

12/6/20 - Genesis 38 - "The Tapestry of Judah & Tamar"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 December 2020

Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 00] Boy, the passage today is quite a doozy, huh? Who signed me up for this one? Genesis 38. It's been a time of reflection.

It's been a time of just serving where we've been and throughout the series and the preaching ministry of this church that we've just come out of a series in Ruth and through the mention of Perez and Zira, I felt compelled by the Lord saying, you know, let's connect a couple more dots this Christmas.

They come. And as we connect the dots, we know that we're tracing something here.

We know that as we're going through these generations, the Toledotes of Scripture, these are the generations, all throughout Scripture is kind of like milestone markers throughout this entire Bible leading up to the Toledote of Jesus Christ.

this story is integral with that generational lineage. When I was reading this passage, I considered a childhood game that we used to play called the telephone game.

[1 : 34] The telephone game when we would line up in elementary school and we would essentially be relaying messages. In this game, the first person would relay a message back to the next person and so on and so forth all the way through 20 elementary school kids who have ADD, ADHD, who are just wild and crazy.

So you can imagine how as that message continued to be passed along from person to person, the message would become more and more unclear from the originally intended message.

Sometimes very comical playing that game. And not only did that message become unclear, but the initially intended message became very distorted and very much adjusted from that original intention.

And as we enter into the middle of Genesis, it is not by chance we are in Genesis 38. We arrive at a similar message relay that's going on throughout Scripture right now.

However, it appears as if this message isn't just being relayed, but there's something else being relayed along with this message. And that being sinful behavior that's been passing down from generation to generation.

[3 : 06] What I believe we have achieved through our series in Ruth that we just came out of is the unique ability to approach difficult texts in Scripture and be able to understand the immediate contextual significance within this chapter but also where it plugs into the whole narrative.

However, we will allow this broken narrative to bloom in the hope that regardless of sinfulness that abounds, God was still providentially working in the midst of this mess.

And it takes a text like Ruth, Judah and Tamar, Rahab, and many others in Scripture to bring into perspective the glory of God's providence.

And we ought to trust Him in response to that. I've labeled the series intentionally as the Christmas tapestry.

And that is the imagery that you just saw on the screen leading up to the reading of God's Word. Not many of you have maybe seen that Sesame Street episode of the making of tapestries.

[4 : 27] So you might not know exactly what I've been referring to up to this point through the book of Ruth. And it's okay. But it made me put a visual together so that we can truly see what I'm referring to when I say Christmas tapestry.

A tapestry has two sides. If you look at a tapestry from the bottom of it, everything looks like a complete mess. The tapestry, it looks like an unrecognizable design.

There's random threads. If you can remember on that video of that guy flipping that blanket up, all those threads, there's no indication of any sense to be made of that tapestry.

However, that's our perspective of this book often, even in our own lives, that when we don't understand exactly what's going on in Scripture, we understand that we see chaos just like we're seeing the underside of a tapestry.

But in all reality, there is a masterpiece laying on the top. And it takes a perspective from God's perspective to know exactly what he's putting together and that he knows exactly what he's doing, even though from our perspective, it looks like a chaotic mess.

[5 : 47] I want to pray before we start going into this text today and handling a couple challenging situations, but to look for that chaos.

And when we're looking at that chaos, we know we're looking at a beautiful tapestry that God is putting together. Let's pray. Father, help us at this time as we enter your word.

Father, help our minds to be settled. Help our hearts to be at ease. Help our consciences to be clean right now through your Holy Spirit. and give all of our attention or heart to your text today.

Help me to proclaim it boldly. In your name we pray. Amen. The first section of passage, I believe that this is kind of like broken up in a couple different scenes based on contextual markers.

So we'll be breaking it up into about three to maybe four sections today. The first section is a providential disaster. I don't know how much better you can put verses one through eleven and just the quick pace of just wickedness and chaos.

[7 : 02] It says in verse 38, in chapter 38 of verse one, it happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain a Dulemite whose name was Hurrah.

