

# *The Scandalous Women of Matthew 1*

*Advent 3 2012 Midweek Worship*

## **Ruth**

*There Were also Gentiles in Jesus' Family Tree*

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** - Ruth 4:9-22

**SECOND LESSON** - Acts 10:34-43

**GOSPEL LESSON** - Matthew 1:5,6

**Text: Matthew 1:5,6**

<sup>5</sup>Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

**Theme: There Were also Gentiles in Jesus' Family Tree**



The last two weeks we have been looking at some very seedy stories. When I called this series, “The Scandalous Women of Matthew 1,” it is easy to see how that theme fits with the stories of Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba. But Ruth? What was the scandal there? She was such a dear soul. When her widowed mother-in-law was down and out, she would not leave her, even though it would mean that she would have to leave her home and family and risk a life of poverty. But there was a scandal with regard to Ruth also. She was a Moabitess. She put Gentile blood into the line of the kings, and even of the Savior.

I. The Moabites were an interesting group in the Old Testament.

Their origins were also seedy. You probably remember the story of when Lot and his family fled Sodom before it was destroyed. Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. At first Lot and his daughters were living in a cave. His daughters got the idea to get their father drunk and conceive children through him. The name of the son of the older daughter was Moab. He became the father of the Moabites. (Gen 19:37) The country of Moab was on a high plateau, on the east side of the Dead Sea. The entire country was about as big as Milwaukee. When Israel was on their way from the desert to the promised land, they needed to pass through Moab, but their king feared Israel and hired a seer named Balaam to curse Israel. Four times he tried, but each time by God's intervention, he ended up blessing Israel. In the final oracle, he even prophesied



the coming Savior. (Num 22) While Israel was staying near Moab their men began to engage in immorality with the Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifice to their gods. (Generally these pagan religious feasts were filled with immorality.) The Lord killed 24,000 people with a plague because of this sin. (Num 25) Moses forbid intermarriage with the other nations, including the Moabites. (1 Kings 11:2) When Moses looked over the promised land before he died, he did so from the plains of Moab. In both the periods of the Judges and King Saul, there were many battles with Moab (Jud 3:12ff, 1 Sa 14:47) When David was being pursued by King Saul, he left his parents in the care of the king of Moab (1 Sa 22:3); however when he became king he subdued the king of Moab. Throughout the history of Israel, there was always a rocky relationship with Moab. The thing that God hated most about Moab was their detestable god Chemosh to whom the people sacrificed their own children. There is a story in 2 Kings 3:27 in which the king sacrificed his firstborn son on the wall. There are many prophecies against Moab in the books of the prophets. When Israel returned from exile, many of the men married foreign wives, including Moabites. The priest Ezra made them divorce their Moabite wives. (Ezra 9:1, 10:11) This was the nation from which Ruth came.

II. She was a woman who gave up her people and her gods for the God of Israel.

Her mother-in-law Naomi had come to Moab with her husband and two sons during a severe famine in Israel. Very soon Naomi's husband died. Her sons married Moabite women, but after 10 years, the sons also died. When things improved in Israel, Naomi decided to return home, and she encouraged her daughters-in-law to leave her and return to their mothers. Orpah did just that, but Ruth responded, "*Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.*" (Ruth 1:16) After they returned to Israel, Ruth caught the eye of Boaz, and the two of them were married.

There was a difference between Ruth and the women with whom the Israelite men engaged in immorality. The book of Ruth makes it clear that Ruth and Boaz did everything according to the Law. There was no immorality in their relationship. But the biggest difference was that Ruth did not pull Boaz into the worship of the Moabite idols. She gave up her people and her gods for the God of Israel. This was a remarkable step of faith for her. Naomi had lost her entire family. She was escaping a famine. Ruth saw this woman of faith experience so much hardship. Yet, there was something about the God of Israel that attracted Ruth. She came to trust in Israel's God as her God. Even a Gentile like her could be saved and be honored by giving up her false gods and trusting that Israel's God was her God too. She would even become the great grandmother of Israel's greatest king and an ancestor of the Savior.

