

Five Unusal Women

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[0:00] Please turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 1. And I know some of you have heard me say this before, but I find Mother's Day messages to be the hardest.

! It's the hardest to preach. So it's always easy on Mother's Day to let you go early. And I hope that I will be able to do that today as well.

Now, Matthew chapter 1. And my prayer is that mothers in particular, but women in general, will be encouraged from this sermon this morning.

And obviously it is God's Word, so all of us should be encouraged. But I especially pray that mothers in particular, women in general, are encouraged.

Matthew chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[1:18] 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 Perez the father of Hezron. And Hezron the father of Ram. And Ram the father of Aminadab. And Aminadab the father of Nashon. And Nashon the father of Salmon. And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab.

And Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth. And Obed the father of Jesse. And Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. And Solomon the father of Rehoboam. And Rehoboam the father of Abijah. And Abijah the father of Asaph.

[2:24] And Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat the father of Joram. And Joram the father of Uzziah. And Uzziah the father of Jotham.

And Jotham the father of Ahaz. And Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh and Manasseh the father of Amos and Amos the father of Josiah and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel and Zerubbabel the father of Abayud and Abayud the father of Eliakim and Eliakim the father of Azor and Azor the father of Zadok and Zadok the father of Achim and Achim the father of Eluid and Eluid the father of Eliezer and Eliezer the father of Mathan and Mathan the father of Jacob and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born who is called Christ.

That's genealogy but that is God's word. Let's pray. Father, we thank you this morning that we are able to gather in this place on Mother's Day and we thank you for the privilege of opening your word.

And Father, I pray that you would speak to all of our hearts but especially, Lord, I pray that you would speak to the hearts of mothers and then women in general.

[4:21] Lord, I pray that you would cause us to hear your word from what would seem to be an obscure passage of scripture for a Mother's Day sermon.

And God, for this, I need your help. So would you pour abundant grace upon me as I bring your word and upon all of us as we hear your word. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. But I think you would agree with me that genealogies, lists like the one that I just read in the Bible, are generally boring to read.

But we should do our best to read them because genealogies, though they can be boring, they can also be very interesting. And I had the experience this week of reading through a genealogy that was a part of my Bible reading plan in Numbers 13.

It's a short genealogy that's there. But as I read it, I was able to see something that I may have read before, but I don't recall it standing out in my mind.

[5:35] I was able to see that Joshua in the Bible was not always called Joshua. That wasn't his, that was not his original name.

His name was Hosea. Hosea. And in reading that brief genealogy there, what I saw was that Moses changed his name from Hosea to Joshua.

I would not have seen that had I skipped it in my reading. But this genealogy that we read in Matthew chapter 1 is more than just interesting.

interesting. It's more than just interesting because it is the genealogy of Jesus Christ. And the list of people from whom Jesus is descended include some people who are not the kind of people that those who like to name drop would want to be associated with.

people. They wouldn't be proud to list some of these people as their ancestors, as those they are related to.

[6:49] And five of these ancestors listed in these 16 verses are women. And this morning I want us to take the remainder of our time and consider these five women.

I would call them unusual women. And here's what I hope that we will see from considering these five women.

I hope that we all see that it does not matter who you are or what you've done. God can use your story and his story.

It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. God can use your story in his story.

I hope that as we consider these women, that we all come away with this deep conviction in our hearts that it doesn't matter who we are, it doesn't matter what we've done. God can use my story in his story.

[7:57] He's not ashamed to do so. God can use God's God's God's God's God's God's story. God's story is the gospel.

So let's now consider these five women listed in the genealogy of Christ. And the first woman is Tamar, a deceiver. we can't tell from Matthew's account that Tamar was a deceiver, but we can tell that she was a deceiver from Genesis 38, at the beginning of the Bible, where we find her story.

Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah, one of the sons of Jacob. And Judah had three sons. His oldest was Er, his second was Onan, and his third was Shelah.