At this time, we need to plug this in because this is connecting some dots here as a literary marker. Let's take a moment to plug it in. Judah is a man.

He's the fourth brother, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah. And he leaves at this time according to verse one at the time this, it happened at this time that he exited the fellowship of his brothers who sold Joseph into slavery and deceptively made it appear as if Joseph was dead to their father, Jacob.

Essentially, Judah is leaving a life of deception. Isn't that right? That's good. I mean, we could just stop there. This message can be all about finding a good friend, leaving deception, leaving your sin, and finding a good Canaanite friend.

That will lead to a road to repentance, right? And it's something to keep in mind because at this time from the very first verse in this passage to verse 30 is the stretch and span of 20 years in the life of Judah.

[8 : 31] So if you look at this as not just a couple quick instances, this is a long saga put into 30 verses. And so Judah essentially was leaving his brothers and by God's providence we enter into ground zero of his wandering with the Canaanites and he befriended a man named Hira.

This is no message on friendship whatsoever but I think it's clearly indicating that there's nothing good that's coming out of this relationship that this man of God is befriending Hira.

And so we have to ask ourselves what's Judah doing? What exactly is he doing? Why in the world is the story of Joseph interrupted?

You have chapter 38 that's all about Joseph. We have chapter 40 that concludes after this section of passage, 39 and 40. And what is Joseph doing?

Why is this narrative of Joseph interrupted? We've seen verse 2. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua.

[9 : 43] He took her and went into her and she conceived and bore a son and he called his name Ur. She conceived again and bore a son and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son and she called his name Shelah.

As we enter the narrative asking ourselves what is Judah doing? We should sense a certain type of pressure that is culturally removed from us today.

If you can keep in mind that Judah and his family and his entire lineage rests in the balance of these three boys, these three baby boys.

He is one generation away from extinction. So what he's doing regardless of the place he's doing it among the Canaanites, he's essentially looking, it's time to build a family.

It's time to plan for a family here. So he leaves his brothers. It's exactly what he's doing in this. So Judah marries an unnamed Canaanite but she is the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua.

[10 : 49] And through marriage, Judah was blessed with three children, Ur, Onan, and Shelah. And it will be through the offspring of these three men that the royal line would continue for Judah.

We see a glimpse of hope but we get quite a sidewinder because verse 6 through verse 10 has a lot of complicated challenges, a lot of vulgar language and we see a whirlwind of chaos.

Ur selects Tamar as a wife but Ur was so evil, we don't even know what the evil he was committing but he was so evil that the Lord put him to death in verse 7. And Onan was given a chance to continue Ur's offspring through leveret marriage, something that we saw with the narrative of Boaz and Ruth.

And the hope of offspring rested in Onan's lap but for selfish reasons he refused to impregnate this childless widow named Tamar.

And that act, in fact, was so wicked in the sight of the Lord that the Lord put him to death again just like his brother Ur in verse 10.

[12 : 03] As we get to verse 11, after all this chaos, all that remains of hope in continuing this family lineage rests upon Shelah redeeming Ur's offspring along with a widowed, used, and abused Tamar.

All rest in the balance of Shelah and Tamar. Verse 11 says, Then Judah said to Tamar, the 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. And this is the dawning of deception. Indeed, Judah was leaving a life of deception only to continue a life of deception.

Judah pays lip service to Tamar. Almost like, Trust me, I'm gonna just go do this for a little while and just go be a widow and I'm just gonna, I'm gonna get things back into order.

I'm gonna maybe think of a couple situations, maybe pray about this a little bit, Tamar. I'll come back for you, don't worry. But underneath the surface was the reality that he was actually fearful that Tamar was the common denominator that was bringing death to all his sons.

[13 : 23] If you could imagine what is going through Judah's mind as he witnesses quite a misfortune. The pressure that weighs in the balance of his family lineage completely being extinct, weighing upon the shoulders of Shelah, one son that remains.

