

11/29/20 - Ruth 4 - "Promise-keeper, is our God"

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[0 : 00] As we look into Ruth 4, it made me curious of a certain industry that exists in the world today. And for more than 30 years, this single company has existed, and they've earned the interest, the consumer interest of over 3 million paid subscribers.

And they have, up to date, over a 1 billion net revenue due to a market of that certain consumer interest.

We've got to ask, what in the world would captivate a consumer interest similar to this? 3 million people being interested to say, take my money, I want to invest in this to receive a certain return. To just put it in plain terms, this is the population of basically Northeast Ohio. Very similar in population. But this interest lays within a company known as Ancestry.com.

Ancestry.com. It's an industry that makes conspiracy theorists cringe. Like you're going to try to give them information so that you can find out information that they already have.

[1 : 18] It makes conspiracy theorists cringe. But it also makes opportunists salivate. To dig the soils within a family's history. Not only that, over the past decade, 23andMe, if giving information, now they're giving DNA to companies to scan.

And to have those actually, there's health benefits and different diagnoses like that. To examine and analyze and to link back lineage all throughout history.

And the point is, there seems to be an innate interest within mankind among us to trace that ancestry. And to discover those maybe long left legacies of our forefathers and our family members. Maybe some have traveled over the Atlantic Ocean, as some of my own family is recorded of doing. Some have left mysteries. Some have been war heroes.

Some have maybe left family disasters in the past. All coming down to having that interest of analyzing that history. And during the storyline of Scripture, the Bible names this ancestry as something that Microsoft Word has flagged me on for typos.

[2 : 41] They've tried to correct the word Toledote, as if I'm trying to say Toledo. Toledote, the Bible names this ancestry as tracing the Toledote.

It's a Hebrew word that basically means generations. And the Toledote revealed in Scripture brought assurance of God's providence in the past and the promise of the future.

The Toledote of Scripture, analyzing the generations among generations, pointed to the past assurance of God's providence and then assurance in the future.

The promises God is laying out ahead. And how greatly we can be assured, looking back upon the biblical narrative at the various Toledotes, where we see in Scripture all throughout Genesis, that these are the generations of so-and-so.

Knowing that each and every generational link of Jesus, who all Christmas revolves around, came to pass as prophesied throughout these several centuries before his grand arrival.

[3 : 44] And dropping into the Toledote of Scripture, not Toledo for Microsoft Word, we are in between the line of Judah that has been coming into fulfillment, and the line of David.

This line continues from a broken narrative back with Judah and Tamar, and we're going to be looking at that actually next week, as we're still actually going in our Advent season here at this church.

And the continuation of this family rests within the hands of this one man named Boaz that Les has read this morning. And we have to ask, why in the world would this be such a big deal, that Ruth would be something to include in the Tanakh, the Old Testament Scriptures?

Not just a quick little detail of saying, and then there was a lady named Ruth, and she was an outcast, she was a Moabite, and she married Boaz and continued the lineage. But what would drive the Lord to bind a four-chapter text in the Tanakh for the people of Israel?

Up to this point, we have felt the intensity of that biblical narrative, I believe. The book of Ruth has really low beginnings, very dark beginnings, just as you're coming out of the darkness of Judges, the book right before Ruth.

[5 : 14] And it seems to be increasingly improving, doesn't it? We see the hand of God move from provision of the Old Testament, from gleaning to redemption, all provided and rooted within the Old Testament law of God, back to Leviticus 25.

What we're seeing here are connection, firing of God saying to his people, I have not left you. We have moved from death to life, barrenness to fruitfulness, emptiness to fullness, from curse to blessing, from bitter to sweet, from living in exile to producing and seeing a father, grandfather, being the grandfather of a king.

Why would this four-chapter account be included in the Tanakh? Why? Because you know what the Bible tells us most about ourselves is we forget.

