

They Speak Of Me

Beauty in the Broken

August 31, 2014

Genesis 38, 49:8-10, Matt. 1:1-3

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Introduction:

Good morning! Open your Bibles to Genesis 38. For the past 15 weeks we've been looking at major characters and events in the Book of Genesis in order to learn about God, about ourselves and about what God has done in Christ to secure our redemption.

If you could take one chapter of the Bible with you on a desert island, this isn't likely one you'd choose. In fact, originally today's message was to be a "Jody – you choose a passage you'd like and preach on it". I was pretty excited! But then the schedule changed, and I now have the unique opportunity to preach on **this PG-13** passage. Commentators agree that texts like this prove the Bible's veracity – you wouldn't make stories like this up.

In fact with actual events like this in our background, we'd be hiding them. This is brutal honesty about the human condition. Well next week Evan gets to preach on whatever he wants! (Bet he wouldn't have picked Gen. 38). Both you and Pastor Paul owe me a coffee and donut. Seriously, I am honoured to be with you today in God's Word bringing you the 16th and final message in this series we've called "They Speak Of Me".

To remind you what that phrase means, it is taken from Luke 24:27,

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself

We have been tracing the fulfilment of God's promise through Genesis and seeing how these roads lead to Jesus. Here's why that is important for us – if there is no rescue plan for us we are dead in the water, drowning in our sin without hope – but there is a rescue plan spoken of first in Genesis 3:15 and traced through Moses, the Law and the Prophets. For this reason we need to pay attention to the breath-taking wisdom and work of God and His grace poured out upon us.

Q. *What has God been doing in Genesis?* In mercy He was dealing with the rebellion of sinful humanity. Q. *What's that all about?* Adam and Eve chose to betray God, reject his authority over them and declared independence from Him by trusting and obey the tempting serpent rather than their faithful Creator. In doing so they became subjects of the serpent and recipients of the punishment of God. However, in an act of profound grace, God promised that someone would crush and destroy the serpent, break the curse upon humanity, defeat sin and death and restore to humanity what was lost. God is full of mercy. He has not left us alone. Greg Gilbert writes,

"The Bible is the story of God's counteroffensive against sin. It is the grand narrative of how He made it right and how He's making it right."

This is a story I can get excited about. This is a story that involves me. There needs to be a counteroffensive in my life against sin. I need to be made right.

So pay attention. As we've looked at God's plan, we've been watching for this *promised child*. We have discovered that this "*seed of the woman*" is intimately linked to Abraham and his family line. Abraham was promised by God that kings would come from him (Gen. 17:6). When Isaac blessed Jacob, his words resounded with royal hopes:

"Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you" (27:29).

Through the course of these messages about this family line of Abraham, we've discovered that:

- *In its preservation and continuation we see the direct intervention of God*
- *A royal dynasty is coming*
- *A Saviour King will restore the broken relationship between God and humanity*

This morning we come to our final message in this message series – it focused on the story on one of Jacob's sons, the 4th born, Judah. Last week, in the story of Joseph we heard about Judah, and the transformation that occurred in him. Today we are studying Genesis 38, which appears to be an interruption in the Joseph narrative. At first glance it doesn't seem to have a significant connection to the context. Let's read Genesis 38,

38 It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2 There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, 3 and 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 Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.

6 And 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 the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. 8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." 9 But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother. 10 And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. 11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house.

12 In the course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13 And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," 14 she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. 16 He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" 17 He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" 18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

20 When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. 21 And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." 22 So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been here.'" 23 And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her."

24 About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." 25 As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." 26 Then Judah

identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again.

27 When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. 28 And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." 29 But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. 30 Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

I told you it was PG-13. It would make a good Hollywood movie. Here is it in the Bible. This is story of faithlessness, failure, disgrace and injustice. It is a low water mark in the story of Abraham's descendants. Let me summarize what we just read – overall it's about Judah and his daughter in law Tamar - Judah had given her as a wife to his son Er, but his son died. I need to give you some background on an ancient custom called Levirate marriage.

When a married man dies w/o an heir, the next of kin (often a brother) is responsible to marry the widow, to bear a son for her dead husband and keep his name and line alive. The firstborn child would be treated as that of the deceased brother which makes the child the heir of the deceased brother and not the genetic father (seen in Deut 25 / and in the story of Ruth & Boaz).

So Judah gave Tamar to his other son Onan, 2nd husband, brother of the dead guy Er, Onan, took Tamar as his wife and wanted the gratification of being with her, but not the responsibility of having a child with her that would bear her first husband's name - so he practiced a form of birth control to prevent her pregnancy. Then he died. Jacob then told Tamar to wait as a widow for his third son Shelah to grow up, but when Shelah was old enough, he didn't give him Tamar as a wife like he promised.