I imagine this brought great questions of purpose. Additionally, from Tamar's perspective, two perspectives begin to take center stage in this narrative.

You got Judah's and you got Tamar's. You have selfishness, deceptive Judah, seeing all his life crumbling down and you also see the perspective of Tamar.

broken, thrown to the side, forgotten Tamar. Suited up with widow garments, a concept of an outer indication of her status or maybe a mark of mourning, culturally speaking.

And if one word can encapsulate these two perspectives, it is just utter chaos, isn't it, church? It's a difficult passage. But as we continue, we will see that this chaotic mess is providentially brought into order and contains great salvific purpose in the grand tapestry of God's plan of redeeming the forgotten and redeeming the deceived.

[14 : 47] Let's see in section two as it continues. In verse 12, it says, in the course of time, the wife of Judah, she was daughter, died.

When Judah was comforted, he went up to Tinba to his sheep shearers. He and his friend, Hira, the Abdullamite. And the narrative begins to shift.

As we see in section two, the reciprocated deception begins to take shape. It kind of shifts. All of a sudden, if there was no hope before, he has one son remaining.

All hope would maybe rest in maybe another son, maybe try a couple more. But what happens? His wife dies. And what should have given maybe Judah a reality check?

That he is one son away from extinction? What we would expect Judah to do would be to seek out Tamar. To bring Tamar out of widowhood. Say, Sheila, come, do this.

[15 : 59] Leveret marriage. Redeem this family name. Continue this lineage. Let's go back to my original promise. But what does he do after his wife's death?

When Judah was comforted, he went to Tinba to his sheep shearers and found a faithful friend here of the Dulemites, his Canaanite friend. What we see in sheep shearing is an indication that this was essentially equal to our payday in our culture and context.

In this context, they didn't operate by currency. It was all by bartering. So, sheep shearing was the time when they would get all the wool off the sheep, gather it, and sell it.

It was payday. This was a very anticipated time. But after mourning his wife's loss, the loss of his wife, sorry, things begin to get better in the narrative.

It's time to get paid. You know, things are looking up. The provision of the Lord. Let's take a buddy and get on the road. It's time to party. Nothing lifts you up but a close friend, right?

[17 : 12] In times of mourning. Let's go out for a drink, even. But where's Tamar in this passage? As Judah prepares for his voyage to payday, this alienated woman has brought word of her father-in-law's travels.

She similarly moves quickly in a crafty scheme of deceiving the deceiver because she's starting to put the pieces together. She is indeed forgotten.

And she was left out to dry by empty promises in Judah's mouth. And so verse 13 and 14, Tamar changes her clothes, moves swiftly to allow her to cross the same path as Judah on his travels, and essentially to take matters into her own hands of bearing offspring due to her first husband's death, Ur, and the misconduct from Onan.

And in verse 15, we see Tamar plays the role perfect of a prostitute. She covers her face. She can't even be recognized in this passage.

And Judah is portrayed as a high-spirited man going to payday with a buddy on the road. But also, the sexual perversion is highlighted in this passage.

[18 : 34] Truly, this man of God is recklessly wandering. And you know that if you're recklessly wandering for so long, you're going to head for disaster one way or another. In verse 17, Judah offers to sleep with this masked Tamar thinking she's a prostitute.

And she plays right into Judah's weakness of sexual desires and makes a prostitute's offer asking him, what will you give me? And at this time, all Judah had to offer was the promise of a young goat once he's done with his sheep shearing that he could return to this woman.

But Tamar, thinking ahead, being a crafty Tamar that she is, she asks for a pledge, something to express. It's like going to the store and saying, I promise I'll be back.

Here, take my ID, take my wallet, take all my cards. Trust me, I'm going to come back for these. These are very, very valuable to me. Trust me. And so she requests that very thing, a signet, the cord and the staff.

And these are marks of royalty. These are the only marks of Judah's royal identity. authority. This signet was used in a way, the signet and cord was something that he wore around his neck.

