

## 199706 underhiswings applebee ruth2

Over the years of my pastoral ministry, I gave a children's address every Sunday morning, and after many years, of course, of different subjects and characters that I'd introduced to my congregation, my daughter it was who said, Dad, you mustn't lose those stories. And so, with the kindness of World Gospel Media Department, which is a very wonderful department, I recorded two tapes of children's stories, five Maudie and Benny stories, my imaginary nieces, five Toby stories of my dog, five Sammy Scarecrow stories with his animals, and then a series of people that I've met around the world, characters that I've met, a never-be-there, an ever-leaner, a comingo bird, different characters that I've met as I've gone around the world. Those tapes are available from World Gospel Mission, Marion, Indiana.

If you want the address, I'll be pleased to give it to you, and I'm not sure how you do that across the border, but they are available. Also, and it's a two-tape series for 12 American dollars, and then the whole of Pilgrim's Progress. Very graciously, the Victor Book publishers of Scripture Press out of Maudie very graciously allowed me to have the copyright of Pilgrim's Progress, and so I recorded the whole of the edited version, edited by Dr. Paul Rudolph.

I put a different voice in, because it's my own voice, but a different voice for every character, and you would find that a great help, especially to give to perhaps your teenagers who would never normally read Pilgrim's Progress. It's that classic, over 300 years old, but still as fresh and as vital as ever. If you're interested in either of those two sets of tapes, both are 12 American dollars.

I've no idea what the exchange rate is, and they're available from World Gospel Mission headquarters. My little book commercial this morning, I was looking through the fiction series that they have in the bookstore here. Not sure how many of you are interested in reading fiction, but I'm so thankful to the Bethany publishers for the way in which they have taken some classics by George MacDonald and others, and put them into print so that people might read them.

There's so much more in them than any television series that you can possibly look at, and one of the things that's been a blessing to us as a married couple is that my wife enjoys being read to, and I enjoy reading to her. She embroiders and sews while I read, and down through the years we have read I don't know how many dozen books together, and enjoyed them. I just like acting the part out.

I never had the privilege of being on the stage except to sweep it occasionally, but I can act out the parts when I'm reading to her and put the various voices of the characters, and we have some good fun together, and it's been a very real blessing. My children are those inveterate story listeners, and so it's been a very wonderful experience for me to be married and have those kind of children. I just happened to pick up this one, and I'm not familiar with Gilbert Morris's writing.

Some of you are in the House of Winslow series. The title attracted me. Guess why? The Iron Lady.

It isn't about Margaret Thatcher, but I just brought it to remind you there is a tremendous wealth of good clean fictional literature that is published by publishers like Bethany, and I'm thankful that there is such today, so that we can recommend them to people who have time and like to relax in that way. And then there's, for your devotions, a book called Amazing Grace. It's 366 inspiring hymn stories for daily devotions.

There's just a page of reading with a quotation from a hymn, and those 366 hymns take you through the year, a day at a time. Part of my devotions every morning is to read some hymns from the 1933 English Methodist hymn book. As far as I'm concerned, the greatest hymn book ever published.

Some of them Wesley hymns, some of them Watts hymns, great hymns, and not just gospel songs, but hymns that are aspiring after God and worshipping God, and that's a part of my morning devotions. And I would recommend that you have a hymn book. But here's an addition.

This is an opportunity for not only to read something of the hymns, but the story behind the hymns. And so often if you know why the hymns were written, the hymns mean so much more. Every Sunday morning in my last congregation, we had five congregational hymns.

We had no specials, no choir, but I researched one of those hymns and gave just a brief account of why they were written, or who wrote them, or how they were written, every Sunday morning. When I left the church, one lady said, Mr. Hubbleby, I don't want to hurt you, but it won't be your sermons I shall miss, it'll be what you said about the hymns. I have a new hymn book since I came to this church, because I understand and appreciate why they were written.

So there's an opportunity, two books that I recommend from the bookstore. I haven't asked them how much commission I'm going to get for all the advertising that I do. Would you turn with me this morning to the book of Ruth? And the second chapter, as I told you when we began this series, it isn't a verse-by-verse exposition, but a thematic study.

And this morning we are considering a subject which I call Under His Shadow. Under His Shadow. Reading from the first verse of chapter two, there was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech.

His name was Boaz. So Ruth, the Moabitess, said to Naomi, please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him, in whose sight I may find favor. And she said to her, go my daughter.

