusalem. Remember what He did? The very first thing He does is to come back to Jerusalem, go to the temple and He cleanses it. Remember what He said while He was cleansing the temple? Mark 11, Jesus says, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.'"

The very fact that Jesus came from the East to the West, to signify His reversal of the curse of Adam, and He is coming as the Messiah because He has to come to Jerusalem to die and to rise again in order to purchase sinners for Himself from every tongue, tribe, nation and people group. The fact that His first act the very next day is to go to the temple and make sure that everyone understands – God cares about the nations! It's an indication that we have got to be people who are concerned for the nations.

It also means this, brothers and sisters. We cannot have a racist heart in any way, shape or form. For racism, in and of itself, is the antithesis to the gospel. It is the antithesis, the opposite, of the work of God. It is also the opposite of what God's heart is. We cannot be effective in our missions, we cannot be effective in our ministry, if we harbor racism in our hearts. So I plead with you – embrace ethnic diversity so that your heart will be conformed to the heart of God. God's heart is for the nations. (applause)

4. (I'm trying to plead, I plead with you to) **Trust the sovereignty of God.** God is good. God is faithful. I just plead with you, Church, let us trust the sovereignty of God.

The book of Ruth demonstrates over and over that God is involved in the details of our lives. Now when I was at Biola, I was a jerk. One thing I was so jerky about was – I was convinced that there is no way that the Bible teaches that the sovereign plan of God (His providence and His will) could ever, ever, ever include suffering. That's incompatible! I was on the internet, watching every video I could find. I was reading every book I could – to prove that anyone who believed God is sovereign over all things, is a liar and heretic and doesn't know what the Bible says. So I spent a lot of time, trying to prove that I was right and everyone else were idiots. Then I got hired at a church. There was a wise pastor who was listening to me rant on, and pooling my ignorance together with other people. We were just telling everyone, *if you believe in the sovereignty of God and that He allows evil – that He actually ordains evil – what heresy! They're going to hell for sure!* One thing I said to this pastor was, "I'm convinced that the Bible doesn't teach that, because the Christian church has never taught that. It has never taught that the sovereignty of God and the suffering that we experience are somehow compatible."

The pastor, in his grace and patience, said, "Really? Are you willing to read something about that?"

Of course, in my pride and arrogance, I said, "Why do I need to read it? I already know it!"

He said, "How about you reading this little theology document, called the Heidelberg Catechism. It was written about 400 years ago. Read question 27-28"

I'm going to read that to you now. The catechism, a question and answer form of theology.

Question 27: What do you mean by the providence of God? (What is meant by that word?)

Answer: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

So I naturally asked this pastor, “Let me ask you this, then. Is it really possible that God governs even the sinful acts of people, to make them ultimately serve His wise purposes, without God Himself being a sinner and doing so?” Boo-yah.

To my dismay and shock and horror, he said, “Yes.”

So I asked, “How in the world can God do that!?”

This wise pastor said, “If God cannot govern human sin to accomplish His wise purposes, then there is no Christian gospel. The gospel is the good news that Jesus was crucified and risen for our sins.” He made this point: If there were no crucifiers, there could not have been a crucifixion.

Uh-oh.

So he asked me, “If God said that His Son would come as the Messiah and be crucified, God must have also ordained that there would be crucifiers to carry out His plan.”

Whoa.

I went through a couple years of being absolutely thrown on my face in humility. God is God and I’m not. God is in the heavens. He does all He pleases.

What does this big theology have to do with me? Or us? Give me something practical.

Romans 8:28 – As Christians ... “²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

All things, brothers and sisters. All calamities. All evils. All set-backs. God is working. You can take confidence that He is going to work, because your story isn’t done yet. God has still got something. Just wait. Trust.

That’s why Paul wrote (2 Corinthians 4:17) “¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” Paul is calling suffering in this world, light and momentary. We’re thinking – *this guy has no idea what I’m going through!* Then we read about Paul’s life. In 2 Corinthians 11, he has been beaten with rods, shipwrecked, hungry, naked, stoned and left for dead. Now we’re starting to think – *wait a minute, maybe I don’t know so much about what it means to suffer!* How is it that Paul can say that a lifetime of suffering is momentary? How in the world can the apostle Paul say, the weightiness of the sin and suffering of this world is light? What’s wrong with this guy?

The reality is, because Paul knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, that whatever avails us or approaches us, whatever comes our way – God has promised, I am with you. I will comfort you.

I will preserve you. I will see you to the end. When you get to the end, you will be resurrected and glorified and I will fulfill all that I have intended to fulfill. You will dwell in the place where righteousness dwells – called the New Heavens and New Earth.

Then I read question 28 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Remember the pastor told me to read both. So let me ask you this, how does any of this theology actually help? The question is:

Question 28: What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence does still uphold all things?

Answer: That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from his love; since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move.

When we look at the book of Job, remember he lost all his livestock, his servants, his children. Job 1:20-22 – he stands up, rips his robe, shaves his head, falls on the ground. He is worshipping the Lord. He says, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

In all of this, Job did not sin or charge God with wrong (it says in v 22). After Job's health was taken from him, he begins to scratch his open wounds with shards of pottery. (Job 2:9-10)

⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” ¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Notice Job's response to suffering. Notice Peter's response to suffering. It says Job did not sin. Peter is called “Satan”. What's the difference? Job is trusting in the sovereignty of God. Peter was not.

I plead with you, church. Let us not sin by saying it is incompatible for God to be sovereign and providential, and also for us to suffer. Instead, in the midst of our suffering and hardship, may we remember Romans 8. We'll read this and close. Romans 8:31-32

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died; more than that, who is raised, and at the right hand of God, who is indeed interceding for us. So who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to

come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen! (applause)

Lord, we know that You are who You say You are. God, grant us the ability to trust You and to cling to Your word. To crave the truth of Your word. To want it to be taught and proclaimed and sung, and prayed with utter accuracy. God, I pray that You would take what we have learned and that through the Spirit's power, apply it to us, that we would be the people who are willingly and gladly sacrificing in the service of others; that we would risk to love others well, embracing ethnic diversity so that we would have the heart that You have for the nations, trusting that You are sovereign and You are good and You are faithful, and You are going to do what You began to do. You will see it through to fruition and completion. God, grant us these things in abundance, we ask in Jesus' name, amen.