[19 : 57] That a signet would be rolled over clay, which the contract was etched in. And the staff was a symbol of one's identity, his authority, his power.

And essentially, this would be equivalent to essentially us going to the grocery store saying, I promise I'll be back. Here, take my wallet. Take everything that rests with my identity. And for some reason, you put your birth certificate in your wallet as well and your social security cards.

Everything that could claim his identity is given away. And as the section of passage wraps up, the climax of this narrative rests upon the deception, but also redemption of Tamar's offspring.

We see deception at its finest, but we also see redemption at its finest through Tamar's actions in verse 18. In verse 19, closes Tamar's scene returning to her garments of widowhood with a royal signet and staff in hand.

She's duped Judah, played on his sexual perversion, and she has officially taken matters into her own hands. Church, where is God in this passage?

[21 : 19] What in the world is God doing? Could it be that the most valuable treasure that God is seeing through is not what Tamar carries in her hands, the most valuable identity of possessions that Judah had to offer?

That's his entire life. Could it be that even that is not as much value as what she carried in her womb? That the Lord is seeing something that he's doing over the course of time and as he's guiding history.

We ask, where is God in this passage? What Judah intended to pledge was how God used a broken narrative of deception like this to pledge his promise to mankind.

And it doesn't end well for Judah, but in the scope of his redemption, it works exactly how God intended it to work out. And we see in the last section of passage a glimpse of the tapestry in verse 20.

Are there any anxious people out there? It's finals week at YSU. Are there any anxious people that can unite with me when we have those oh boy moments?

[22 : 49] Like, oh man, what's going to happen next? Or this next stage in life? This, oh boy, it's happening. I had that oh boy moment on the way home from our firstborn coming into a baby carrier.

You walk home with that child and you're just like, oh boy, it's on me now. Those nurses were really helpful, but this child's health and well-being is now in my hands.

Those oh boy moments. we see in verse 20. We kind of have an instance where Judah returns with his friend from this sheep shearing.

He's got this young goat and we see an oh boy moment coming for Judah. Something that God has ordained, orchestrated, and used, and saw through the actions of Tamar.

Looking for what his friend all of a sudden decides to, we see in our translation referred to, they're looking for a cult prostitute. This is known as also a shrine prostitute.

[24 : 03] This is a little higher of a status of a prostitute. And you see that their mission to preserve their identity is taking full front of the narrative.

narrative. She's not just a prostitute. Where's this shrine prostitute? Yeah, it's not just one of those lowly prostitutes, this is a shrine prostitute. And then what happens when they can't even find her?

She's missing, along with all of his identification markers. They say to keep quiet, lest people laugh at them.

Right? Something we learned in the series in the book of Judges, I believe, is that, strangely enough, we can try to cover our sin, but our sin is sure to find us out.

There's only so long that you can hide sin in darkness, and better for you to confess that sin, lest the light of God shine and bring it to light, and especially through the accountability of others.

[25 : 12] In verse 24, three months pass by. Tamar is beginning to show a little of the baby showing through her garments, and this only meant that she had committed immorality.

Strange accusation coming from a man with such sexual perversion, right? A man that basically just tossed a woman to the side, promises her the only, her daughter-in-law that I'll come back for you when she was born.

A man who pulls a prostitute off the side of the street and thinks it's okay to do a horrific act. Strange accusation, right?

You should sense the hypocrisy. How much more hypocritical could Judah be than to call out his daughter-in-law to, as this passage says, to be burned in verse 24.

She is pregnant with immorality. And Judah said in verse 24, bring her out and let her be burned. Brushing his own sin under the rug, he has the audacity to charge another woman to death.

[26 : 28] And not only that, if you could imagine, this isn't just Tamar anymore, there's two lives in view. There's her life and there's a baby's life. Judah has the audacity to call this woman, who he's deceived since day one, and to look at her in the eye as she's approaching him to put her to death, to see a small bump on her belly, to look at a daughter-in-law, he's deceived.

