

# God's Sovereignty Through Uncertainty

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Good morning. If you have your Bible, I invite you to open it to the book of Ruth. We are beginning a new sermon series through the book of Ruth this morning. If you are not familiar with this book, it is in the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth. It is a short book of only 4 chapters, and we will be spending the next few weeks walking through this book together.

Less than a year of being lead pastor of Cornerstone, and Pastor Nathan is already asking for a break from preaching. I'm not sure what you want to make of that. Pastor Mike and I are going to try and pick up the slack for the next few weeks. In all seriousness, we wanted to give Pastor Nathan an opportunity to focus his attention on his doctoral work. So, for this Sunday and the following 3 weeks, Pastor Mike and I will be walking through this book.

Maybe this is your first time going through the book of Ruth, or maybe you have read it several times before. Either way, I think it would be good to set the context for this book before we walk through the text.

As I mentioned earlier, in our English Bibles, Ruth is placed directly after the book of Judges. This is because of the opening statement in Ruth that places this story during the time of Judges. If you remember Israel's history, slaves in Egypt 400 years, Moses sent to rescue them and lead them to the promise land. The Israelites grumbled and complained against the Lord and were made to wander the wilderness for 40 years, in order that the generation that rebelled against God would die and the new generation would take the land. We see all this in Exodus and Numbers. Moses dies, Joshua is made leader of the people to lead them into

the Promised Land where they begin to conquer the land. We then see that they failed to complete the conquest and allowed many of the Canaanites to dwell in the land, and this caused great trouble for them as God told them it would. The Israelites fall into a horrible cycle of idolatry and sin, causing their enemies to overtake them, they would cry out for help, God would raise up a judge to deliver them, and they would fall back into sin again. It was a vicious cycle that became worse and worse each time.

It is in this time period, this seemingly endless sinful cycle, that the story of Ruth takes place. However, the book of Ruth gives us a more hopeful and optimistic perspective during this terrible time in Israel's history. Now, in our Bibles, the books are categorized by the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy), Historical Books (Joshua-Esther), Poetic Books (Job-Song of Solomon), and the Prophets (Major and Minor). This places Ruth directly after Judges, which makes sense if you include it with the historical books and narrative of the Bible.

The Hebrew Bible, however, categorizes their books differently: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. This is how Jesus understood the books to be arranged when he spoke of the Old Testament in the Gospels. There are a few different places the book of Ruth is placed in the Writings, but the most common place is directly after Proverbs. If you recall, the book of Proverbs ends with chapter 31, the virtuous woman. Therefore, immediately following the verses on the virtuous woman, we see a live portrayal of that woman in the person of Ruth. Which is even more striking because she is not an Israelite, but a Moabite woman. Throughout the Old Testament the Moabites are seen as enemies against Israel.

What we are going to see in this book is a remarkable story of redemption. You will notice as we walk through this book that God is recognized as the one in control of all things, and yet is not given very much prominence in the story. He is not seen directly speaking or acting as in the books prior to Ruth. What we do see is people living and acting and making decisions, and phrases like "she happened to come to the field...". But we know these things are not a coincidence. God is behind the scenes, sovereignly working through the actions of people to bring

about his great plan of redemption. We will see this story of redemption unfold over these four chapters.

I know that is a lot of information and I moved pretty quickly through that, but I wanted to give us some context as we begin this journey through the book of Ruth. Today, we are focusing our attention on the first chapter of Ruth, the setting of the story and major problem that needs to be resolved. With that in mind, would you follow along as I read Ruth 1.

### **READ Ruth 1**

Would you pray with me?...

## **INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever had times in your life where things just did not go the way you had planned? Maybe a house project you were working on went awry. Or your car got a flat tire on the way to work.

This seems to happen, at the very least, a monthly basis to me around here. You guys have all been witnesses of it during service. Christmas Eve the sound doesn't work at the start of service. Last week the projector acts crazy in 2<sup>nd</sup> service and no one has lyrics for the first song. It's an ongoing battle around here. I can assure you that was not at all how I had planned any of that to happen. I could go on and on about situations where that was not according to plan. And I'm sure you could too.