And Er married Tamar. And the Bible says that Er was wicked, and so God put him to death. And the custom was, at that time, that when man would die without leaving offspring, his brother had a duty, his oldest brother had a duty to raise up offspring for him.

And so that lot fell to Onan. Onan was to perform the duty of a brother-in-law to Tamar, the widow of his brother, Er.

[9:29] But Onan was not an upright man. Onan was a wicked man. And Onan reasoned that this child is not going to be my own, and essentially what would have happened, that child would have carried on in his father's stead, and so the heir would have inherited in his dad's father's place.

And so Onan selfishly determined not to raise up a son to his dad's brother, but he decided to selfishly enjoy the gratification of sleeping with his brother's wife.

And scripture says that he would spill his semen on the ground so that she would not get pregnant.

And the thing, scripture says, displeased the Lord, and so the Lord put him to death.

And it was a very wicked thing that Onan did. And so here you have Tamar, two husbands, both died.

And Judah, her father-in-law, seems to have reasoned, you know what, this woman is not good news. This woman is, she's bad luck, she's jinxed. I mean, all the husbands died.

[10:48] And he was enchanting his third son, Shelah, with her. And Shelah evidently was a bit younger, so he told Tamar, he said, why don't you wait, let Shelah get a little older, and when he is older, I will let him

perform the duty of a brother-in-law to you.

So time went by, and it was very evident that Judah was not keeping his word, and Tamar observed that. And what the account says is that in the course of time, the wife of Judah passed away.

And Judah, after he had grieved for his wife, he went to another town, where his sheep were, and his sheep sharers, those who would cut the wool off of the sheep, they were there, and Tamar got word that he was going to this other town.

And so Tamar took off her clothing as a widow, she was in her father's house, she took those off, and she dressed herself as a prostitute, put a veil on her face, and she went to the city gate where he was going, and she sat at the entrance of the town as a prostitute.

And Judah, she must have known her father-in-law, he solicited her, but he had no money. And so he said, look, don't you credit me, I'll send you a goat in a little while.

[12:15] And she said, well, what are you going to give me? Give me some pledge that you're going to give me this goat. And she said, why don't you give me your signet and the cord and that staff in your hand?

And he agreed, he gave it to her, slept with her, went on his way, but Tamar got pregnant. She took off her prostitute's garments, she went back to her father's house, put on her widow's clothing, and in three months the scripture says, it was evident that she was pregnant, and word went to Judah, to say, your daughter-in-law has been a harlot, your daughter-in-law has been immoral.

And Judah's words were, bring her out, she will be stoned. And this is what we read in Genesis 38, 25 through 26.

As she was being brought out, as Tamar 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.

Then Judah identified them and said, she is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son, Sheila.

[13:49] And he did not know her, scripture says, after that. So Judah was stuck. Judah was tricked because he could not disown his property because that signet that he was wearing was a type of unique identification that people had in those days, and he could not deny that it belonged to him.

But when the time came, Tamar gave birth, and she gave birth to twins, two boys, Perez and Zira. And both of them are listed in this genealogy of Christ.

Now think about that story. It was no accident or chance that Tamar bore a son by the name of Perez.

No accident. A sovereign God superintended all of that and could have done otherwise if he had chosen to do so.

So here you have this woman who was deceived and used by her brother-in-law, deceived and used by her father-in-law, and she in turn deceives and humiliates him.

[15:07] and yet the sovereign Lord chose to include her story in God's story, the story of God's son coming into the world.

God's son coming The second unusual woman mentioned in the genealogy of Christ is Rahab, a prostitute.

Rahab's story is found in the book of Joshua chapters 2 and 6. The children of Israel were about to enter into the promised land, and Joshua sent spies into the land to scope it out, and these spies went, I guess naturally they went to the house of Rahab, the prostitute, and word got out that these spies had come and they had gone to Rahab's house, so the king sent messages to the house and told her to give the men up, and Rahab said, well first of all, she hid the men up on the roof of her house, covered them with stalks of flax, and then she told them, the men did come, but before it got dark, they left, and they went through the city gate, so I don't know where they went, and the men believed her, and they went on their way in search for the two spies who were up on the roof.