We forget. We are forgetful people. And so maybe this would be included for the people of Israel to include a four-chapter narrative of God's kindness towards his people in contrast with the great stark difference and bleakness within the book of Judges, maybe for forgetful people like us to remember God's kindness.

I believe this series has helped us to sort of adjust our lives, to refine our perceptions that we might have of who God is and see him more clearly, more clearly and confidently knowing that God is working out a providential plan according to his will.

[6 : 48] And we experience that in our lives in sometimes what we might consider luck or maybe receiving a dealt bad hand, per se, in life.

Or maybe the odds not being in our favor. But in light of God's providence, we rest assured of his unwavering promise that he is continuing, even to this day, seeing through for his people.

Let's pray as we get into Ruth 4, as we keep all of this in mind, being forgetful people. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word this morning.

Thank you for your promises in scripture. Help us to see those promises clearly. Help us to uphold your promises that what's written in the word will supersede and be subject to the authority of your word and the supremacy of your word.

And within this supremacy, we find the supremacy of Jesus Christ being central within the narrative, even back to Genesis, the first book of this Bible. Father, we know that we are not the center of this storyline, but you are the center.

[7 : 58] So at this time, help us to read your word as we have this series come to a close. Help us to see you clearly and know that your plans are sure.

We praise in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. The first section that we have today is the other side of kindness.

We see as verse one says, now Boaz had gone up to the gates, sat down there. And what we have here is a cultural norm.

A lot of business was done at a gate. We see that in the book of Job. And so the gate would be where justice would be served, where situation, legal matters would be handled, would be at this gate.

And so this situation comes about where Boaz gathers this kinsman redeemer who is first in line to redeem this family that we read of last week.

[8 : 59] So he gets there. He springs to action. He tells him to sit down. And he took the elders of the city to this gate and they all sat down. We have this scene, sort of like a courtroom-like setting going on right now.

And then in verse three, it says, then he said to the redeemer, Naomi has come back from the country of Moab and is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

So I thought I would tell you of it and say, buy it in the presence of these sitting here, in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it.

But if you will not tell me that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it. Then I will come after you. And he said, I will redeem it.

And then Boaz said, sort of like, oh yeah, by the way. He says in verse five, the day that you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth, the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

[10:08] Then the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.

Let's look at this church. We see the other side of kindness, don't we? Now it's not saying, sort of to place ourselves in the narrative, to say like, be like Boaz, always acting in kindness.

Don't be like this redeemer. That would be a very shallow, superficial way of approaching the Lord's inspired word. It's important to not approach scripture in a modeling human characters approach, but a theocentric approach.

We must remember that the Bible is about God. And so his presence, his actions, his plans, everything we see must be central to applying this text.

The Bible is indeed about God. But what we can see as we sort of theocentrically focus and reflect upon this text, I think we can accurately feel something in this text.

[11:12] I felt it during this week of reflection and prayer, and it's a great implication that Boaz was sacrificing to redeem this family. But I want, but if we want to feel this text, we have to truly understand this text.

Isn't it interesting that we get a glimpse of that intensity, of that, of what Boaz's sacrifice is truly entailing by looking at the refusal of this other redeemer to redeem?

Point being that this kinsman redeemer has little to nothing to gain and a great deal to lose in this passage. And doesn't this sound familiar, church, if you've been plugged in with this series since chapter one?

This reflects greatly upon the contingencies that drove Orpah away from Naomi. It was the same contingencies about, I will abide by the law of the Lord, in Leviticus, lay down Leviticus 25, if I get a little something in return.

Contingencies of return on investment that weighed heavily on their decision-making.

Contingencies of return on investment, not contingencies of kindness.

[12:30] And this decision would change the course of this redeemer's life, and he knew it, didn't he? By his refusal to redeem this family. Because all of a limolexic estate would essentially not go and be awarded to this redeemer.