We have all experienced this to one degree or another. It could be something as small as the clothes you wanted to wear that day being in the wash to as large as losing your job or even losing a loved one. The question becomes, how do you respond to these situations? I think many of us would be ashamed to admit that we don't act any differently than a three-year-old who doesn't get their way. There is one thing that is certain in life, and that is we are not in control of

anything. Sometimes it takes something as drastic as a worldwide pandemic to help us see that. Are all of these things just coincidence or a product of “the universe”? They are not.

We like to live with the illusion that we have control over our jobs, our kids, our family, our relationships. But in reality, we are at the mercy of God’s sovereignty, his plan and purposes. If we could plan out our lives step-by-step, I don’t think anyone in here would choose to include pain or suffering or loss. And yet, it is often through these that God brings about sanctification in our lives and glory to his name.

In the book of Ruth, we see this very thing laid out for us. We see brokenness, hurt, hopelessness. And through this, we see God bring about a redemption far greater than anyone in the story could have imagined. But it will not happen the way we would expect.

I’ve titled this morning’s message, “God’s Sovereignty through Uncertainty.” As we walk through our passage this morning, I want us to focus on three things: A hopeless situation, a heartfelt devotion, and a hopeful future.

## **A HOPELESS SITUATION**

First, we see **A Hopeless Situation**.

In the first few verses, we are given the context for the story of Ruth: when this takes place and the reason this family is in Moab. There was a severe famine in the land of Judah, severe enough to cause Elimelech and Naomi to move to the region of Moab. It is here that their two sons take wives for themselves, Ruth and Orpah. And they dwell in the land for around 10 years.

Notice how the author sets the scene. Elimelech and Naomi are fleeing a desolate situation: no food. They come to Moab and their sons take wives. Now, in many

Old Testament narratives, you would expect to see a genealogy or children being born to these women, especially after 10 years. However, we see first that Elimelech dies. Naomi is widowed, but she has hope through her two sons who are married. And yet, these women seem to be barren for 10 years.

But the story unfolds even more in that these two sons also die, leaving Naomi in a foreign country without a husband and without her sons, without any hope of future descendants. You can almost hear the ominous soundtrack behind this scene. And we are not given any reason for their deaths. There is no pronounced judgement upon them for moving or for sinning. They just die. And in this context as we read, pretty unexpectedly. That is not how we would expect the story to unfold, and yet the author surprises us with this shocking development.

And this is the reality for all of us, is it not? We may expect one thing to happen and yet, something drastically different takes place. We are never told the reasons for why things happen in our lives: why we are diagnosed with a serious illness or disease, why a loved one passes. These things just happen.

This is reflected in the book of Job. Job suffers all of these calamities: the loss of his children, wealth, health. And we see a glimpse that God allowed Satan to do these things in order to prove Job's faithfulness to him. However, from Job's perspective, he cries out to the Lord seeking answers for his suffering. And God replies to Job in chapters 38-41. In summary, God is absolutely sovereign and does not need the counsel of man to make his decisions. He is in control and has a perfect plan according to his own wisdom and counsel.

After all of that, Job responds with this in chapter 42:

<sup>2</sup>"I know that you can do all things,  
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.  
<sup>3</sup>'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'  
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Hear, and I will speak;  
I will question you, and you make it known to me.’  
<sup>5</sup> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees you;  
<sup>6</sup> therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.” – Job 42:1-6

That’s not the answer we were looking for, right? We want God to explain himself to us. Tell us why these things happen to us. How do we make sense of all of this? And simple answer we are given is, trust in God. In his character.