Then she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to his reapers, the Lord be with you. And they answered him,

the Lord bless you.

Then Boaz said to his servants, who were in charge of the reapers, whose young woman is this? So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, it is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves. So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, you will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not glean in another field, nor go there from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessel and drink from what the young men have drawn.

So she fell on her face, bowed to the ground and said to him, why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner, a stranger? Boaz answered and said, it has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come for refuge. And just a few verses from the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which as I've already said is a companion in the New Testament to the book of Ruth in the Old Testament.

I'm reading from verse 16 of the second chapter, sorry from verse 6. By grace you have been saved and he raised us up together, made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before that we should walk in them.

Therefore remember that you were once Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision made in the flesh by hands, that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were afar off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. We have three pictures in that brief reading that we had from Ruth chapter 2. The first is an insight into the character of Boaz, this wonderful type picture of Jesus the redeemer in the book of Ruth.

Then we have an insight into the character of Ruth herself, this humble young woman who had come from the land of Moab to make a home among strangers. And finally we have an insight into the very character of God in this wonderful short reading that we had together, all three insights are there. I want to ask you a question this morning to begin with however, do you remember the first sight you had of your husband or he of his wife? Can you look back to that

moment? I certainly can, it's as clear today as it was then.

I was on a railway train and the railway trains in those days had seats that faced each other, just long seats along each side of the carriage with a door at each end. The design hadn't been changed since the day of the stagecoach. Sitting opposite me in the railway carriage was this young lady.

I can describe exactly how she was dressed. She had a herringbone tweed brown costume on, thick woolen costume. She had the most sensible brown walking shoes, not the flippity-tippity type shoes that most of these young women wear, good strong walking shoes.

And she had a velvet hat on with a very colourful, I think it would be a partridge feather. And as the train made its way to the place where I was going on holiday with a group of young people, I had the opportunity to sit and, I hope unobserved by her, to completely envelop her with my eyes. And what I saw, I liked.

Now I have to tell you that I had no previous desire to look at any young lady. I was brought up in a home where I just had one brother, five years my senior. He didn't at that time have any interest in girls and so we just managed fine on our own.

But whilst I was in the army, a certain friend made a disastrous mistake. She said to me, you know, now you're a Christian, you need to think about your partner for life. And I made a comment, very casual comment that I didn't really mean very much about.

Oh, I said, I'm not interested in all these young girls. I see holding hands with these boys. All the soldiers seem to find a girlfriend somewhere in the city.

I said, if I ever choose a wife, it'll be like so-and-so, who was a person quite a bit older than myself. And the foolish woman went and told so-and-so what I had said. So I found myself with a follower and almost was caught.

I managed eventually to escape. Unfortunately, that dear so-and-so was deeply hurt by the fact that I was not interested. And I have to say, she's never married to this day.

I see her very occasionally. And of course, we are still friends, but it was an unfortunate incident. So I'd never been interested before, but now I was.

Imagine my surprise when we got up at the end of our journey to find that this young lady was a part of the party of young people that I was in. And so I had a whole week to observe her, never said a word. A year later, I discovered that she was now a student in the college where I was just about to graduate from.

So I was even more interested. And the next year, when I found myself on that same holiday with the same group of young people, she was with them. It was too much for me.

However, I didn't say anything to her. I just waited. And her story, if you heard that, was not

only amazing, but very amusing.

Not to me, but to her. And finally, the moment came. Now, the young people in that holiday must have realized there was something going on that even we didn't think of.

They asked that particular evening for fish and chips for their evening supper. That meant a trip to the fish and chip shop to buy them. And so they said, now, Mary, Dennis, would you mind going for the fish and chips? And so we left on that eventful journey.

Going for fish and chips isn't usually eventful, but it was this time. And the last thing they said before we left was, oh, by the way, don't forget a shillings worth of peas. Now, in England, when you buy fish and chips, you can get a carton of cooked peas to go with them.

So they said shillings worth of peas. Well, we left the home and we began walking towards the fish and chip shop. We knew that they wouldn't quite be open, so we didn't have to hurry.

But as we wandered along the road, suddenly Mary said, well, say something, Dennis. I said, oh, a shillings worth of peas. My first romantic words.

