



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

November 27, 2022

Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

The First Sunday of Advent: The Mothers of Jesus (Mt. 1:1-16)

Matthew begins with what appears to be one of the most boring parts of all four gospels. The genealogy of Jesus begins with Abraham and then moves along with a series of “father of...” It is a long list of names that very few of us remember. The rhythm of the reading is long and monotonous. It is easy to tune it out, but then the rhythm is broken by the five women. Four women are named before finally getting to Joseph, who is called “husband of Mary.”

A closer look at each of these women reveals a deeper truth about not only Jesus, but about our own stories as well. The women are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. The stories of these women have been told by generations as stories of shame. They are women of ill-repute, “bad girls of the Bible,” who we should learn from and sometimes avoid. Yet here they are, singled out in Jesus’ story. It would have been so easy for Matthew to have ignored them. No one would have noticed if he had skipped them, but he didn’t.

Why not? Maybe because they are not women of ill-repute at all. Maybe it is complete and utter nonsense to call them “bad girls” at all. Yes, there is a tinge of scandal attached to each of them, but the scandal is a product of destructive, patriarchal society, not their own moral fortitude.

Tamar was not the wife of Judah. She was the wife of one of his sons. Yet she bears Judah’s child in one of the most sordid stories of our Bible. Remember who Judah was? He was Jacob’s son and Joseph’s older brother, the one who sold him into slavery and told their father that he was dead. Judah’s son married Tamar, but he died before bearing children. Tamar should have been protected by Judah. She should have been a part of his household, but instead she was left vulnerable. She takes matters into her own hands. When she is done, she has a son and she has a claim on Judah’s estate. She survives because of her own intelligence, initiative, and agency.

Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute living in Jericho. When the Israelites are planning their invasion, she takes in the spies that Joshua sent into the city. She protects them, and then strikes a deal that her family will be rescued when the Israelites destroy the city. She is remembered as a hero to the people even as she is named as a prostitute. And she is a grandmother of Jesus.

Ruth the Moabite—another Gentile—has an entire book of the Bible dedicated to her. Her story is full of tragic death, sexual innuendo, cunning, and strategy. It is also a story of deep faith, friendship, and loyalty. She is named in the book of Ruth as a Grandmother of King David.

Bathsheba, who is called “wife of Uriah [the Hittite],” is the king-maker who made sure that her son Solomon would take David’s crown. She survived the assault of the king, the death of her first son, and made the most of the terrible circumstances that were given to her.

And of course Mary, the unwed young woman who finds herself expecting a child.

These are not the stories most people would lift up, yet here they are. We all have stories. We all have a family history. Some of our histories are sources of pride. Some are stories of survival, or overcoming great odds. Some of our stories however, are not told in proper company. There are stories of shame or disgrace that have survived as cautionary tales. The stories of our own lives are much the same. We have our own stories of failure and regret as well as stories of triumph and celebration. All of our stories however are stories of survival. Our family stories. Our life stories. They are stories of survival, and God makes room for them all.

God makes room for every story. We don’t have to hide them. Our history, both individual and family, is a part of who we are, but we need not be defined by them. With God, there is room for every story. There is room for every triumph and tragedy. There is room for every regret and celebration. And there is room to make a new story. This Advent, each of us can begin writing a new story, a story of grace, growth, and love.



In the bottom left Tamar holds her father-in-law's insignia... Moving clockwise, Rahab holds the red cord she lowered to ensure the safety of her family... Ruth holds the wheat that she gleaned from the field... Bathsheba holds the crown for her son Solomon... Mary looks adoringly at the rose which represents her son... Without their brilliance, passion, ingenuity, resourcefulness, the lineage that led to Christ would have ended.