**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**11th December 2022**

**Ruth**

**Gathering**

Light travels

From the first moments of time

Across the universe

Burning away the darkness

With stories of conviction

Of defiance and justice

Of women who have caused heavens plans

To be reshaped and redrawn

Tamar and Rehab and Ruth

Who have conspired with the light

And brought a new hope to shine

On old injustices

And in this season of flesh

Of divine presence in human skin

We tell these stories again

In defiance against the dark

We speak with pride

of these daring women

Who made room in their skin

for godly incarnation

**Welcome**

Hello, thank you for the chance to meet again and travel together through Advent, and making space to speak of the women, the first-ones, who have shaped incarnation through their defiance and daring. Those four who are found in the genealogy of Jesus, it is them we travel with this year.

And so, we meet Ruth, the Moabite woman, not a Jew, never been anywhere near Judea, who finds her way into the central story of faith, and a place called Bethlehem and becomes the mother of Obed, grandmother of Jesse, great grandmother of David.

**Prayer**

In this season of light

That conspires against the darkness

May we kindle hope again

And place here a marker

That God is on the way

May we choose to live

As light in these shadows

And start the rumour

All will be redeemed

In the moment of birth

May we travel towards justice

And with all the humanity we have

Reveal the saviour

The enfleshed one

In our human touch

And leave here

That which is not infused with light

That which hurts

And brings on the shadows

The fear and the prejudice

The safety of comfort

And the comfort of the status quo

This is advent

And may we hear the angels sing

And the light shift

And the word clear its throat

With the news

Change is more than a rumour

It is a battle God is taking on

Flesh is now the divine home

And the word is breathing among us

In this season of flesh

Where the divine light finds home in human skin

May we believe the rumour

The light is on the way

Hear us as we share the Lord’s Prayer

**Scripture Introduction**

The third woman in Jesus’ genealogy is Ruth who is perhaps not so innocent as we have traditionally thought. However, the story so far. Naomi leaves Bethlehem with her two sons for Moab, an entirely different country… Indeed it was an empire in its own right.

While there her sons marry Moabite women, Oprah and Ruth… Unfortunately, both sons die and it is the three women who are left, without security and a sustainable future. Naomi decides to return to Judea but insists the two Moabite women remain in Moab and find husbands… Orpah decides to do so, but Ruth decides to go with Naomi, even though she is going to a foreign land, of which she knows nothing, having never been there before and there is no kinsman to support them.

On returning, Naomi confesses that indeed there is a kinsman, Boaz. Ruth is sent to glean from the fields, the Israelite welfare system, picking up the leftover barley. Boaz eye falls on her… Naomi hatches a plan for a more secure future using only that which a woman could use in these days.

**Scripture**

**3**Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. **2**Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing-floor. **3**Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing-floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. **4**When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.’ **5**She said to her, ‘All that you tell me I will do.’

**6**So she went down to the threshing-floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. **7**When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came quietly and uncovered his feet, and lay down. **8**At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! **9**He said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin.’

**14**So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, ‘It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing-floor.’ **15**Then he said, ‘Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.’ So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. **16**She came to her mother-in-law, who said, ‘How did things go with you,[e] my daughter?’ Then she told her all that the man had done for her, **17**saying, ‘He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, “Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.”’ **18**She replied, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.’

**13**So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. **14**Then the women said to Naomi, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin;[a] and may his name be renowned in Israel! They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

**Reflection**

We’re less than two weeks before Christmas… Doesn’t feel like that… Maybe you are all effervescent with seasonal joy… you’re lucky enough to have been one of the few able to buy a turkey… you’re going to visit a relative at Christmas and live off **their** heating… and you have bought enough Christmas jumpers over the years to keep you warm… if you wear them all at the one go…

It certainly feels different this year… again… so many stories of cutting back… food… heating… presents… outings… and for the least in our communities… it sounds to be a genuine worry… not so much over a reduced Christmas… for all our sakes that possibly is never going to be a bad thing… but the sense of wellbeing… the comfort of having what we imagine is adequate… of being able to afford what we consider a good Christmas…

Now everyone will argue a different point of view over what is adequate and affordable and necessary… That’s not the point… it is the sense that we feel less this year… we have woken up to a less comfortable… less secure… even less expectant celebration of incarnation…

And I know most folk listening can recall stories of themselves or parents who had a far more frugal Christmas and enjoyed it all the more… again… that’s not quite the point… It is that we feel reduced… less secure… less confident…

Which is where we meet Ruth… and Naomi… two widows… in different generations… Naomi being a Jew… Ruth not… she has no link with Judaism… never been to Judea… Only heard stories off it from her now deceased husband…

And with no security they make their way to Bethlehem… Naomi assuring Ruth she shouldn’t come as there are no kinsmen… no one… under leverite code to marry them and keep them safe…

Ruth insists she will go to Bethlehem… and Naomi hatches a plan… a cunning one… that involves the traits of the other two women we’ve talked about this advent… some deceit… some lies… some manipulation… as they had no other choices for their security…

Ruth is not innocent and certainly not naive… no matter how much we have romanced her story… but we won’t go into details here… They are wily… and cunning… and manipulate affairs in order to keep themselves safe and have a secure future…

But that very question is the very heart of the matter… for if we can’t understand that… in our context today… then we don’t understand anything about Ruth and Naomi…

The story is all about seeking security in an insecure society… it is full of the issues of how you create a society that welcomes people who are not your own… Massive issues for us today… dealt with in a four-chapter story in the Bible…

And the resolution of the story… is found in people’s commitment to one another… Ruth to Naomi promising to journey with her… Naomi to Ruth to plan a secure future… Boaz to Ruth… welcoming a newcomer…

And in this season of incarnation… when the divine love finds itself in the same human skin as Ruth… Jesus’ own ancestor… and discovered himself that those who give him security are unwelcome shepherds… foreign astrologers… and a teenage mother out her depth… but each make a commitment of welcome…

And as such… that commitment to each other… becomes the source of divine blessing… There… is the more generous gift this Christmas… especially to those who are least and lost…

Maybe that is where we begin again… in a less secure world… a commitment to each other… of love… of care… of peace… which will always be more… in a world of less…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

May we gather with all those who have travelled this season

Through time

Across borders

Found themselves to be strangers

Wondering what welcome they will receive

In this season of travelling

Yet with so much disruption

And the complex arguments for that

May we pause with Ruth

And pray for those

Who are in dispute

Worried

Stuck

Plan uncertain

In this season of refugees

Where borders are crossed

And unknown lies ahead

May we pause with Ruth

And pray for those

Who are not at home

Because of conflict, hunger, fear

In this season of finding a home

Where those familiar places

Seem lost to us

May we pause with Ruth

And pray for those who have lost homes

Who are on streets because of mental health

Whose homes are no longer safe because of gangs in Haiti

Homes unsafe because of abuse

And make space for them all

In this season of family

Of renewing family and friendships

Creating community

May we pause with Ruth

And pray for these new connections

New ways to enflesh divine love

And gather together

The diversity of our humanity

Into the breadth of love

And know the peace that comes

In such a hope

And such a space

Hear us

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**