And this leads us to ask, “What is going to become of Naomi?” She is a lonely, widowed woman living in a man’s world: where power and privilege were given to the male members of the family. One commentator said it so clearly:

“From wife to widow, from mother to no-mother, this female is stripped of all identity. The security of husband and children, which a male-dominated culture affords its women, is hers no longer. The definition of worth, by which it values the female, applies to her no more. The blessings of old age, which it gives through progeny, are there no longer. Stranger in a foreign land, this woman is a victim of death—and of life.” – *Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*

She has no protector, no provider. She seems to have no hope. And this kind of situation can result in a few different responses. One being fearful or anxious. In the uncertainty of our situations, we can become fearful of what is to come.

But we can also become bitter. We see how this hopeless situation effects Naomi. Bitterness takes root in Naomi’s heart and grows throughout this passage. She says in verse 13,

“...it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.” – Ruth 1:13

And we see this bitterness take even deeper root in verse 20,

She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” – Ruth 1:20

Bitterness, left unchecked, can become a dangerous thing in your life.

#### [ILLUSTRATION]

It’s like gardening. Now, I’ll be the first to admit that I’m no gardener. In fact, I think this story will go to prove that very point. When Hannah and I first bought our home, there was pretty nice landscaping around the whole house. In fact, the woman who sold the house to us saw how young I was and said, “Oh no. You are going to ruin all of this.” I’m not even joking about that. She really said that. But you know...she was not wrong.

Each year, we would try to get out there and clean up the flower beds. To be honest, not because of some initiative of mine, but mainly, because Hannah couldn’t stand to sit out there and see all the weeds. So, the least we could do is try to keep the flower beds going with what was in there by cleaning it up each spring.

Well, then along comes Evelyn. And we get distracted with the chaos of being new parents. We had talked about getting the landscaping redone in the backyard and so why clean it up if someone is going to come and redo it all anyways. Well, that decision kept getting pushed further and further back, meaning the flower beds kept going longer and longer without being cleaned up.

Let me tell you something about leaving flower beds alone for that long. It gets bad. And not just bad because of how many weeds there were, which goodness, it was a lot. But something dangerous grew in all of that. If it wasn’t for Alyssa Sauder, who was nannying for Evelyn at the time, we

probably would have never known. She sent us pictures of a poisonous hemlock plant growing in our flower bed. (Picture)

I don't know if you know anything about poison hemlock plants, I didn't. But let me tell you. It's not good. For one thing, it's poisonous. (Picture) If ingested, it can cause severe symptoms in as little as 15min. There is no antidote for it. It can become fatal. Naturally, with a two-year-old running around in the backyard putting everything in their mouth, this was a cause for great concern. Not to mention, it was growing directly outside of her bedroom window. We then quickly decided...we should get it removed and redo the landscaping in the backyard. Which we did. And now we have a great reason to keep our flowerbeds cleaned up.

We had left the flowerbed unchecked. And weeds grew rampant. And a poisonous hemlock plant had time to grow. Bitterness is the same way. It likes to take root and dig deeper and deeper in your heart. It can become very dangerous. It can lead you to push people away who care about you. In some cases, it can lead to forsaking God.

In Naomi's case however, her bitterness led not to her forsaking God, but to a resigned mentality toward God. She recognizes that these events are not random circumstances. They are not a product of "the Universe" or karma. They are in fact the very hand of God. She says in verse 21,

<sup>21</sup> I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" – Ruth 1:21

This does not signify a bold confidence in God's sovereignty but rather a resigned attitude, a passiveness. She is basically saying, "God is going to do what God is going to do. And he has chosen to bring ruin to my life. What can I do about it?" This is quite a different response than Paul's response to God's sovereignty in Romans 11 where he says:



<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. – Romans 11:33-36

Let me ask you: What trials, circumstances, or pressures are you facing in your life? How are you responding to God’s working in your life? Have you allowed bitterness to take root? Take it to God. He is big enough to handle your questions, your doubts, your insecurities, your fears. Recognize that God is sovereign, he is in control, he is perfect and just in all he does. When things seem hopeless, seek the God of hope.

