Lindsay began his message on Sunday by telling the story of a young pastor attending his induction service. The whole community had gathered and, as he made his way to the pulpit, someone handed him an envelope. Deciding to share the message with the congregation, he opened it and turned pale. The note read, “You are an absolute disgrace. I know your past. How do you have the audacity to stand up as a pastor?” The young pastor then told the congregation, “I am ashamed of my past, but I am not ashamed of the Bible message,” referring to Romans 1:16.

Lindsay then turned to the story of Ruth. Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons had been living in Israel, but because of a famine they moved to Moab. While there, Elimelech died and the sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. Then, both sons also died, leaving Naomi and her daughters-in-law alone in a foreign land with little security or hope.

Naomi decided to return home to Israel and urged Ruth and Orpah to remain in Moab. Orpah stayed behind, but Ruth showed extraordinary loyalty to Naomi, saying, “Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16).

The two women returned to Israel poor, struggling and hungry. Naomi was so overwhelmed by her misfortune that she changed her name to Mara, meaning “bitter.” They arrived during the barley harvest and Ruth gathered leftover grain in the fields of Boaz. Boaz was deeply impressed by Ruth’s faithfulness and kindness toward Naomi. As a relative, he was also able, according to the customs of the time, to marry Ruth and provide security for her.

Lindsay then skipped forward a couple of generations to the story of David. Samuel, the leader of Israel, had become unhappy with King Saul. Samuel visited Jesse and inspected his (team of) sons one by one, but none of them was the chosen leader. Finally, Jesse mentioned his youngest son, David, who was out in the paddocks tending sheep. He was sent for and Lindsay imagined him arriving in his work clothes, smelling like sheep! Yet when David came before Samuel, God made it clear: “He is the one” (1 Samuel 16:6–13).

Lindsay also reflected on the story of David and Goliath. As the Philistines and Israelites faced each another across opposing hills, the giant Goliath challenged Israel to send a man to fight him in single combat. David volunteered. Saul tried to dress him in heavy armour, but it was unsuitable, so David approached Goliath armed only with his shepherd’s staff, a sling and five smooth stones. God used the young shepherd boy to defeat the giant.

Lindsay reflected on Ruth and David and asked why God chose such ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. He commented that God may use a quiet and humble person to spread the work of Samaritan’s Purse across Northern Tasmania or enable someone who writes songs to use modern technology to share music with people around the world after many years. God chose a village maiden, Mary, to bring Jesus into the world.

The message was a reminder that God works in mysterious ways. He often chooses everyday people to fulfil His purposes. Our own plans may fail, but God’s plans never fail.