How hypocritical. It's at this moment that we start to see that oh boy moment happening in the life of Judah. We get a glimpse and we see a small peek at the justice through human actions that God is seeing through.

While there is no mention of God's direct intervention, it seems as if that tapestry may be coming together just as God saw it coming to be.

And so, unveiling his sin, Tamar makes her way to Judah, and it is on this journey that she is thinking that she's being led to her death, but in her hand is Judah's cord and signet and staff.

You can imagine the nerves, the cunningness of Tamar at this passage. And in verse 25 she reveals it all. As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, by the man whom these belong, I am pregnant.

[28 : 13] And she said, please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff. There's no mention of his faithful friend here at this moment, is there?

I can imagine that he's backing away from this narrative at this point, saying, oh boy, so we're just going to back up here a minute.

I don't know, Judah, I'm just a Canaanite man, I'm going to go back to my Canaanite ways. No mention of here at all. And then Judah in verse 26 identified them and said, she is more righteous than I, since I did not give her my son.

Sheila. And he did not know her again. It took 20 years for this man to come to grips. And like father, like son, you know the saying, like father, like son, like the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

We see and we can conclude that the wickedness of Judah's sons, of which brought judgment upon them and brought their sure death because of their wickedness.

[29 : 28] Ur and Onan were put to death. And we get a glimpse of that passing on of wickedness within a family for the world to see. And we trace it even back, like father, like son, the deceptive tendencies that existed before Judah even met Tamar with the deception of Joseph.

and reaching all the way back, stemming all the way back to Jacob's deception against Esau. We get a glimpse of the passing of deceptiveness within this family for the world to see.

And Tamar's crafty scheme against Judah seems to be a final round of repayment where Judah's deception is repaid with the deception that stripped Judah of any royal honor.

Making him an absolute hypocrite in front of everyone to see that even she was more righteous even in the act that she did against Judah.

There's no mention of God at all in this passage. However, it is as if God was calling Judah out of hiding. These generation after generation after generation, wickedness, deceptiveness, and sin.

[30 : 43] Wandering, wicked, deceitful Judah come out of hiding. And as for Judah, we get a glimpse of the tapestry of God in that this moment marks the first step towards Judah's later transformation that we see in Genesis 43 and 44.

And as for Tamar, forgotten, outcasted, broken, used, and abused Tamar, though she played upon Judah's vices, she is commended for her daring actions to expose Judah's wrong and build up her family.

Similar to the blessing of the elders that was given to Ruth, that she took human actions to actually see it through. And so just like that telephone game in elementary school, that message being passed on and becoming distorted throughout the years of wickedness in this passage, and deceitfulness, the message is preserved regardless of human failures, regardless of vices and shortcomings.

Church, how mysterious the plans of the Lord are. And how scandalous at times are the ways of man. But one thing is for sure, those who mask themselves under deception are sure to be found out.

They're sure to be found out. Fidelity truly will be brought forth through the providence of God. And so we can see clearly the tapestry of Judah and Tamar.

[32 : 25] What a chaotic mess, right, church? It's a difficult passage to understand and take in because of all the cultural dynamics that are involved in it.

Literally everything is chaotically running out of control from our perspective, but God's hand is guiding his providence and his will according to that which he alone decrees.

He knows what he's doing. This is the tapestry of Tamar and Judah. A forgotten woman, a deceitful man. Tamar, widowed by Ur, neglected by Onan, and left to die by Shelah and Judah.

However, through the crafty and risky efforts of Tamar, the Lord sees fit to bring the narrative back around to work for a greater purpose to bring Judah's sin to light, but also we see it was the sin of generations that providentially led to the salvation of man.

This was the tapestry intricately woven to center upon the life and death of King Jesus. Truly the Lord knows the masterpiece he is making.