## A HEARTFUL DEVOTION

Next, I want us to see **A Heartful Devotion**. Now, you may be wondering if “heartful” is a word. And yes, it is a real word. I looked it up. Merriam-Webster defines it as “full of heartfelt emotion.” That’s well and good. But, for our purposes, I want to expand this meaning to include the Hebrew word *hesed*. One simple definition of *hesed* I found is: “a sense of love and loyalty that inspires merciful and compassionate behavior toward another person.” This is the word used to describe God’s love in the Old Testament.

So, when I say a heartful devotion, I mean a compassionate and merciful, loyal, loving, devotion. And we will see this idea of *hesed* a few times through this book as we will see it here in our passage. Let’s look again at what is happening in this drama that is unfolding.

In the first 5 verses, we are given the setting of the story and the problem that needs addressed – a lonely, widowed woman with no future descendants: basically, no hope. Now, the story continues as Naomi begins her journey back to Bethlehem. It is interesting to notice how the author describes this. It is all in the singular:

<sup>6</sup>Then *she* arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for *she* had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. <sup>7</sup>So *she* set out from the place where *she* was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. – Ruth 1:6-7

*Naomi* arose from the country of Moab, *Naomi* hears that God has brought food to the land, *Naomi* set out from the place to return. Naomi is the one returning to Bethlehem. It is uncertain as to what will become of the two daughters-in-law. They seem to be going along with Naomi, but it is unclear whether they have decided or resolved in their hearts to return to their people or continue with Naomi.

This is a huge decision with vast consequences. For Ruth and Orpah, going back to their land and their people, there is hope of finding another husband and having children. Continuing with Naomi would mean going to a foreign land, and as such, being treated as a foreigner and most likely not marrying again. But the decision is also difficult for Naomi.

To send her daughters-in-law back to their country means she has to journey back to Bethlehem alone and live on her own, again with no man in the family to protect or provide for her. However, having her daughters-in-law come back with her would be asking them to renounce any hope of life or future husband and kids. Naomi understands the tension here, and so as they are traveling back, she speaks up and decides to send them back to their country.

She says in verse 8,

May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. – Ruth 1:8

This phrase “deal kindly” is the Hebrew word *hesed*. Other translations may say “show kindness.” Naomi is hoping that by sending them back to their country, God will *hesed*, show loving kindness to them by providing a husband for them. We see both Orpah and Ruth decline this initial offer.

But Naomi, full of anguish over her situation, her loss, and bitter about her circumstances insists that they return. She begins spouting out “reasons” for them to return, which is really just illogical sayings. Not real reasons at all. When people are hurting and broken over their situation, we don’t typically make rational arguments. We are not able to see clearly and process everything. Often, we make brash decisions, illogical statements, and poor reasoning. We even push people away who care about us.

At this point, Orpah kisses her mother-in-law and returns to her country. But Ruth “clings to her.” Naomi, again, tries to insist that Ruth follow her sister-in-law and return to her land. But here, we see this bold declaration of *hesed* by Ruth. This heartfelt devotion.

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.  
<sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”  
– Ruth 1:16-17

Ruth shows this heartfelt, *hesed*, kind of devotion to Naomi. In saying where Naomi goes, lodges, and dies, so will she, Ruth is committing all of herself, all of her life to Naomi. Remember, this is a major decision with vast consequences. As one commentator put,

A young woman has committed herself to the life of an old woman rather than the search for a husband. – Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*

Ruth was basically resigning herself to a life with Naomi. There was no promise that the rest of the story would unfold the way it does. Ruth does not know what God will do in the coming chapters. She has given herself, a heartfelt devotion, to love and care for Naomi. And this is the great example of *hesed*.

[ILLUSTRATION]

It reminds me of the end of Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring. Now, I'm not as diehard of a fan and haven't read through the books. But at the end of the movie, Frodo gets in a canoe to go to Mordor on his own (Picture 1), and Samwise Gamgee chases after him to come with him.

Frodo: "Go back, Sam! I'm going to Mordor alone."

