

Scripture Reading: Ruth 4:

“4 Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside, friend, sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.’” & he said, “I will redeem it.” 5 Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.” 6 And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it.” 7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. 8 Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” So he took off his sandal. 9 And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. 10 Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You are witnesses this day.” 11 And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. 12 May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which Jehovah will give you from this young woman.” 13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, Jehovah gave her conception, and she bore a son...

17b: And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

“A Woman More Righteous Than Judah”

We come to a chapter this morning in the Book of Beginnings which can certainly be seen as a difficult one! Some see it as an interruption of the account of Joseph going to Egypt, others question the adult content and of course as we saw in the early chapters of this book, we come face to face with the sinfulness of sin in this fallen world that God is redeeming.

Our reading this morning was taken from the 4th chapter of Ruth and I did this not only because it makes mention of the account of Tamar that we will study this morning, but also to help us understand why we come to this chapter where we do here in Genesis.

- As we have emphasized the past few weeks, we are here considering the story of redemption and it is centered at this point on the history of Jacob!

Now of course Joseph plays a major role in this story, but it is Jacob’s story none-the-less and we know that Jacob is at the center because he was the son of Promise in the line of Promise that would one day lead to the coming of Messiah: Jesus our Savior! So chapter 38 is not an interruption of the story, but a careful reminder that the promise will pass to Judah, not Joseph, as the one who will continue the line that brings us to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Jesus! And when we take a broad look at how God unfolds the story of redemption in the Old Testament, we can see the entire Book of Ruth in much the same way and I think both tie back to those first promises made to Abraham:

As we mentioned last week, Joseph will bless Egypt. A foretaste of the promises made to Abraham where Jesus will bless all the nations of the earth as we carry out the Great Commission and the Spirit of God brings them under the feet of Jesus. We must also remember that God clearly told Abraham that his descendants would spend some 400 years in Egypt before they would fully possess the land of Canaan.

- This is because the sins of Canaanites were not yet full AND because Israel was not yet a great nation, as it would become in Egypt.

We studied this part of the promise in Genesis 15 where we read:

“13 Then [the Lord] said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

- So I think we can see this chapter which tells the story of Judah and Tamar and the Book of Ruth as the bookends of this exile in Egypt.

What we will study here in Genesis chapter 38 is what happened in the line of promise just prior to the exile and Ruth tells the story of the line of promise just after the Nation of Israel left Egypt and began to actually occupy the Promised Land. So chapter 38 is parenthetical, but so is the Book of Ruth as you consider the flow of history from Exodus, to Joshua, to Judges & then the Books of Samuel.

So with that in mind let us dig into our text which as I mentioned does have some adult content. Parents will be glad that the New King James version which we use for our worship texts follows the tradition of the King James version in using polite language in these frank portions of the Scripture!

Genesis 38: “It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.”

Yes we are going to see how God provided for the line of promise, but as with other Saints who play significant roles in the story of redemption, like King David or the Apostle Paul, we are going to find deeply flawed individuals greatly used by God and as such they can teach us important lessons about our walk with Jesus! We know the major sins that King David committed when he was not where Kings were supposed to be in the spring... On the battle field! And just as King David should not have been in Jerusalem to see Bathsheba bathing... Here we see Judah choosing to hang around the wrong places and with the wrong people and trouble will follow.

- Yes, there is much truth in the saying that bad company corrupts good morals!
- It is a principle that King Solomon labored and labored to teach his son, and our covenant children, in the Book of Proverbs!

And just as we see in the early chapters of that book or the life of King David, Judah will be tempted by a beautiful woman he has no business being near.

2 “And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her. 3 So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. 4 She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. 5 And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him.”

So Judah gets married and has a family which seem to be very good things:

- But just as those who think that Christians today can have relationships with non-Christians and things appear OK for a time, there is always trouble ahead in such cases.

Judah is playing with fire by setting up his household in the midst of wicked people and soon we see much trouble:

6 “Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah killed him. 8 And Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.”

➤ **Here Judah is following the practice we saw Boaz use in Ruth!**

Now this of course is what we will see later in the Law of God with regard to the steps taken to preserve a family line and was the ‘tough’ question that the Sadducees asked Jesus to stomp Him with regard to the resurrection:

➤ **A wife marrying seven brothers!**

There are some that argue this was picked up from the surrounding cultures, but I think it is clearly a principle laid down by God and one that certainly relates to the importance of the line of Promise.

As we have mentioned before, we should remember that we are not given all the instructions that these early Saints received from God and the giving of the Law to Moses would have reflected many earlier revelations. We should remember what God said to Isaac in Genesis 26:4

“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, & My laws.”

This is something that brother Onan understood well and it was not something that he wanted any part of:

9 “But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother’s wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. 10 And the thing which he did displeased Jehovah; therefore He killed him also.”

➤ **So now two of the wicked sons of Judah were dead but Judah would put the blame in the wrong place!**

11 “Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father’s house till my son Shelah is grown.” For he said, “Lest he also die like his brothers.” And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house.”