It would be awarded to Ruth's children, according to the law. And so we see a contrast here. The redeemer's attitude serves as an indicative standard of the attitude of Boaz's sacrifice, doesn't it? And in the context of this narrative, it puts the kindness of man under the spotlight and a test.

Boaz's attitude is one to marvel. Boaz was not concerned about the gain of his own life.

He didn't care if all the possessions, the family name, everything wouldn't go to him. He was concerned solely through and motivated by his kindness, even if that meant that he would severely be adjusting the course of his entire life, sitting and pondering young Boaz, maybe in his teens, thinking about the great plans that he might be able to fulfill and see through in life, all disappearing within this instant act of devotion to this woman named Ruth.

I don't know about you, church, but this challenges me. This challenges me in ways that I see and survey my own life in comparison to this text.

[14:00] To identify where I might have a tendency of basing my decision-making contingent upon what I receive in return.

After all, time's valuable, right? And where I invest my time maybe sometimes becomes an idol rather than being obedient to God as being the one that I worship.

I worship my time. But to truly live following Jesus is to surrender our will to him, even if it means becoming exhausted, even if the Lord exhausts us.

Or we put our head on our pillow, man, we are out because throughout the day we have exhausted our time in devotion to the Lord. That means becoming aware of the expense of our time and money sometimes without contingencies.

Thinking of Ancestry.com. Giving your money for a subscription, this annual subscription or month-to-month subscription, so that you can receive a certain return.

[15:09] Sort of like Christians playing the lottery. Sort of like Christians playing slot machines and things like that. You put your coin in to get something else. Coming to church even sometimes, I think we can often have this sort of mentality of doing things, having our decision-making based on return as if the church is a spiritual vending machine.

It sometimes expresses itself in going church to church, maybe finding certain music style that suits your preference. Or maybe some people that are less of a bear to deal with.

You know, maybe the church down around the corner might be able to have some people that are a little bit nicer and things like that. Rather than the gospel work being central, do you participate within a church based on contingent ease or entertainment or selfless commitment to the gospel? How might this challenge us to uphold a standard of forbearing charitable lives, similar to the attitude of Boaz? This is an attribute of God church that has been redefining us through the past several weeks in our series in Ruth.

And similar to last week, it kind of begs that question on return on investment and that selfish attitude. It sort of makes us wonder, are we making excuses to participate or are we making excuses to be absent from the gospel work of the church?

[16:39] But I started feeling the weight of that text and especially as it continued into verse seven, look with me. And I have a section here labeled I do, simply saying I do.

Verse seven says, now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging. So just a little brief history that one would draw off a sandal in a manner of attesting in Israel.

And the redeemer said, go buy it for yourself. And he drew off his sandal. So similar to our modern day, how we have written legal contracts, you sign on the line.

What we have here is that culturally speaking, the same thing was carried out through swapping sandals. I think we might have, I don't know, somewhere along the line of history, lost the art of swapping sandals.

Maybe for the better, for anybody with foot phobias. But we see that there's a cultural imperative of what's going on, that this transaction is being solidified in the presence of the elders of the city at the gates.

[17:46] And what we essentially come to across today is a simple instance of the law of redemption being played out. This stems back in Leviticus 25. I hope throughout this past several weeks of the book of Ruth's study that you've traveled back to Leviticus 25 to kind of examine what is going on here, lest my sermon turn into some history lesson.

And we can distantly relate that this process of what's going on here is simply sort of in relation to what we might see as a marriage proposal and what happens on that wedding day.

You see in verse 1 through 6, you have that proposition of proposal. He says to the Redeemer, here's the situation, will you do it, will you not? He says, I will not.

And so you have this mutual agreement, sandal swapping in verse 7 through 8, a sign of mutual agreement. And then, carrying out in verse 9, you have these witnesses that Boaz said to the elders in verse 9, you are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Limelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Malon.

Also, Ruth the Moabite. I'm adding on a contingency onto this transaction. Not only land, but I'm also acquiring this woman, this Moabite woman who was widowed to Malon, the son of Limelech.