Sam: "Of course you are, and I'm coming with you!"

(Picture 2) Samwise then continues to pursue Frodo as he is drifting further away in the river. Frodo shouts: "You can't swim!"

And after nearly drowning in his pursuit to follow Frodo, Frodo pulls Sam aboard (Picture 3) and says: "I made a promise, Mister Frodo. A promise! 'Don't you leave him Samwise Gamgee.' And I don't mean to! I don't mean to."

(Picture 4) And they embrace. It's a truly touching moment in the story as we see Samwise Gamgee pledge full devotion to Frodo and this quest which could very well end up in death.

And in our story of Ruth, we see this grand gesture, this amazing act of kindness, this heartfelt devotion Ruth shows to Naomi, how does Naomi respond? She doesn't. It just says, "She said no more." She saw she could not convince Ruth

anymore, and she said no more about the issue. What we don't see is any acknowledgment or recognition of this great act of kindness and devotion. Could you imagine if at the end of Lord of the Rings, instead of Frodo and Sam embracing, Frodo just turns around and beings rowing?

And this, I think, is an important lesson for all of us. We should show heartfelt devotion, this *hesed* kind of love to other people, regardless of any reciprocation. Whether we gain anything in return or not. This is the love God has shown to us, sinners who were rebelling against him. And yet, Romans 5 tells us:

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. — **Romans 5:8**

We are told throughout the New Testament to show this kind of love to others. Jesus says in Matthew 5:

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. — **Matthew 5:43-48**

Who do you need to show love to today? It's easy to show love to people who are kind and nice and show love back, right? But Jesus wants us to show love in the way he showed love. Looking past the hurt or the anger or the indifference of other people and lavishing love upon them. Whether they show love to us or not.

Parents and caregivers, you know this kind of love. No matter what your child does, you love them. Whether they shout, “I hate you” and slam the door to their room, you love them. The problem is, we don’t translate that kind of love to others. But as Christians, we should. Jesus showed love to the world, to the very people crucifying him, by forgiving them and dying for their sins. We are called to show *hesed* to others.

## A HOPEFUL FUTURE

Lastly, let’s look at **A Hopeful Future**.

Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem. And as we mentioned earlier, we see this bitterness that has been welling up in Naomi come out. The people of Bethlehem see Naomi and from the context and Hebrew language, it sounds as if they are excitedly asking if Naomi has returned. She has been gone for around 10 years, and now these people see her and are excitedly wondering if she has truly come home.

The author here gives us this play on words in this section. These people are excitedly asking, “Is this really Naomi?” The name Naomi means “pleasant.” Naomi, probably hearing her name said, knows what it means, and cannot bear to be called “pleasant” because of the great affliction the Lord has brought upon her. She would rather be called Mara which means “bitter” because of the circumstances God has brought.

In this drama playing out, Naomi took center stage in verse 3, and as we saw, Naomi was the center of attention in her return back to Bethlehem in verse 6. But now, the author brings Ruth to the center stage. He says in verse 22,

<sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. – **Ruth 1:22**

It was not just Naomi who returned, but now we see Ruth has returned. Which shows the bitterness in Naomi's heart even more in saying that she has returned empty, all the while Ruth has pledged her life to her and is with her.

The author concludes this section and our chapter with these hopeful words:

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. –  
Ruth 1:22

At the beginning of the story, we were told a famine had struck the land, causing Naomi and her family to leave Bethlehem and go to the region of Moab. While there, her husband and two sons die. As we mentioned, it was a hopeless situation: famine and death. But here, they have returned to Bethlehem (literally “the house of bread”) during barley harvest. There is food. Where there is food, there is life. We are left with a sense of anticipation.

But there is something else that gives a learned reader this sense of anticipation, a sense of hope for the future. It's actually back in verse 2,

They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. – Ruth 1:2

Now, to our modern-day ears, we read that as nothing more than extra background content. But to the Jewish people hearing this story, this phrase has great significance.