III. This story is a wonderful example for us that our background never matters.

I am a pastor in the LCMS with a Danish name. There are probably more Hmong pastors in our church than Danish pastors. (Most of them are in the ELCA.) On the other side of the family, my great great grandfather helped to found the LCMS church in western Kenosha County, but he joined the Woodman's lodge and was excommunicated. My mom's side of the family joined the Methodist Church and didn't like Lutherans very much for a couple of generations. When I look at our Hmong members, most of their families were not even Christian a generation ago. When I consider our French African congregation, none of those people were Lutheran just a few years ago. As I said a couple of weeks ago, we probably all have some skeletons in the closets of our family histories,

things that we don't even know about. A lot of people think that there is no family as messed up as their family. You would not believe how many people think that. There are a lot of dysfunctional families with a lot of embarrassing issues. But none of those things matter.

When we embrace Christ as our Savior, He accepts us as His people, no matter where we came from. Even if we were guilty of false worship as Ruth was at one time, God wants us to turn from our unbelief and follow Him. He is pleased to call Himself our God and Lord. He is pleased to call us His people. Christ died for all of our sins on the cross, and He is so happy to give us the forgiveness of our sins. When we get to heaven, we will also find that there will be all kinds of people there. Our background never matters. What matters is that we have faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. If Jesus could have a Gentile woman as a part of His family tree, He is more than pleased to call any of us His brother or sister through faith in Him as our Savior.

Take that example of Ruth. Leave everything that smacks of unbelief behind, and follow Jesus, and He will accept you fully as one of His own.

Amen.

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**OPENING HYMN - LSB 367 "Angels from the Realms of Glory"**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

P: The Spirit and the Church cry out:  
C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**  
P: All those who await His appearance pray:  
C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**  
P: The whole creation pleads:  
C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

**Psalms 45:10 - 17 (NIV) [A Royal Wedding Song]**

<sup>10</sup> Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear:  
Forget your people and your father's house.  
<sup>11</sup> The king is enthralled by your beauty;  
honor him, for he is your lord.  
<sup>12</sup> The Daughter of Tyre will come with a gift,  
men of wealth will seek your favor.  
<sup>13</sup> All glorious is the princess within her chamber;  
her gown is interwoven with gold.  
<sup>14</sup> In embroidered garments she is led to the king;  
her virgin companions follow her and are brought to you.  
<sup>15</sup> They are led in with joy and gladness;  
they enter the palace of the king.  
<sup>16</sup> Your sons will take the place of your fathers;  
you will make them princes throughout the land.  
<sup>17</sup> I will perpetuate your memory through all generations;  
therefore the nations will praise you for ever and ever.

**COLLECT**

P: The Lord be with you,

C: **and also with you.**

P: Let us pray, Faithful God, You promised to preserve Your people and save Your inheritance, using unlikely and unexpected vessels in extending the genealogy that would bring about the birth of Your blessed Son. Give us the loyalty of Ruth and her trust in the one true God, that we, too, might honor You through our submission and respect and be counted among Your chosen people, by the grace of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, who reign together with You, now and forever.

C: **Amen**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** - Ruth 4:9-22

**SECOND LESSON** - Acts 10:34-43

**GOSPEL LESSON** - Matthew 1:5,6

**SERMON HYMN - LSB 332** "Savior of the Nations, Come"

**SERMON** - Matthew 1:5,6

*"There Were also Gentiles in Jesus' Family Tree"*

**OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD**

**HYMN - 380** "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"

**THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**THE BENEDICTION**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

**CLOSING HYMN** - "Watchman Tell Us of the Night" (TLH 71)

1. Watchman tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are.  
Trav'ler, o'er yon mountains height, See that glory beaming star.  
Watchman, doth its beauteous ray Aught of joy or hope foretell?  
Trav'ler, yes; it brings the day, Promised day of Israel.

2. Watchman, tell us of the night; Higher yet that star ascends  
Trav'ler, blessedness and light, Peace and truth, its course portends.  
Watchman, will its beams alone Gild the spot that gave them birth?  
Trav'ler, ages are its own; See, it bursts o'er all the earth.

3. Watchman, tell us of the night, For the morning seems to dawn.  
Trav'ler, darkness takes its flight; Doubt and terror are withdrawn.  
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease; Hie thee to thy quiet home.  
Trav'ler, lo, the Prince of Peace, Lo, the Son of God is come.

**Welcome to Benediction Lutheran Church!** In our Advent services, we are looking at the women who are mentioned in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1. Today we will look at the story of Ruth, a Gentile from Moab, who becomes the Great Grandmother of King David, showing that salvation is for all nations.