[19:20] I have bought to, it says in verse 9, I have bought to be my wife to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.

To continue the line and the inheritance of the dead, meaning Limelech, you are witnesses this day.

I want you to see, I want us to take a step back from Ruth specifically, but I want to look before we step back because what is happening within verse 11 through 12 is profound.

It takes us right out of Ruth and places us in different areas of Scripture and within different promises of God. Look at the profound message in the confirmation of witnesses.

I want us to slow down as we broaden our narrowed view of the Old Testament. Look in verse 11 and pay attention here. Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, we are witnesses.

May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. And may you act worthily in Ephratha and be renowned in Bethlehem.

[20:41] And may your house, in verse 12, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.

What you have is a twofold blessing in this passage between these witnesses. You have a blessing of Ruth rooted in honor and Rachel and Leah.

These are the women of Jacob, if you can recall the story in Genesis. This is rooted way back in Old Testament Scripture, Old Testament promises.

And it's given to Ruth a blessing of having honor of bearing children, which was a fleeting opportunity prior. And we also see another side of that blessing, not only a blessing to Ruth for having honor, but a blessing to Boaz, having offspring.

Perez. This is a situation of one of the twins being born to Judah. It doesn't take a biblical scholar to observe that these witnesses were worthy elders in this city who knew the kindness of God very well in that they knew Boaz was sacrificing the good life.

[21 : 56] Boaz was laying everything, throwing everything out, every expectation, every anticipation of what his life could entail through an act of kindness. To live not a life in the good life of having things and stuff and having a name recognized by the land that this Redeemer, this other Redeemer was concerned about, but to live a life worthy to be marked in benevolence, which reflects the benevolence of God.

And additionally, as we plug into the bleak melody of Judges, they wanted a king. Look with me. Turn to the left a little bit. The bookend of Judges keys us into something spectacular and profound. In Judges 21, verse 25, in those days, these dark days of Judges, we were just through a series in Judges, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It would be through the offspring from Ruth's womb that God's provision would be fulfilled to give them the very thing that they desired, which was a king.

And the Bible unfolds for us a committed God to often wavering and uncommitted people, to forgetful people.

[23 : 40] This commitment is observed through his covenant-keeping attributes since the Garden of Eden. And notice now in these verses, going back to Ruth, that God is the subject of these witnesses' blessing.

In verse 11 and 12, God is the subject. And conception of Ruth's child in verse 13, it says, every mention of the Lord is followed by him giving.

This has nothing to do with Boaz. This has nothing to do with Ruth's. This has everything to do with God. Every mention of the Lord is followed by God, God giving.

God is the source of provision. He is the source of blessing. It's true here and it's true all throughout Scripture as we see these broken narratives that we see back at this blessing of Rachel and Leah, of what happened back in that time.

It's the same blessings of God being carried out that they're wishing upon these two people. It's the same blessing of offspring of Perez. I can imagine that these elders knew the tale of Naomi's return and began to see the broken narrative being restored through Boaz.

[25 : 01] Similar to that broken narrative of Judah and Tamar where we got Perez and Jacob with Rachel and Leah. And we see something larger going on outside of this small account.

as we zero back into our lives today, this has tremendous meaning, church. God's provision, known as his providence, often looks messy.

Things don't make sense at all often. Really, God? Coronavirus? This is what you're doing? This is how this is going to work? Look, we are often assured of the great promise to those who are able to devote themselves solely to God regardless of the cost.

God's providence looks messy. It looks like an empty seat at Thanksgiving often. Things don't take God by surprise.

Remember the Heidelberg Confession where it says, God's providence is this, the almighty and everywhere present power of God whereby, as it were, by His hand He still upholds heaven and earth with all creatures and so governs all the herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty.

[26 : 27] Yeah, all things come, not by chance, but from His fatherly hand. I don't know how many of you need to know that and be reassured of that today through the Lord's Word.