Let's turn to Joshua chapter 2. I want to read what transpired after that point in the story. Joshua chapter 2.

I want to read verses 8 through 14. Joshua chapter 2 verses 8 through 14.

[16:55] It reads, before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given you the land, and

that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.

For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites, who are beyond the Jordan, to Sion and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.

And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you. For the Lord your God, he is God, in the heavens above and the earth beneath.

Now then, please swear to me by the Lord, that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign, that you will save alive, my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.

And the man said to her, our life for yours, even to the death. If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land, we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.

[18:32] go back to Matthew chapter 1. So that was the conversation that Rahab had with these men.

And what is quite evident is that Rahab, when you think about the fact that this is one woman in this whole city, who is coming to this conclusion, when, according to her, everybody else saw what God had done, they heard the stories of the great conquest, and yet, it's only her heart that is moved to recognize what is going on.

And I think it's correct to say that Rahab was not wiser or better than the other people. It is correct to say that God moved on the heart of Rahab.

And so Rahab let the men down through the window of her house, which was on the city wall, and the men told her, you would tie this cord into the window, this scarlet cord into the window of the house, and let all of your family come into this house, and we will spare this house when we invade the city of Jericho.

And they did exactly that, and we read about the conquest of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6, and how Rahab and her family were spared.

[20:04] But we don't read about Rahab anymore after this point. She kind of disappears off the scene. She's not mentioned again until this reference here in the book of Matthew, in the genealogy of Christ.

Christ. And so here we see this woman who was exploited by men, who was no doubt looked down upon in society, but who was looked upon by God.

A woman who nobody had a clue what was going on with her, but God was dealing with her, even though all the outward signs were that she was continuing in the same way that she had already always continued.

And God moved on her heart so much that this woman was willing to align herself with who were essentially the enemies of her people, against her people. She became a part of that people and God spared her life.

And here in Matthew chapter 1, we see that Rahab gives birth to a son by the name of Boaz, fathered by Salmon. Although we're not told it exactly, it is reasonable to conclude that Rahab, though a foreigner, became a part of the covenant people of God, and perhaps became the wife of Salmon.

[21:45] So again, we have a woman whose story is unattractive, God's story. But her story is part of God's story. The third unusual woman in this passage is Ruth, a foreigner.

Ruth's story is found in the book of Ruth. Ruth married one of the sons of an Israelite by the name of Elimelech. Elimelech was from Bethlehem in Judah, and there was a famine in Bethlehem of Judah, and Elimelech left Bethlehem, and he went to the country of Moab, took his wife, Naomi, with him, and his two sons.

And while there, Elimelech died, and his two sons married two women from Moab, two women, Ruth and Orpah, and eventually those two boys died.

And Naomi was left without a husband, without sons, and she got word that God had been kind to her people, and there was now food back in Bethlehem of Judah, so she decides to go back.

And when she announces this to her two daughters-in-law, they both said, we're going to go back with you, and she urges them, says, no, don't come with me, I am a miserable woman, if I had children today, you wouldn't wait for them, you wouldn't wait for my son, so don't follow me.

[23:24] And one of them, Orpah, took her advice and ran back, but Ruth said, no, I'm going to go with you. Where you go, I'm going to go. Your God's going to be my God, your people will be my people. And she could not get rid of Ruth, so Ruth goes back to Bethlehem in Judah with Naomi.

And long story short, God takes care of this foreigner, this woman who is widowed, this woman who is a foreigner, she goes into this land that she had never been to before, and God takes care of her. And the way God takes care of her is God has her to marry a godly, wealthy man by the name of Boaz. And Boaz provides for her and for her mother-in-law.

Now, there's no doubt that God moved on the heart of Boaz to have compassion on Ruth and to take an interest in her. But before that, God moved on the heart of Ruth to forsake her people in Moab and join God's people in Bethlehem.

