

The Scandalous Women of Matthew 1
Advent 1, 2012 Midweek Worship

Tamar and Bathsheba

After this, Shouldn't God Have Gone in a Different Direction?

FIRST OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - Genesis 38:1-11,24-30

SECOND OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - 2 Samuel 11:1-17

GOSPEL LESSON - Matthew 1:1-3, 6

Text: Matthew 1:1-6 (NIV)

¹A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

Theme: "After this, Shouldn't God Have Gone in a Different Direction?"



How many of us know the background of when our forefathers came to this country? A number of years ago, I went to the town where my great great grandparents came from in Schmolde, Germany. I found an elderly man who was of the same family tree. When I asked him if he ever heard of my great-great grandfather, his answer was, "Never heard of him. Must have been a good-for-nothing." He might be right because no one knows the circumstances surrounding their coming to this country.

We all have things that are best hidden in our family trees, but it is very interesting that two women are mentioned by name in Jesus' family tree in Matthew 1, Tamar and Bathsheba. These are sordid stories, the kind of thing that most families would want to white-wash over. We would want to forget them in our family trees, and yet these women are specifically mention in Jesus' ancestry. To be honest, I even need to sanitize these stories for my sermon because they would make me blush, and they aren't appropriate for young ears. When you hear these stories, it makes you wonder whether after this, shouldn't God have gone in a different direction.

I. Every one of these people failed miserably.

We see that in the story of Judah and Tamar. In Genesis 12 God called Abraham. Abraham believed God's promises, and often followed in God's ways, but he and his family were far from perfect. Twice Abraham lied about his wife and claimed that she was his sister. His son Isaac did the same

thing. His son Jacob was always deceiving people – his brother, his father, and his father-in-law. He would have 13 children, born two four different women, two of which were not his wives. His sons were horrible. They had planned to kill their brother Joseph, but instead they sold him into slavery. After their sister Dinah was violated, they annihilated an entire village.

But nothing in the entire Old Testament is as sordid as the story of Judah and Tamar. After the brothers sold Joseph into slavery, Judah also went out on his own. He began to raise a family among the Canaanites. Eventually he found a wife for his firstborn son named Er. Her name was Tamar. Er was so wicked, that God put him to death. According to the law of the time, if a man died before he could have offspring, his brother was to take the widow, and their first child would belong to the deceased brother. Judah's son, Onan refused to do this, so the Lord put him to death also. Then Judah sent Tamar back to her father's home, but promised that when his third son grew up, he would give him to Tamar. But he thought that this woman was cursed and never really planned to give her any more of his sons. Eventually, Judah conceived a child through Tamar himself when he thought that she was a prostitute. There is a lot of irony in the story. Judah thought that Tamar was cursed because his sons kept dying when it was their own wickedness. He was also ready to have her burned to death when he thought that she was guilty of prostitution when he was the father of the child. The biggest surprise of the whole story is that the first of two twins born to Tamar was Perez, who would become the head of the leading clan in Israel and the ancestor of both David and Jesus.

Then there is the sordid tale of David and Bathsheba. David saw Bathsheba's beauty and brought her to the palace while her husband was fighting in the war. She conceived and sent word of it to David. David did all that he could to cover it up. At first he brought her husband Uriah home from the battle, but Uriah was so righteous that he would not even go home at all while his comrades were still in the heat of battle. When that didn't work, David devised a plan to make sure that Uriah was killed in battle. David's general felt horrible about what happened, but David callously responded, "*Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another.*" Then he brought Bathsheba to the palace as his wife. She would be the mother of King Solomon, and eventually, the ancestor of the Savior. The sin of David is especially shown in our text when Bathsheba is not called the wife of David, but the wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

II. Do we see ourselves in this picture at all?

We should know better. God has taught us His ways. He has forgiven our sins. He has blessed us in so many ways. Yet, we sometimes do things that God's people should never think of. We break the commandments in some of the vilest ways. We hurt other people. We accuse others falsely when we know that it was our own fault. We try to cover our sins. We want to look good and righteous to the world when we know deep inside, that there is a lot of sin hidden in our lives. The prophet Nathan's words could also apply to us, "*Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in His eyes?*" (2 Sam 12:9) Jesus says, "*Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven?*" But how often are our lives dark with sin, that makes people think, "And they call themselves Christians," rather than being a light that gives God glory?

III. The amazing thing is that God can even redeem the lives of sinful people like us for his purposes.

Judah repented of his sin, and even said of his daughter-in-law, “*She is more righteous than I.*” David confessed to the prophet Nathan, “*I have sinned against the Lord.*” Both of these men sinned grievously against both God and those women, and God forgave their sin. If God could forgive their sins and redeem their lives, he can redeem the lives of you and me also. Confess your sins to the Lord. Don’t live in the darkness of those sins any longer. Confess them and trust that Jesus Christ paid for them all on the cross. It doesn’t matter what you have done. It doesn’t matter how dark and disgraceful it is. God wants to forgive you. Christ shed His blood to pay for that sin too.

God will also redeem your life to use it for His glory. Paul once persecuted the church, but God made Him into a great preacher of the Gospel. John Newton once worked on slave ships, but he became best known for the hymn, “Amazing Grace.” God can take sinners like you and me and redeem our lives, so that we will give Him glory and serve our neighbor. That is the good news of these texts. When we sin, He doesn’t say, “That’s it! I’m going in a different direction.” He wants to redeem our lives, so that they will give Him glory. There is a reason why the stories of Judah and Tamar and David and Bathsheba are not swept under the rug. Those stories are stark witnesses of the grace, mercy and redemption of God, even for the chief of sinners. He doesn’t give up on us. By grace, He redeems us from our sins. To Him be all glory.

Amen.

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Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
December 6, 2012***

OPENING HYMN - LSB 392 “God Loves Me Dearly”

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 32:1 - 11 (NIV)

¹ Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

⁷ You are my hiding place;

you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you and watch over you.

⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

COLLECT

P: The Lord be with you,

C: **and also with you.**

P: Let us pray,

C: **Almighty God, our heavenly Father, You desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that we turn from our evil ways and live. Graciously spare us those punishments which we by our sins have deserved, and grant us always to serve You in holiness and pureness of living; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

FIRST OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - Genesis 38:1-11,24-30

SECOND OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - 2 Samuel 11:1-17

GOSPEL LESSON - Matthew 1:1-3, 6

SERMON HYMN - LSB 370 "What Child Is This?"

SERMON - Matthew 1:1-3, 6

"After this, Shouldn't God Have Gone in a Different Direction?"

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD

HYMN - 511 "Herald, Sound the Note of Judgement" [Tune 367]

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 - 887 "Now the Light Has Gone Away"

Welcome to Benediction Lutheran Church! For our Advent services this year, we are looking at the women who are mentioned in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1. Today we will look at the sordid stories of Tamar and Bathsheba. All of the characters in these stories were sinful, and yet God was able to use such people as His instruments. It shows that it doesn't matter what we have done. God can redeem the life of any repentant sinner.