Do you remember what you said, first of all? But look at this story. And you're face to face with the fact that here is a young woman who has simply gone out into the fields, knowing very little about the people she was living among, only having been told that this man was a distant relative and that she ought to go to his field and perhaps she would be allowed to glean there. And you know, the custom in Israel at that time was that they were never to harvest the corners of the fields.

They were always to leave some grain so that the poor of the district may have something to eat. It was a very fundamental law, as it were, in Israel. So this young woman with her apron on would be gathering up the grain as she went along and especially in the corners of the field, would be even picking the ears of the grain.

And along comes Boaz. And he looks over the field and he sees this young woman. Now, I'm not sure whether he'd seen her at all before, but he asks who she is.

He's told. And then he realizes that he has heard about her and knows all the details of how she came from Moab with this near relative of his and has been loyal and loving and attentive to her mother-in-law. Now, he, and I use this word thoughtfully, condescends to speak to this young woman.

He had no need to speak to her. She was just not even one of his servants, but gleaning in the field and he could have just passed by. He greets the servants with those words, and they greet him back with the typical greeting of the day.

And then he comes right to her and he speaks to her. And that condescension reminds me of the fact that God has no need to pay attention to us. After all, when we begin our life, we are a

part of the rebel company of the world at enmity with God.

And yet he deigns to speak to us. And may I ask you a second question? Do you remember the first time you heard the voice of God? The first time God said something to you that grabbed your attention? I remember that as clearly as I remember the first romantic words I spoke to my wife. And of all places, I was in a bathroom.

The bathroom of Medical Ward 6 in the military hospital at Chester in England. I'd been in the army a year. I'd been in the medical corps for all that time and in that same hospital.

My task was in a particular section that was dealing with the beginnings of treatment by penicillin. We were seeing some miracles happen in those days that hadn't been seen before. Of any drug that had ever been on the market.

And this particular evening, I'd gone into the dining hall and seen a man with a big, what I thought was a large Bible. It happened to be a concordance. I made some snide remark about having such a big one in front of all the other men.

And he asked me, are you a Christian? And I said, well, yes. Well, I must have been. I'd been to church every Sunday in my life.

And as a teenager, I loved the things of God, the house of God. He said, well, if you're a Christian, why haven't you been to the prayer meeting? Prayer meeting? I never thought of a prayer meeting in a military hospital. Where do you meet? He said, we meet in the bathroom of Medical Ward 6. I felt like saying, are you all Baptists? And that would have suited me because that's the Baptist church that I was brought up in.

Anyway, on the Monday night, I turned up. And I got the shock of my life. I thought there'd be one or two men there having a little private service.

Instead of that, there were 18 men crowded into that room on their knees. I knelt down with them. And as the evening went through and they were there for one solid hour, nothing but prayer, one after another pleaded with God for the salvation of other men in the hospital, naming sometimes particular patients on the wards.

I didn't pray. I became conscious that they were talking to a God who was so near to them. My prayers had been a long distance call to a God a million miles away.

I knew he was there. And then one of them read from the first chapter of 2nd Timothy. And he came to those words, I know whom I have believed.

And I'm persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day. And like a sledgehammer, those words entered my mind. And I said, but I don't know who I believe.

I know about him. I could tell you the stories of Jesus. Learned all the Old Testament characters

in my day school.

Knew all about it. But that's all the difference between knowing about and knowing him. I went back to my room that night and I cried a simple prayer.

Not the sinner's prayer. Oh God, I want to know you like those men know you. That was on Monday night.

Tuesday night, I found myself in the bathroom prayer meeting again because they held it every night of the week. Wednesday again. Thursday afternoon, I had a deep desire just like a hungry man to read the Bible.

I had a Bible, bottom of my kit bag. My parents had given it to me to go to the army with. Took it out, opened it.

It fell open at the letter to the Romans. I would never suggest a young person just starting out to start there. But I did.

I hadn't gone far before I came under deep conviction. Thing that convicted me was not the number of my sins. Nor perhaps the depth of my depravity.

But the simple fact that God had seen it all. And still loved me. That broke my heart.

I just wept there in the barrack room on my own. And when I got to the 16th chapter, I closed the Bible. And all I could say was, thank you, Lord.

Thank you. I knew without anybody telling me that I now had a relationship with him. And I could say with those other men, I know whom I have believed.

And I went back to that prayer meeting that Thursday night. Normally on Thursday, I had the afternoon off and I'd been downtown to be to the cinema. But this particular day, I just simply spent it reading the word of God.