#### [ILLUSTRATION]

It's like if I were to say, Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee, I think just about everyone in here could tell me who I'm talking about. Maybe not so much the younger generations. But that term carries some weight and is associated to someone who was very famous in our American culture, Elvis Presley.

In the same way, this phrase was not just background information, but carried great significance. There is someone else who was an Ephrathite from Bethlehem. Look at 1 Samuel 17:12,

<sup>12</sup> Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. – 1 Samuel 17:12

The book of Ruth was most likely written during or after the time of David because of the genealogy we find at the end of the book. Any Jewish person hearing this phrase would anticipate the hope of the great king, David. But it seemed very unclear how that would take place with the death of the Elimelech and his two sons. So, this chapter ends, and we are left with a sense of anticipation for the rest of the story. A sense of hope for the future.

What will become of Naomi? Will the problem at the beginning of the story be resolved? And how will this Moabite, Ruth, who showed *hesed* to Naomi, play a role in this solution? How will David come through this line with the death of Elimelech and his sons?

What can we learn from this? I think, first, we need to recognize God's sovereignty over all things. Even despite the dreadful circumstances Naomi found herself, she still acknowledged that it was the hand and the work of God. Do we live with this kind of understanding? Do we truly believe that God is at work in the world, and that he is in control of all things? Let's not let our circumstances in life sway our belief in a sovereign God.

Secondly, we need to recognize that not only is God sovereign over all things, but he is working all things for our good and his glory. Romans 8 tell us,

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. – Romans 8:28



All things. Good and bad. He works all things out for our good. And we may not understand how, we may not be able to see it clearly in the midst of our trials, our hardships, our troubling circumstances, but he is faithful to bring about our ultimate good – which is our sanctification, to be conformed to the image of his Son.

In every circumstance we find ourselves in, let us be faithful to trust in our God who is sovereignly working all things according to the counsel of his will, and working all things together for our good.

## CONCLUSION

Things in our life often do not go the way we anticipate or expect. I don't know what situation you find yourself in today. Whether it's the loss of a job, a broken marriage or relationship, a terminal illness, the loss of a loved one. The question is not will things happen unexpectedly in our lives, but how will we respond when they do. No matter what seemingly hopeless situation you find yourself in, there is a hope and a future through Jesus Christ. We sang about it this morning, he's our living hope. 1 Peter 1 says,

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. – 1 Peter 1:3-5

Maybe you are here this morning, and you don't have this hope. You have not trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. God's Word makes it clear to us: Repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Turn away from your sin and cling to the life and forgiveness offered through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. You don't have to live in your hopeless situation. You can have a living

hope in Jesus. If you have questions about this, please find one of the pastors this morning as we would love to talk with you about how you can be saved.

For the believers in the room, we have been shown such great love from God. Who do we need to show love to in our lives? Who in our lives is hard to love? Let us ask God to strengthen us by the Holy Spirit to shower love and grace upon those around us. Let us look through the hurt, anger, and brokenness of people and how they respond to us and show them the *hesed* that God has shown to us. However the Lord is speaking to you this morning, I pray that you would be faithful to respond to his leading.

Would you pray with me?

## COMMUNION

I'm going to invite the band and the deacons to come up. This morning we have the opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper together. What better way to display the hopeful future we have than taking communion together, where we reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us and long for his return.

At Cornerstone, we invite everyone who professes faith in Christ to participate in communion. Scripture warns against taking communion in an unworthy manner. And so, if you have not placed your faith in Christ for your salvation, then we would ask that you please refrain from participating and consider your own need for salvation, for the forgiveness of your sins.

In a moment I will pray, and the band will begin playing. We have tables here at the front with both elements. All of the bread is gluten free. Each row will be dismissed by one of our deacons and you will come to the table, take both the bread and the cup, and return to your seat. If you are sitting in the back section, there is a table in the back that you can freely get the elements. Please wait until everyone has received the elements and we will take them together as a sign of our unity in Christ.