Perhaps Judah thought Tamar was bad luck. Here was one woman with 2 dead husbands and Judah didn't want there to be a third funeral and an end to his own lineage. The Bible tells us that it was not Tamar or bad luck that killed his sons; God himself had killed them because they were evil.

7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death

10 And what he (Onan) did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also.

Judah failed to keep his promise to Tamar to give his Shelah, so Tamar in desperation disguised herself as a temple prostitute and sat down near where her father in law was doing business. She set him up. He saw her, and thinking she was a prostitute paid her for sex. In this exchange she took his signet ring as a pledge of payment. She became pregnant and then went into hiding. In a few months time when her pregnancy was discovered, Judah heard about it and was enraged, thinking that she has been unfaithful to betrothal to Shelah called for her to be killed by burning. Judah didn't know that he was the father however it was revealed that he was the guilty party and he was humbled. Two children were born from this illicit union, Perez and Zerah. This indeed is a sad story of faithlessness, broken promises, an incestuous relationship and hypocrisy.

What Do We Learn About the Human Condition?

1. Left To Ourselves We Fail Miserably

Note Gen 38: 1 – What was true of Judah geographically was true of him morally.

It happened at that time that Judah went down...

a. Disobedience - Abraham forbid that a wife for Isaac be found outside his clan – (Gen 24:3), yet Judah did just that – married a foreign woman, outside the covenant community.

vs. 1-2 (he) turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.

b. Faithlessness – he pledged Shelah to marry Tamar, but refused to keep his promise perhaps out of fear or self-interest – protecting his only remaining son. It is clear that he did not trust God in the doing of what was right.

v. 14 For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage.

c. Injustice - In refusing Tamar her rights through continued postponement of her marriage to Shelah, he sidelined and isolated her, ignored her well-being, leaving her as a dishonoured and grieving widow.

d. Deception - In Judah's actions we see presence of generations of deceit

- Abraham deceived Pharaoh about the identity of his wife Sarah
- Isaac deceived Abimelech about the identity of his wife Rebekah
- Jacob deceived Isaac pretending to be Esau and received the blessing
- Laban deceived Jacob pretending to give his daughter Rachel, but gives Leah
- Judah and his brothers deceived Jacob by dipping Joseph's robe in blood
- Judah deceives Tamar about the promise to give her his 3rd born
- Tamar deceived Judah pretending to be a prostitute –

e. Immorality – after his wife died, he wanted some comfort so he found what he thought was a prostitute and got her pregnant. It was harvest season – time to make an offering to the fertility gods. Tamar didn't see Jacob's fraud at first, but discovered it after a long time. She turned her thoughts to revenge and devised a plan to get what she wanted – a child. Judah took Tamar's bait – he got what he wanted, and so did she.

f. Hypocrisy – When he found out that Tamar had been unfaithful to her betrothal (which wasn't going to happen), he demanded that she be burned – finally he would get her out of the way. The tables turned; then the whole house of cards came down – *he was the one*, he was the guilty party – he'd been unfaithful to God and to her; in the end Tamar was vindicated, he was humbled.

Judah went down. Crashing down. His name means *praise*. His life was to be one that honoured the God who made an everlasting covenant with his grandfather but in these ways his life brought not praise to the name of the Lord, but dishonour.

In the life of Judah we see how easy it is to slide from grace to faithlessness, disobeying God's Word and will, living in fear rather than faith, gratifying the lusts of the flesh and disregarding others in the community of faith.

In the life of Judah we see the contrast between who we should be and who we are. We are Judah and not Joseph. Judah is therefore set before us in contrast to Joseph, a man of integrity who trusted in the Lord. We are the disobedient. We are the faithless; we are the liars and the perpetrators. We are the immoral and the hypocritical.

Instead of being for the praise of God's glory, we are sinfully self-seeking. Looking at Judah as a mirror of our own condition, we are acutely aware of the need for a rescue plan that can redeem our desperate situation.

Can the nations of the earth be blessed from a man and family line that are on the brink of self-destruction? Can our hearts be changed from sin to those that seek the glory and honour of God?

What Do We Learn About God?

1. **The Power Of His Grace.** In spite of Judah's failings, grace was powerfully working in his life; by grace his sin was revealed, by grace he humbled himself, by grace his sin was confessed, and by grace he was changed (e.g..) he stood in place of his brother Benjamin (last week).

No doubt Tamar wondered if God had forgotten her. But He hadn't. God used this desperate act and the story tells us of the birth of twins, one of which had the hand of God all over him...and by grace, in spite of this sin God's promises continued.

God hasn't forgotten you. His grace is powerfully at work in your life. He brings good from evil and from grief.

2. **The Mystery Of His Providence.** He is involved in all things and in events. All of life is the realm of God's activity. No place, no situation is without Him. He is always working. His hidden hand working out His eternal plans. In Genesis 38, God is directing them to fulfil His purpose.