And now, what we have is this foreigner, this foreigner named Ruth, whose story is included in God's story.

[24:56] But it's quite interesting to think about it because here you have Boaz is the son of Rahab, a foreigner. foreigner. And I believe that it was quite easy for him to be thoughtful and considerate and compassionate towards Ruth because his own mother was a foreigner.

And he would have known what the challenges of that would be because one of the realities is in a fallen world, even when foreigners are accepted into a country, there remains prejudices in the hearts of many people.

And no doubt, as Rahab came into the community of the children of Israel, she faced some of that. And Boaz, being her son, would have also experienced some of that.

And so God would cause this foreign woman to be looked upon by this wealthy godly man from a foreign mother.

And he takes care of her and her mother-in-law. One of the other interesting things I find with this is that we're able to see this whole thought about Jesus being a Jew.

[26:26] He's a Jew, but Jesus had Gentile blood in him because we see it in Rahab and now we see it in Ruth. Well, the fourth, unusual woman in this genealogy is one of the most famous women in the Bible, so much so that her name is not mentioned.

and in verse 6, she is simply referred to as the wife of Uriah. And most of us, if not all of us, know her name as Bathsheba.

So the fourth, unusual woman in this genealogy of Christ is Bathsheba, an adulteress. Bathsheba's story is found in 2 Samuel chapter 11.

On a day that David was up on the roof of his house when he should have been in battle fighting for his people, he set eyes upon this beautiful woman who was taking a bath, I presume at a house away from where his house was.

And David had his men to go and inquire of her and they came back and they said, that's the wife of Uriah. Uriah was one of David's 30 mighty fighting men. Uriah was one of the men out on the battlefield risking his life for Israel while David was taking it easy.

[28:01] And David mercilessly and heartlessly had Bathsheba to be brought to him. And when you read the language that the writer uses, it simply says they went and took her.

They didn't go and say, oh, the king said, come over for a drink or no. They went and took her. They brought her to David.

David slept with her, sent her back, and then in time she said word to David and said, I'm pregnant. And David tries to cover his tracks by framing her husband and he sends for him off the battlefield and tells him to come, tries to get her husband to go home to sleep with his wife.

He does all kinds of things, including getting him drunk. And Uriah was such a man that even when he was drunk, he had more character than David when David was sober.

[29:08] He refused to go home and sleep with his wife, knowing full well that his comrades won the battlefield, risking their lives for Israel. And when David saw that there was nothing he could do to frame this godly man, David decided to have him killed.

He had him to take his own letter back to Uriah. He told back to Joab, who was his commander of the army. He told Joab, I want you to take Uriah, put him on the front line of the fiercest part of the battle, and then withdraw.

And Joab did that, and Uriah was killed. And after Uriah passed, David took Bathsheba to be his wife, but God wasn't pleased.

And God confronted David through the prophet Nathan. And then God took the life of the child, and God disciplined David.

But God was merciful and God gave Bathsheba another child by David, Solomon, who became king after David.

[30:30] So here we have this woman, Bathsheba, whose husband was fighting for his country, and although she did not take the initiative to engage in an adulterous relationship with David, he was the one who sent for her and no doubt used his power over her.

Bathsheba didn't resist. She could have resisted, probably would have cost her her life, but she could have resisted. So Bathsheba is not a victim.

She, in her own right, is guilty of adultery. And truthfully, if that had happened today, Bathsheba could not join with the Me Too group of women who were sexually exploited by men in positions of power and wealth.

She was intimidated, but she cooperated. But despite her adultery, God still used her. God uses Bathsheba's story of adultery in his story of redemption.

And reminds us again that no matter who we are, no matter what we have done, God is able to use our story in his story, the story of the gospel.

[31:56] Because Bathsheba offers hope, offers hope that even in our greatest sin, our most egregious sin, God, can show mercy.

Well, the fifth and final unusual woman in the genealogy of Christ is mentioned in verse 16. And she's Mary, a virgin.