First time in my life, reading it with understanding. And so I wrote in the front of the Bible and I read it to those men that night. I said, when I came here on Monday, I thought I was a Christian.

When I left, I knew I wasn't. But I said, I've written this in the front of my Bible. No longer hoping I'm saved, but sure.

I knew that God had spoken to me. I knew that he had passed by on that night. And his words were so clear to me that I had to do something about it.

And as Boaz spoke to Ruth, she realized she had to respond to him. And her response was so beautiful, wasn't it? She asked why he should have taken trouble to speak to her, who was a stranger. We'll deal with that in a moment.

But I just want to think about this character, Boaz. And if we had time, and if I'd been staying for a few more days afterwards, we could have dealt with this in more detail. Boaz is a type of the kinsman redeemer of which our blessed Lord is.

And when I spoke about his condescension in speaking to Ruth, when I speak about the condescension of God speaking to us, who are sinners and rebels against him, I want you to see the picture. In theology, we talk about the descensus, the coming down of Jesus. And in the first place, of course, he leaves heaven's glory and wraps himself in the form of a man, in the babe of the womb.

Wesley puts it so beautifully in those wonderful words of his. And only Wesley has poetry like this. Our God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man.

What a beautiful picture of the way to use words. Contracted to a span, as big as a hand's breadth. God.

But that wasn't sufficient. Because we not only needed someone to come to show us what God was like in character, and he certainly did that as a spotless, sinless son of God, walking in a filthy world. But that only brought added condemnation to us.

Because we couldn't live spotless in a sinful world. We needed a savior. And to be a savior, he had to identify himself with sinful humanity.

Now, if he had done that by sinning, he could not have been the savior. So how was he to do it? He did it at his baptism. You recall how he came to the banks of Jordan? And John was baptizing people unto repentance there, in preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

And he comes to John and asks to be baptized. And John remonstrates with him. He said, no, I have need to be baptized of you.

I'm not worthy to untie the laces of your shoes. And Jesus says, suffer it to fulfill all righteousness. And he submitted himself to baptism.

And at that point, he descended down, not just to mankind, but to sinful mankind. He identified himself with us in our sinfulness, not by sinning, but by identification. And then, of course, in Gethsemane, he bore the brunt of that awful condemnation.

And on the cross, having cried, if it were possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, thy will not mine. He cries, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And identifies himself, not just with our sinfulness, but with our hell, the absence of God. In that terrifying moment, he bears the sin of the world and bears it away, like the goat in the Old Testament day of atonement.

One goat, you remember, bore the sin away into the wilderness, having had it confessed upon his head. And the other goat was slain and offered himself as a sacrifice. And Jesus did both, to

bear away our sin and to offer himself as a sacrifice, his blood to be sprinkled, not on an earthly mercy seat, but in heaven before God.

And as we see that, we see the picture of our kinsman redeemer. I say kinsman, because he identified himself with us and became a man and entered into our sinnership by baptism, and then bears our sins away and becomes the perfect once-for-all sacrifice offered in God's presence. And he'll obtain for us redemption.

It means to buy something. But it simply means to pay the price for an object. It doesn't mean to take hold of that object.

So when you buy something, it's like saying to someone, well, I'm going to pay for it now, I'll call back later. And of course, Paul had in his mind when he used this word, the slave market. And here is a man going to the slave market and saying, I want that slave.

Uh, how much are you charging for him? All right, I'll pay the price, put my name on him. I've other business to do in Rome today. When I finish the business, I'll come back for him.

He's mine. I've paid for him. I could answer.

He goes about his business and comes back. And he says to the slave seller, where's my slave? Always here. He says to the slave, will you come quietly or do I need to chain you? Man says as best he can in his language.

I'll come with you. So they're walking home now. They've left the slave market.

And you can tell by that little prefix means to take out of the market, buy something, take it out of the market. On his way home. The new owner says to the slave he's just bought.

When we get home, I want you to go into my son's room. I want you to strip. I want you to take off all your clothes of slavery.

I want you to bathe. I want you to put on my son's garment. You'll find his ring on the dressing chest and underneath you'll see his sandals.

And then I want you to come and I want you to sit at my table. And from then on, you will be called my son. The slave says this man is mad.