Believing in God's providence doesn't mean that we will always understand what God is doing but it means we will trust that God is doing something amazing. He is providentially at work, by grace saving and to sanctifying us that we might be for His *glory and praise*.

3. **The Wonder of His Plan**. God's purposes are bound up in the life of an individual – an undeserving, fallen one at that. Yet we see that a particular honour given to Judah

... he was divinely elected as the source from which the salvation of the world would flow (Calvin).

We asked ourselves last week, why does this one awful chapter of the story of Judah interrupt the 13 chapters of the story of Joseph? In fact, says one Bible teacher Joseph's story is the one that interrupts Judah's. He says the purpose of Joseph and the 13 chapters is all about keeping Judah alive for he will emerge as the one through whom God' covenant purpose will be realized.

We see two babies born out of an illicit relationship, struggling for who will be first and something great is yet going to happen in this line. We find that out as we look ahead to Genesis 49:8-10. In Jacob's dying days, it is his final blessing over his children. Here is what he said about Judah,

8 "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. 9 Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Gen 49:8-10

This is a prophecy about the future of the line of Judah. God appointed Judah (which means praise) to be praised. Judah is like a lion. Judah is conquering and victorious. His is the royal tribe and the royal sceptre – the symbol of kingship would remain in this tribe of Judah until it came to whom it rightly and finally belongs. The Promised Son, Jesus Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was foretold 2000 years before His birth. Jacob saw down the line the promised King who would come.

And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered. Rev. 5:5

In Jesus Christ we see the mystery of God's providence, the power of His grace and the wonder of His plan.

What Do We Learn About Jesus Christ and The Gospel?

1. Jesus Christ Stepped into Our Broken World

The Son of God was pleased to take on our nature. Matthew Henry writes,

He came near to us, in our fallen, wretched condition; but he was perfectly free from sin: and while we read the names in his genealogy, we should not forget how low the Lord of glory stooped to save the human race.

What do we find in the genealogy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1?

*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar... and Jesse the father of David the king... and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.
Matthew 1:2-3, 6, 16*

In the same stained, tainted family line we find, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, **Tamar**, David and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus identifies with us and our fallen, sinful humanity. He entered into a family tree marred by sin.

You've got to love the honesty of the Bible! There's no whiteout, Photoshop touch up. Tamar – 1st woman mentioned in NT in genealogy. Jesus' great granddaddy was sexually immoral, faithless and a liar and his grandma acted like a prostitute and got pregnant out of wedlock (Bathsheba, and Rahab) are also there. Jesus humbled Himself – He entered a story of failure, disgrace and injustice. He had no reputation in fact only humiliation - His glory was his triumph on the cross.

Did you hear that? Does that sound like your story? Your family? Your family tree? Is that good news for you? Do you have a dysfunctional family? Jesus came for you and for your messed up family. He will not reject you or be ashamed to get his hands dirty in mess of your background.

2. **Jesus Christ Brings Beauty to the Broken**. No one is too far-gone, too messed up, too broken to heal, save or restore. However, so profoundly broken and messed are we, that it required Jesus' death to address our sin condition. Yet, in Christ we are part of the same trajectory of God's covenantal purpose that began in Genesis and went right through the chapter that gives us Jesus. We are captured by grace. Jesus' blood is sufficient to blot out

our sin. Jesus is our perfect righteousness (Gen 38:26). Jesus brings life to the losers. Jesus brings beauty to the broken. Listen to the testimony of this profoundly sinful and deeply broken man;

formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 1 Tim. 1:13-16

The Apostle Paul wrote to tell you that sinful broken people who believe in Jesus for eternal life are the recipients of God's perfect patience and love. Judah's royal Son, the Lord Jesus stands as an advocate for us. His grace is far greater than our sin...where our sin abounds, His grace abounds the more. He is our only hope. His grace flows down to the lowest point and is able to transform lives – We are sinners who tell sinners what grace has done in us.

3. Jesus Made Us To Be For His Praise and Glory.

That we who are sinful are changed to be praise for Him. With our lips and with our lives we are made to be praise and worship Him – to overflow with gratitude for His mercy for the King who came for us and whose grace works in us and through us and in spite of us.

The Apostle Paul, immediately following his wonder at the grace he received, gives this shout of praise, 1 Tim. 1:17

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Conclusion

God's promise recorded in Genesis 3:15, found it's home in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David came to complete fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we, who know fallenness and brokenness, can take heart, look up and be filled with hope. In Jesus Christ is the power and the demonstration of God's grace, the mystery of God's providence, the wonder of God's plan. He stepped into our broken world, He brings beauty to the broken, and He makes us to be for the praise of His glory. This is our God. This is our King. This is Jesus and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.