This is actually going to be the theme of December for this church. As we go through Advent, each Sunday of Advent is going to be marked by a broken narrative, one of Tamar, one of Rahab, one of Bathsheba.

These are going to be broken narratives that we're going to see how God has been using these broken narratives in our lives known as a tapestry and it's going to be called the tapestry and the Christmas tapestry.

We're going to see how these promises come to fulfillment through Jesus Christ all throughout this month. I want to know the greatest hope that we have of reading a narrative like this today, the greatest hope that we can have, that it is a simple kindness observed through the words of these witnesses, the simple kindness of blessing just as the kindness of Boaz all revolved in kindness, everything, these weren't just sort of shot in the dark blessings, every one of them came to pass in Boaz's life.

And what we see man do, man was saying I do, but actually what is happening in this narrative, God is saying I still do. God seeing his promises fulfilled and come to fruition through a messy narrative and messy life, it was ultimately a prophetic-like promise of blessing these two, Boaz and Ruth, that God works out his plans and is also the prophetic-like promise within this entire narrative that should encourage us that God is truly the expert masterpiece maker.

[28 : 24] We can try to make sense of often what God is doing, but we just get tangled in a mess of chaos because we can't comprehend the vastness and complexity of his plans.

We see often our immediate sufferings and things like that and they take captive of our minds and even our Bible rings where we throw our Bible out the window. What does not be so in this church? How might the tapestry of life bring us doubt as we look at the mess of life and think, God, what in the world are you doing? This should bring us to marvel and to worship God.

So if you are not in Christ, obviously, I don't think I have to travel too far from this text to say, look at the situation you have found yourself in. God has brought you here today on this live stream, maybe here in our church physically.

God has brought you here. It shouldn't be a news to you after talking about God's providence of his plans. You're here today and it's all due to God to hear a message that revolves around Jesus Christ.

[29 : 34] God has brought you here today to hear a message that he is not finished with his people and guess what? He's not finished with you yet either. Just as his grace we observe is common in life.

We get food, we receive water. Even the most vile, wretched person in this life who's maybe locked up in prison still receives the common elements of life through God's hand.

Water, air, common graces. But so too, these common things have led you to this message today. How might it be appropriate to respond in maybe a new song today?

Maybe a new surrender in your life and give everything to him and give everything, give your faith and your life to Jesus Christ solely and fully.

Maybe you were on the fence before but coming to Jesus saying, God, I've been compromising my entire life. I thought I knew what it meant to be a Christian but I'm giving it all to you.

[30 : 34] I trust you solely here in this moment. If that might be you, keep that in mind as we come to a close in the sermon today and make it known because the Christian life is a relational life.

You have to get plugged in in some way or manner. Come talk to me if that is you today. As we come to the last section of the passage in verse 13, we see a section that can be labeled as make way for a king.

verse 13, so Boaz left that place and took Ruth and she became his wife and he went into her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son.

Explicit, censored action going on here. If anybody last week was saying, what happened at this barley harvest and this winnowing and this night of uncovering feet, well, it wasn't explicitly stated here but here you have it.

There's no guesswork of what is going on here and this is important because who gave her conception? it says in verse 13, the Lord gave her conception.

[31 : 53] The blessing of the witnesses comes to fruition very quickly in this narrative. In verse 14, we see, 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.

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.

Remember Naomi coming back from this wandering season of life.

Remember Naomi, the wife of Elimelech who lost him, her husband, who lost her two sons.

Remember Naomi who came back to Bethlehem and Judah completely empty without anyone except Ruth who is relentlessly committed to her emptiness.

[33 : 08] Remember Naomi and see her now as these people, these women of this day say, blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a redeemer.

Naomi went from completely broken, completely empty, completely bitter and in turn became the recipient of God's blessing and abundance.

