

Weekly Newsletter: 4th July 2023

Reflection: A tapestry of bitter and sweet providence

By Neil Longwe

So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek. Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!" Ruth 2:3-4

I once heard it said that our lives are like one big tapestry, the back of it is a series of messy strands and knots. The jumble of threads is all the difficult and challenging circumstances we go through, the heart break, the hurts, the frustrations, the doubting of God's goodness, the short-lived successes, and the mundane times. What we need to remember is there are two sides to the tapestry, we might not be able to makes sense of the back, but God is the master weaver who is producing a glorious picture on the front using the good, the bad and the ugly threads of our lives to produce his masterpiece.

The Book of Ruth is the story of two women who experienced their fair share of twisted knots, frayed edges, and difficult circumstances. After the death of her husband and two sons, Naomi returns home to Bethlehem destitute, broken hearted and bitter. Accompanied by her loyal (Moabite) daughter in law Ruth, the two women seek to forge a new life in the city known as the "House of Bread".

In the second chapter of the book, we read of Ruth seeking to glean some left-over crops in an Israelite field. It just so happens the field belonged to a man named Boaz. What a coincidence! What a stroke of luck! That Ruth just happened to be walking into the field that belonged to Boaz, a wealthy man who also is distant relative of non-other than Naomi. Go figure! Ruth had no obvious reason to pick this field over any other. It is not as if there were signs and boundary fences indicating whose land she was entering.

I love the fact the Bible uses the phrase "as it turned out". The literal translation is "as chance chanced" or we might say "as luck would have it". The narrator of the story deliberately uses this phrase as a rhetorical device or hyperbolic irony. In attributing Ruth's good fortune to chance, the phrase points ironically to the opposite end of the spectrum, mainly the sovereignty of God. It is as if the author is exclaiming "there is no such thing as chance!!" All of this is the work of God's providence! That is all the happens stance are all a result of God's sovereign care in their lives.

There are two specific ways we see God's providence in chapter two: firstly, that God would have the provision of the levirate marriage law, which enabled a relative known as the Kinsman redeemer to marry the widow of a deceased relative to provide an heir for the deceased. The mention of Boaz as a distant relative

should grab our attention - we are observing the orchestration of the divine match maker. The second way is the provision for widows and foreigners to be fed by the covenant community (Leviticus 17:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22).

The significance of Ruth's seemingly random decision to glean in that particular field, at that particular time on that particular day demonstrates that Ruth's steps were ordered by God, and we are soon to discover that this meeting will have a significant impact not only the future welfare of both Ruth and Naomi but on God's unfolding story of redemption. After all, from the eventual marriage of Boaz to Ruth came Ruth's great grandson King David, who's great descendant was the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was not only born in the "House of Bread" but is the bread of life who provides, governs and sustains all of life.

Many of us may be going through difficult and challenging times, and we may not understand what we are going through, but God is using it for our benefit (Romans 8:28). The providences of God, as the puritan preacher John Flavel once put it, are like the Hebrew words; they can only be read properly backwards.

Why not take a moment this week to reflect on the steadfast love of God on your life, on how he has protected, sustained, and provided for you. "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." Psalm 118:1

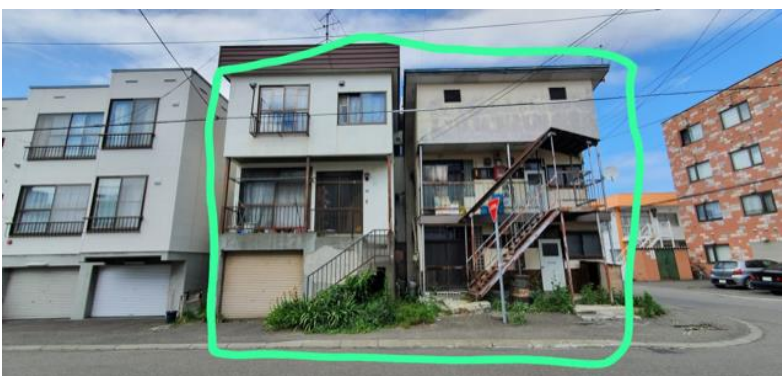
Pickleball and Table Tennis – this Tuesday

The church will be open on Tuesday evenings at 7pm for anyone wanting to play pickleball and/ or table tennis. Everyone is welcome and if you've never tried pickleball, come along and have a go at one of the world's fastest growing sports! Contact Andy Scott or Alasdair Roberts (the ping pong pro) for more details.

Update - Hiragishi Izumi Church

By Lorna Ferguson

In the Christmas Appeal in 2021, you kindly gave a generous donation to the Hiragishi Izumi Church building fund. This was the church which David and I helped start in Sapporo in 1909. The church had tried unsuccessfully to purchase different pieces of



land, but last month they finally had an offer accepted. The plot is in a visible and easy-to-find location, near the local train station, and big enough for the church's needs. Two building companies were also trying to buy the land, so it is very much the Lord's providence that the owner chose to sell to the church.

Contracts are due to be exchanged on July 6th so please pray that goes ahead smoothly. There is currently an old building on the land which the owner will demolish, then the land will be the church car park until the Lord provides the enough funds for construction to start. Please keep praying for this small church's witness in the local community.

Summer Appeal 2023

The Summer Appeal currently stands at £7624 and will go towards the support of our three missionaries.



The Sorsamo Family in Finland



Lorna Ferguson in
Japan



James Stewart in
Singapore

There's still time to give! Cheques (made payable to Holyrood Evangelical Church) and cash in an envelope marked 'Summer Appeal' can be placed in the offering box or given to Nick Archer. Or you can contribute by using the bank details on holyroodevangelical.org (use reference 'Summer Appeal'). Thank you!

SASRA – Life Behind the Wire



SASRA are hosting 'Life Behind the Wire' on Saturday 29th July at 7pm to hear stories of what God is doing in the lives of young people in the Armed Forces. Everyone is warmly invited and it will take place at Ferniehill Evangelical Church.

Plans for the summer

We're looking forward to meeting in person for the prayer meeting this Wednesday. Neil will lead our time together. The prayer meeting for the rest of the month will take place on Zoom.

Joe and the family are away in the US until Wednesday 26th July. Neil will be on holiday on 16th and 23rd July and we're looking forward to Bob taking our morning services.

Here are the plans for our Sunday services:

Date	Morning service	Evening Gathering
9 th July	Neil Longwe	Neil Longwe
16 th July	Bob Akroyd	No service
23 rd July	Bob Akroyd	No service

For any pastoral matters when Joe is away, please speak to Neil, an elder or a member of the Pastoral Care Team (Alison Nelson, Alasdair Roberts, Elaine Harley or Liz Scott).

Liz will be on holiday from Monday 10th July until Monday 24th July. **There will be no newsletter or prayer bulletin for these two weeks.** Service will resume as normal from Monday 24th 😊

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm in person in the church
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Neil Longwe preaching.
 - Evening Service at 6pm (and live streamed). Neil Longwe preaching.



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