He's just paid for me in the slave market. Now he's telling me I'm going to be treated like a member of the family. A different word is used altogether in Titus.

When Paul says we are redeemed from all iniquity. It's the word *Latrone*. Comes from *Latrone*.

Different root altogether. And it simply means to take all the signs that he's ever been in the market at all away. And here's the slave now, a son.

Can't you see that that's exactly what God has done for you and for me? He finds us in the slave

market of sin. He pays the price for us of God's law against that sin. And then takes us out of the market and wants to redeem us from all iniquity.

To remove all signs that we've ever been a slave. This is the glorious truth that Wesley brought again to the church's notice. When he spoke of perfect love.

When he spoke of entire sanctification. Where we move out of the business of sin. Where our heart is cleansed and we become in perfect love with God.

And with man. And we move into an area of our life no longer babes in Christ but adult persons. Mature men and women who can stand the test against us.

And can operate as adults in God's kingdom. No longer simply building our own kingdom. Demanding our own ways as a child would.

But now we're adults. We've been taken out of the slave market. We are sons and daughters of the living God.

Kinsman redeemer. What a picture in this man Boaz. You know the end of the story.

And I don't want to preempt what I want to say tomorrow. But it ended in this man marrying Ruth. How are we going to end? Marriage supper of the Lamb.

Leave that for tomorrow. Just an insight into the person of Ruth herself. As we look at her.

There are some beautiful words she speaks. Why have I found grace in your sight? She says. Picture of humility.

And a picture that we saw again in Ephesians. As we looked at those wonderful words. Look at verse 12 in chapter 2. If you've got your Bibles open.

And at that time you were without Christ. Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Strangers from the covenants of promise.

Having no hope and without God in the world. And Ruth uses that very word. She said.

How is it that you are speaking to me who am a stranger? She realized that her natural affiliation was not with these people. And we can look into the Old Testament. And see the wonderful promises of God to the house of Israel.

But we have no part in that. God broke down the middle wall of partition. Opened the door to the Gentiles.

Gave us the opportunity to come in. So that the word of God says. We're no longer strangers and foreigners.

But members of the household of God. Or have you thanked God for that fact this morning?

That all the promises of God are in him. Yea and amen.

Because he has come to us. And made us a member of his household. And then comes that beautiful word.

Where Boaz says. I know all that you have been to your mother-in-law. And how that you've left your father and your mother.

And your country. And you've come to a people that you did not know. What a beautiful picture.

Of the fact that we've come into the kingdom of God. Who were strangers and foreigners. And had no right.

One of the wonderful things about our Christian life. Is that once we've caught sight of Jesus. Surely if we've really seen him.

If we've really known him. Then no matter what the attractions of the world may be. Or the circumstances of life may be.

We are his. And his forever. Right? Is that your feeling? Is that your reaction? Well let me illustrate it with a precious experience I had.

With a dear Scottish lady. Who was in a diabetic nursing home. In my first parish.

And as I went to the home every Tuesday to hold a service. I got to know Ella Stewart very well indeed. She'd already suffered because of her diabetes.

The loss of one limb. So she used a wheelchair. Terribly independent.

And as the days went on. I realized. I mean you couldn't even help Ella.

She'd come to a little set of three steps in the corridor. She'd never let you put the chair up. She'd get out.

Stand on one leg. Lift the chair up. And then hop up to the chair.

And sit in it. And wheel herself away. Day came when the matron said to me.

Ella will not be in the meeting this evening Mr. Abelby. I'm afraid she's in St. Paul's Eye Hospital. Her eyes.

She has glaucoma. Are so bad. There's need for surgery.

And there's no guarantee that she will regain anything of her sight. Sure she'd value a visit. And I said I'll be there.

I was in the next day to see Ella. And she said to me. Mr. Abelby.

I cannot take it. If I lose what sight I've got. I've lost the last bit of my independence.

I cannot take it. I said Ella. How real is Jesus to you? Oh I believe in God.

How much do you really know him Ella? So you can put your hand out and hold his. Know that he can lead you. Maybe into the darkness.

How well do you know Jesus? Oh I believe in God. As I knelt in prayer at the side of her bed. I prayed a simple prayer.

Oh God. Please let Ella Stewart see you. And then it won't matter what else she can't see.

I left the ward and went back a few days later. After I anticipated she'd had her surgery. She still had the big pads on her eyes.