[33 : 40] When all we see is incest, prostitution, infidelity, deception, scheming, sin after sin, sin on top of sin, sin under sin, sin, we know the Lord is still at work.

We are confident in that. And truly the Lord knows the masterpiece that he is making in our own lives. When all we see is a history of rebellion, of running from God, deception at times, sin on sin, sin under sin, sin with sin, having Canaanite friends, metaphorically speaking.

sin. But in our mess, he is still in control. Hopefully this Christmas we can reflect upon the significance of God's providence.

And when we do, we can be assured to see the glory of Jesus Christ arrival even more brightly. And equipping us to trust him even more.

It is through the illumination of the broken narratives of scripture that we see Christmas is truly about our unrighteousness. The generations leading up to the manger broadcast both the glory of God and the depravity of man.

[35 : 10] In fact, sections of passage that have troubling implications in our current day and age where we are just disgusted with men, disgusted with women, we need to understand that the Bible in these passages isn't necessarily about morality, but it's about depravity.

It is important to key into that theme within narratives like this. How could we not trust God in his providence? If Israel can be assured that God can accomplish his plan of salvation through disobedience and deception, how much more can we be assured that he is working all things out for our good?

As Romans 8, 28 says, we know that all things work together for good for those who love God. You see, the Bible is a story of God accomplishing his plans of salvation, even amid disobedience, even amid oppression, even amid suffering.

In Christ, we are assured of God's continued salvation for those who take refuge in him. And so Tamar joins Ruth in our progressing series of God's providence, and I hope that we can find great hope when we read Matthew all the more now.

In Matthew chapter 1, where it reads, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah, and Judah the father of Perez, and Zerah by Tamar.

[37 : 04] You want hope in hopelessness, church? Well, I hate to break it to you. You're not going to find hope in yourself. Man is deceptive.

Man plans selfishly. Man commits adultery, often as scripture highlights, and as King Jesus says, often with our eyes, more so than not.

And the plethora of other cringeworthy depictions found in scripture, we learn something about ourselves. That if you want hope in hopelessness, you're not going to find it in yourself.

Two words changed it all in Ephesians 2. But God. Ephesians 2.4 says, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, church, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[38 : 23] So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

It's narratives like these that prove, that prove to us that God is always in control. His fingerprints are upon the tapestry of Judah and Tamar.

And they are also upon the tapestry of your life as well. We have to ask, might there be hidden sin that we may be concealing from the world to see that may need your confessing, similar to the life of Judah and his generational passing along of sin?

This kind of passage calls us in our sinfulness and deception out of hiding. And allow the cross to do the work that it was intended to do.

Generational sin is one generation away from being continued, but it's also one generation away from being confessed and being dealt with.

[39 : 37] This type of passage should call us out of hiding in our sin. I want you to think for a moment as we come to a close. As sin continued to abound, even through and leading up to the life of Christ, we know that it was the same sin that put Jesus upon a cross.

And it was the cross by which God's salvation was made manifest and Jesus died for sin. Who are we to conceal the very thing that he died for?

And how often we can just almost play games with God and just go along our merry way, go to our paydays, go with our friends and all to distract us, to keep things quiet, lest our honor be completely bankrupt.

The good news, church, is that in Christ we are heirs of righteousness alone. Trust in this message of Jesus Christ and let the glory of Christmas shine brightly in our hearts this month and the years to follow as we understand that God has redeemed a broken narrative in the life of Judah and Tamar as we see the passage come to a close.

Afterward, his brother came out with a scarlet thread on his hand and his name was Zerah and Zerah accompanied Perez. These two men continued the lineage of Jesus and if the lineage to Jesus is continued and there's hope in Perez and Zerah, there's hope in Jesus that his death upon the cross is more than enough to cover all of our sin and this is God's redemptive plan and the tapestry, the grand tapestry of all that we see in our lives and the life within these passages in scripture.

[41 : 43] Let's pray as we reflect upon this broken narrative that God is redeeming. outro Zachary
ogl absolutely he absolutely