Now, there's a very obvious way that Mary is very different from all the other women, from the four other women mentioned. Mary is different in the sense that the four other women are certainly from the Old Testament, but they also, because of that, we know their stories, we know their histories, and so when we, if you know the Old Testament, when you come upon these women's names here, you know the background story to them.

But if you're thinking of a person who's just reading chronologically through the Bible, and you're coming to Matthew, when you see Mary, at this point we don't know anything about Mary, other than she is the, the, she's the wife of Joseph, but we're not told anything about her.

It is only as we read on that we find out that she was a virgin. Matthew doesn't tell us some of the details about Mary as Luke does, but in Luke's gospel we find out that Mary was from an obscure town with a bad reputation, the town of Nazareth.

[33:45] It is a place that one of the disciples of Jesus asked when they heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, they said, can anything good come out of Nazareth? That's where Mary was from.

She was a poor peasant girl. If you were to interview Mary in that day or anyone from Mary's town, I don't think they would have had the bravado to think that something great would come out of their lives or that they would even, the girls would even consider the day could, be the one to bear Messiah.

We read Mary's own view of herself and of God and the magnificent. In Luke 1, 46 through 49, Mary says, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. here's why. For he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.

You see, in a fallen world, people like Mary are not given the time of day. In a fallen world, Mary's name on a resume and where she lived will not get the interest of a prospective employer or someone in an HR department because her name wouldn't be known.

[35:30] And where she lives would communicate so much about her that this world is not to celebrate. But God knew Mary's address.

her and it is a reminder to us that those who are not on the top of the list in this world can be those that God will include in his story.

And that should encourage us. And a lot of times we would say it doesn't matter who it doesn't matter what you know, it matters who you know. And we begin to think that unless we pull strings, unless we do all these other kinds of things, we won't get things done, but no, we are reminded that God knows exactly where we are no matter who we are.

And again, no matter what we have done, God is able to take our stories. He's able to use them in his story.

Now, the point of the sermon this morning, really, is not to consider which of these five unusual women are my life. That's not the point of the story.

[37:02] It's not trying to line our lives up as best we can with one of these women. The point is that God is able to use all kinds of people, and they are not overlooked in his plan of redemption.

In Hebrews chapter 2, verses 10 through 12, we read these very encouraging words. verse 10. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin.

That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise.

and again, I will put my trust in him, and again, behold, I and the children God has given me.

Not only is Jesus not ashamed of these five women in his genealogy, he is not ashamed of any of the children that God has given him.

[38:26] All those who put their faith in him. And this should encourage all of us today. This should encourage all of us today to be reminded that it doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter who we are. It doesn't matter what we have done. God is able to use our story in his story and he's able to do it for his glory.

I know when you live in a fallen world, and I think we all know this as well, life can be hard. And I think, I'm going to generalize in this statement, but I know that it is not always true.

In a fallen world, because life is hard, it's harder on women than men. Not all the time, but generally so.

And in a fallen world, that is harder on women than men, it is harder on mothers for so many reasons.

[39:44] husbands. One that is obvious is that a mother never doubts a child is hers.

But many husbands do. And even when a husband, I should say many fathers do, and even when a father may be confident that it is his child, it is far easier for a father to walk away from a child than from a mother.

And so many times mothers are living in a fallen world and faced with unimaginable difficulties and challenges and through the ebbs and flow of life, we can find ourselves in all kinds of difficult situations and circumstances and sin and disobedience.

And you know what? None of that disqualifies those who find themselves in that situation from coming to God and having their story to be a part of his story.

Because every story of redemption communicates the gospel. It communicates the gospel of what an amazing God is able to do with any life that comes to him.

[41:19] He's able to save, he's able to transform and enable them to live for his glory. And so I pray this morning that we are all encouraged and again mothers particularly, women in general, but then all of us because this is God's word, that it doesn't matter who we are, it doesn't matter what we've done, God is able to use our stories in his story.

Amen.