So clearly Judah sees Tamar as the problem and makes a maturity excuse for not giving her the 3rd son, but Tamar accepts what Judah says on face value and goes to wait for her next husband.

12 “Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah’s wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.”

It is interesting to note that we are never told the name of Judah’s wife who was likely the source of many of the problems with those sons, AND Judah is still hanging around the wrong crowd, and yes it will get him into even more trouble soon enough.

➤ **Now while Tamar had been patient it becomes clear to her that she has been deceived and so she takes matters into her own hands, which is never a good idea!**

13 “And it was told Tamar, saying, “Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.” 14 So she took off her widow’s garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.”

Apparently Tamar knew her father-in-law all too well and was able to lay a seducing trap for him as he journeyed:

15 “When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face. 16 Then he turned to her by the way, and said, “Please let me come in to you”; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?” 17 And he said, “I will send a young goat from the flock.” So she said, “Will you give me a pledge till you send it?” 18 Then he said, “What pledge shall I give you?” So she said, “Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand.” Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.”

- There is NO justification for the actions of either Judah or Tamar and yet as we shall see in a moment, once again God is able to carry out His purposes in the midst of disgusting human sin.

20 “And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman’s hand, but he did not find her. 21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying, “Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?”

And they said, “There was no harlot in this place.” 22 So he returned to Judah and said, “I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place.”

23 Then Judah said, “Let her take them for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her.”

Here we have a classic example of how we justify sin by means of comparison: Sexual sins is no problem, but he does not want anyone to think he did not pay his bills!

But Tamar has set a trap for Judah and it would not be long before all was known to all...

24 “And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry.”

So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”

Now while the major place that we see Jesus in this messy chapter is in the line of promise, I think we must recall one of the most famous passages in the life and ministry of Jesus when we see the reaction of Judah here: His daughter-in-law has played the harlot, which she most certainly had in an incestuous way, and now he wants her to face the most severe of punishments just as those Pharisees who brought the women caught in adultery demanded of Jesus!

- Of course the problem there at the Temple with Jesus was that IF a woman was caught in the very act, as those religious leaders claimed, then where was the man who would face the same punishment?

Sadly many have used that account to teach that Jesus did not want sin punished but forgiven and forgotten, when in fact He was pointing out that there would not be enough punishment if the Pharisees had their way! So if Judah here is playing the part of the Pharisees, then perhaps we see Tamar in the role of Jesus:

25 “When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, “By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.” And she said, “Please determine whose these are—the signet and cord, and staff.”

Just as many suspect that Jesus was writing the names of men who had been with the woman brought to him, Tamar informs Judah about who the partner was in this sinful act so that both could be punished under the Law.

- And so as wrong and sinful as Judah has been here, he joins with King David and the Apostle Paul as one of the Saints who repents and turns from his wicked ways...

26 “So Judah acknowledged them and said, “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.” And he never knew her again.”

While Judah is not teaching us that sin is relative, he is taking full responsibility for this mess and we see that they sin no more, just as Jesus admonished the woman brought to Him after her accusers dropped the charges by deserting the scene. And finally we come to the central point of this entire chapter...

27 “Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb. 28 And so it was, when she was giving birth, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand, saying, “This one came out first.” 29 Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, “How did you break through? This breach be upon you!” Therefore his name was called PErez. 30 Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.”

With that our story is complete and next week we pick up again where we left off at the end of chapter 37: Joseph at the house of Potiphar.

- But this brings us back to that other parenthetical portion that we started with in the Book of Ruth.

In the text that we read we saw the same situation of a widow woman and the need to carry on the family lineage. Just as Judah had wandered off to places he should not have been, a man who lived in the time of the Judges, on the other side of the 400 years in Egypt did the same.

- Elimelech took his wife Naomi and two sons to the land of Moah where the sons married & then Naomi loses both her husband and sons.

Ruth, like Tamar is a Gentile woman who has now become a part of the people of God, just as all of us in one way or another have been adopted into the family of God as His sons & daughters! However, unlike Judah who refuses to follow the Law, we meet a man named Boaz, whose mother was the prostitute Rahab: Boaz becomes the protector and later husband for Ruth so the family of Naomi would carry on.

We saw in our reading how the Book of Ruth hearkens back to fruitful Tamar as part of the blessing sought for Ruth! And after the text that I read, the Book of Ruth ends by tying these two very similar accounts together by giving us the history of Tamar’s son PErez:

Ruth 4: 18 “Now this is the genealogy of PErez: PErez begot Hezron; 19 Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; 20 Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; 21 Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; 22 Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.”

And of course when we come to the fullness of the Revelation of the family history of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel Account we should not be surprised to see these faithful women included:

Matthew 1: “2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah begot PErez and ZERah by Tamar, PErez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. 4 Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. 5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king.”

So we have PErez born to Tamar as the exile in Egypt is about to begin and Salmon has a son named Boaz as the people of God are entering the Land of Promise once again, who of course just as God had promised Abraham was in the 4th generation!

- Truly we serve a God who keeps His promises and we serve a God who can truly work all things together for the good of His people!

Communion Meditation: II Corinthians 5

“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”