They hadn't taken them off yet. So she didn't know the results. As I touched her arm and I said Ella.

It's Mr. Abelby. Oh she said. Oh I'm glad you came.

I'm glad you came. She said you'd hardly left the ward. When he came and stood there.

I've seen Jesus. I don't mind whatever else I can't see. I've seen Jesus.

Now I've never had that privilege. Of literally seeing physically a form standing there. But she had it.

Meant everything to her. The pads were eventually taken off. She was as blind as the proverbial bat.

She came back to the home. Smile all over her face. Whenever she was sitting in the services.

Time and time again she'd say. I've seen him. I've seen him.

It's all that matters. Some years later I'd left the district. Gone to another church.

I visited for a Sunday service. And on the Monday I decided to go down to see the people in the diabetic home. There's several empty chairs of people that had been there and now had passed on.

And I was disturbed because there was no wheelchair with Ella in it. Said to the matron. Has Ella gone home to heaven? Oh no, she said.

I'm glad you mentioned it. She's in Clutterbridge Hospital. They're taking off the second leg.

Oh no, I said. I went into the hospital. Surgery had already taken place.

She was hanging in a cradle. Pillows this end. Nothing at the other end.

I touched her arm. She couldn't see. I said, Ella.

It's Mr Appleby. Oh, she said. They can take anything they like.

I've seen Jesus. Oh friends. This young woman saw Boaz and saw something that day that was so attractive.

She didn't know the end of the story as we do. But she was determined to stay right there. And any instruction she received concerning her relationship with him.

She followed to the letter. We shall see something about that tomorrow. And of course, it was a part of the custom of the day and very strange to us.

Almost immoral in our way of thinking. Oh friends, she caught sight of this man and it was enough. The last insight we have here concerns God himself.

And it's a very simple picture. You know that there are anthropomorphic terms used about God. Human terms used about God.

His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. His eye is always upon us and we are guided by his eye or with his eye upon us.

These are what we call anthropomorphic attributes which God doesn't actually have. God is a spirit. But we need to understand that God is able to hear.

And God is able to act. And God is able to notice. And so those terms are used.

But the term that's used here is not the term of a human attribute. Listen to it. Boaz says, under whose wings you have come to trust.

Do you see something of the words of Jesus there? When he looked out upon Jerusalem and said, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you would not.

Under whose wings you have come to trust. Oh friends, if there's something more that we need than a saviour, it's a protector. For the enemy is out to get us.

And whether we think of a storm beating upon a farmyard. Or whether we speak of a fox coming in to rob the hen of her chicks. The hen is there to put her wings over those tiny, fragile, little helpless creatures.

And say, not while I live. And that's what he says. Not while I live will anyone touch you.

Oh friends, this morning the question is not just a case of what are the first words you've heard. Nor yet what is your response to him. But where are you abiding this morning? Am I being rude when I say some of you are even older than I am? And you know the changes that take place.

You know how we can look at that loved one at the side of us. Been our companion all through our married life. And say, one day one of us will be going.

Other one will be left. I don't find that easy to face. It's not just a case of somebody to cook the meal.

Somebody to, I was going to say, do the washing. Put the washing in the machine. It's not that at all.

It's companionship. But friends, in heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear. For safe in such confiding and nothing changes here.

Where are you abiding this morning? That's the final picture we have of God here. So simple. Just the wings under which you're resting this morning.

Shall we pray? Lord, most of us here have got our eyesight and our limbs. And although there's the possibility that any of us could lose our loved ones. We thank you this morning.

That if we've really seen Jesus, nothing else really matters. And we would turn our eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

That the things of earth may grow strangely dim. In the light of his glory and grace. If there's someone here this morning who has fears about the future.

Lord, open their eyes to see you. And then to rest under your wings. For nothing changes here.

Amen. Would you turn with me as we close our session to the hymn number 86. This had already been chosen before I came for our opening hymn.

But I asked if we might have it as our closing hymn. Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the lamb.

Redeemed through his infinite mercy. His child and forever I am. Shall we stand together and sing this wonderful hymn.

And the truth we've just been expounding. We thank you gracious Lord. That you looked upon us in our sinfulness.

You loved us still. You went to the cross. And although we ignored you.

You said father forgive them. For they know not what they do. And it is in the light of your wonderful redemption.

That we leave this tabernacle this morning. To abide under the shadow of your wings. Amen.