His disposition didn't change. His promise remained certain and true in Naomi's life. What changed was Naomi's attitude of coming back to the Lord in this massive universe that Yahweh is the center of.

He looked down upon Naomi, saw disobedience, saw wandering, saw feeble faith, which enacted quite horrific consequences according to the Lord's providence in this situation through Elimelech, Malon, and Chilion.

But now we see that He restores that same emptiness that He administers according to the same will that provided the brokenness and the emptiness.

[34 : 27] I'm going to extrapolate that a little bit. But as you see, God works in ways that we are brought to our knees, church, pleading for mercy from God.

pleading and pain and sorrow in this life, questioning when the certain elements in this life seem out of place.

But we can have great hope that God has not abandoned Naomi nor will He abandon His people.

And the narrative comes into full circle through the word that's spreading in this city where it says in verse 16, that Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name saying, a son has been born to Naomi. You want to know what this means for us?

God is not just benevolent to give. And get this countercultural message today. Welcome to Youngstown Metro. God is not just benevolent into giving to us.

[35 : 41] God is benevolent in actually taking from us as well. It is in this that we know that we can rejoice in our emptiness, in our lack, knowing that God is in control.

Maybe quiet at times, like, God, do you hear me? Quiet at times as He deems necessary to maybe humble us but never distance from His children.

As the Lord takes away, we can be assured that He is actually giving to us something far more valuable than possessions, than having a family name in this estate as this other Redeemer was concerned about.

Far more valuable than all of that. Namely, for this woman is a chance to grow in humility and to grow into love and adoration for a God who loves benevolently to give but also to take away.

This is the story of Ruth. And additionally, we can see and observe other vital components as Naomi holds her grandchild.

[36 : 51] We've been through four children of holding young children in our laps, newborn children, as we have four beautiful children. And I can just imagine those thoughts just rocking this baby in a lonely room as this baby is being consoled, holding the answer of prayer.

I want us to see answered prayer in the book of Ruth as well because the book of Ruth is a saga of answered prayer as well. And while I'm not going to go into detail, if anybody wants to jot down some notes, I do have a slide.

But we see back in chapter 1, we see Naomi's prayers for the widows being petitioned in chapter 1, verse 8, and we see it answered here in verse 10, especially at least for Ruth.

We see Boaz's prayers for Ruth, his petition in chapter 2, verse 12, and also chapter 3, verse 10, and it was answered here in verse 11 through verse 13, through verse 15, verse 21.

We see Naomi's prayers for Boaz. Her petition, petition in chapter 2, verse 19, and being answered in verse 11 in chapter 4.

[38 : 13] The witness's prayers for Ruth and Boaz quickly coming to pass within just a verse in chapter 4. And the women's prayers for Obed, the petition in verse 14.

You might ask, so what, right? What's this mean? What's all this? This is cool notes that we could take, right? Yeah, I'm not just trying to fill your notebook full of notes. I'm not trying to fill your mind full of knowledge.

What I'm trying to do is fill your heart with awe and wonder of a benevolent God, that God is inclined God is inclined to answering selfless prayers, just as he is inclined to blessing selfless actions.

This is the book of Ruth. This is sort of woven within the fibers of Ruth. God being inclined to answering selfless prayers and also blessing selfless actions.

The selfless actions that we see in Ruth's life, we see the selfless actions of Boaz and all throughout here. And isn't it so encouraging to know that God cares enough about us to see all of this narrative come to pass.

[39 : 35] The God of this universe sees this narrative and sees everything come to pass. Going from such a stark book like the book like the book of Judges Church.

And we often think that God has forgotten us. We must remember. You want to know the most dangerous prayer that you can ask the Lord is for him to give you patience, for him to give you humility, for him to give you steadfastness.

It was in, actually, not too long after that I uttered those very prayers and then all of a sudden we lost everything in our lives to a house fire. Only the clothes on our backs remains.

It is through those prayers that our family can attest that there are times, the times that the Lord saw us through, those times to humble us, to let us experience the extreme poverty that life can bring. That we acknowledge in our lowest moments in life that they are actually a gift from God. That we can say, great are you, Lord, for giving us such a trial.

[40 : 57] And to kind of close that story, one of the most profound moments was when I could actually thank God for our fire because I saw the refining work that it produced in our family's life.

And looking back upon the promises to come, we can see that we reached the end of Ruth, but clearly God is not finished yet as we sort of have a cliffhanger, a toledote of Scripture as we are encouraged in verse 18 as they named the child Obed.

He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. And all throughout the family lineage, it didn't take Ancestry.com to find out.

We see that this was God fulfilling his plan of giving the people of Israel exactly what they wanted, a king.

And if God provides an earthly king, this should bring a promise of something, a greater king, a greater David of this storyline that God is working out.

[42 : 06] the true promise being fulfilled and culminating within the person of Jesus Christ. Simple, self-sacrificing kindness paved the way for a king.

King David, as Jesse fathered David, but also King Jesus. I know I've gone a little bit long this morning, maybe a couple rabbit trails that I didn't intend to make.

But if I could encourage you all with seven words of encouragement. Seven words of encouragement that I observed in this series going forward.

And this is for Christian or non-Christian. Seven words that God is not finished with you yet. I don't know who needs to hear that this morning.

That God is not finished with you yet. Yeah, we're master excuse makers, we're disobedient, we're masterful at disobedience, just as the people of Israel are.

[43 : 12] But God is not finished with you yet. How great of confidence we can have knowing that God is also not finished writing your story. We often think our culture is something that promotes this self-worship, this self-elevating worship, of writing your own story, being your own hero in the narrative and uphold self.

But we can be assured that we can wisely rethink this self-centered idolatry in full assurance that God has not given us the pen of writing our story.

That he is the master mind behind this masterpiece. He holds the pen. It is not us sowing the pattern of this tapestry. God is in the business of bringing hope to the hopeless, raising dead to life, restoring the broken, and we can sleep well knowing that God of this universe is always working, sort of thinking back in our John series.

And his plans are good regardless of the immediate threat of evil or the threat of loss. Thinking of Naomi sitting there holding her grandchild, Obed, who would later be revealed as the grandfather of King David.

What a great mystery and glory of God's providence. But if you are in Christ, haven't you experienced God's providence?

[44 : 45] the richness of his blessings in your life? The kindness that Paul encourages the Ephesians with, as he says in Ephesians 2, 6, and 7, where he says God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Jesus Christ.

Makes me think of Romans 8, 31. What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

How will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? The truth is, Ruth was an outcast similar to us.

Ruth was an outcast just like any Gentile out of the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, and he has grafted them in, just as he has grafted Ruth in.

I believe as we search through Scripture through the lens of, search our lives through the lens of Scripture, we can see that even our best days are nothing to boast except boasting in our hypocrisy, our wanderings from God.

[46 : 09] As we proceed at Youngstown Metro Church, let us be rooted in this great mystery and participation of God's providence, in full assurance of our faith in Jesus, in light of his providence to his people.

Not just the cognitive interest of ancestry or knowing all the toledotes of Scripture of the generations and being able to cognitively affirm that, but to practically express that knowledge that we know the living God.

We are witnesses, we bear witness of the living God. We are active in participation of trust. Truly, our lives declare the unfolding of that tapestry. I know a lot of us have really crazy stories in light of God's providence.

Trust me, as I'm reading a text like this, it challenges me to maybe soften the message a little bit because I know a lot of our stories here in this church and the brokenness of our lives in the past. But I think that it's encouraging when we look at that in light of his providence that we see him working out throughout the storyline of Scripture. It only enables us to be more faithful to him in return.

[47 : 26] Let's trust him together, church, moving forward. God is not finished with you yet. Let's pray. Let's pray.