

A Different Kind of Mother's Day Sermon
Matthew 1:1-6

Dr. Steve Horn
May 8, 2011

Text: ¹ The historical record of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

² Abraham fathered Isaac,
Isaac fathered Jacob,
Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar,
Perez fathered Hezron,
Hezron fathered Aram,

⁴ Aram fathered Aminadab,
Aminadab fathered Nahshon,
Nahshon fathered Salmon,

⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab,
Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth,
Obed fathered Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.
Then David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife,

Introduction: Now didn't that just bless your soul? I bet most of you thought I indicated the wrong text, then read the wrong text, and now have caught my mistake and now am ready to admit my mistake and bring you to the right text. No—that's it. That's the text that God has led me to for this particular Sunday.

Let me explain why. You see a lot of preachers will be preaching today from Proverbs 31. Now, that's an appropriate text for Mother's Day and if you remember, one that I have preached from on a previous Mother's Day. If you are not familiar with the passage, it's the last chapter of Proverbs. Hear just a bit of it. My particular Bible gives it the heading, "In Praise of a Capable Wife." (10-15, 22-28)

¹⁰ Who can find a capable wife?
She is far more precious than jewels.

¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will not lack anything good.

¹² She rewards him with good, not evil,
all the days of her life.

¹³ She selects wool and flax
and works with willing hands.

¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from far away.

¹⁵ She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her servants.

²² She makes her own bed coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

²³ Her husband is known at the city gates,
where he sits among the elders of the land.

²⁴ She makes and sells linen garments;
she delivers belts to the merchants.

²⁵ Strength and honor are her clothing,
and she can laugh at the time to come.

²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and loving instruction is on her tongue.

²⁷ She watches over the activities of her household
and is never idle.

²⁸ Her sons rise up and call her blessed.
Her husband also praises her:

When I think of Proverbs 31, I think of what Liz Curtis Higgs said of this woman. “The ideal woman was described 2,500 years ago in Proverbs 31 and she is still intimidating her sisters ever since.” O.S. Hawkins said of this woman, “This wonder woman gets up before dawn and stays busy until the early hours of the next morning. We have developed a mental image of her. She has the looks of a movie star, the domestic abilities of a master chef, the stamina of a world-class athlete, the intellect of a professor with a PhD, the tenacity of a political operative, the wisdom of a godly missionary, the sensitivity of Mother Theresa, the business sense of a Fortune 500 executive, the grace of an etiquette expert and the spirituality of the Virgin Mary. Wow.” Then he concludes, “**No wonder so many mothers leave church feeling down on Mother’s Day!**”

It’s that comment that caught my attention. So, I began asking this question: “So, what about all of the mothers who are asking, ‘What if I don’t quite measure up to the Proverbs 31 woman?’” Is there any hope for me? Can God use me? And not just mothers. We all have times and circumstances in our lives when we ask this question? Is there any hope for me? Can God use me? Can God take me with all of my flaws, my sin, my sometimes lack of faith, my past, my pain, and use me?

We find our answer in our text today. That’s right. You might not have noticed but in our reading today, we find the names of four women (all Mothers): Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and though unnamed in this text, we know her name to be Bathsheba (Uriah’s wife).

What about these four women In Matthew 1?

Tamar—We find her story in Genesis 38. Now, let me just tell you that there is not a soap opera that has ever been on television that is worse than this tale. Here is the condensed version. Tamar is the daughter in law of one of the 12 sons of Jacob, Judah. Tamar was married to Jacob's first son- Er. Er died without Tamar having had a child. Tamar is then given to Judah's second son Onan in order to carry out the custom of the day and that is father a child with her. Onan died. Judah is concerned that his third son might die so he does not allow that marriage. So, without child, after Judah's wife dies, Tamar does the unthinkable. She dresses like a prostitute and propositions her father-in-law. He takes her up on the offer and she bears a son. One word describes Tamar's story--Desperate. Often our desperation causes us to make bad decisions. Tamar made one even though she thought herself justified in doing so.

Rahab—The second woman in Matthew 1 is Rahab. We find her story in Joshua 2. It is Rahab's house that is used by the spies to scout out the land of Israel before entering. Now, Tamar, was a one-time prostitute, but Rahab, when we meet her in Joshua 2, is a full-time prostitute. In fact, that is how she is described—Rahab, the prostitute. Often times in Scripture you will find these descriptions of occupation in a person's name. Matthew is the tax-collector for example. Rahab is identified a prostitute. In Joshua, we don't even learn that she had children. But now, we learn that not only did she have children, she gave birth to Boaz who would marry Ruth.¹ Rahab represents that kind of person who cannot dodge his or her past. Even in reformation and repentance, someone or something is always there to remind you of your past.

Ruth—We are probably more familiar with Ruth's story. There, after all, is a book named for her. Ruth's story is a story of tragedy—famine (1:1) leads to the death of all of the men of her immediate family (1:2, 5)—her husband, her father-in-law, and her brother-in-law. The tragedies allow us to see her devotion to her mother-in-law in returning to the land of Promise. But don't miss something here—Ruth is not an Israelite; she is from the land of Moab. Worse than being from the “wrong side of the tracks or town” as we might say, she was from the wrong line of people. The Moabites were from a line that started in incest and were a notoriously pagan and ungodly people. Like the Moabites some people cannot shake their roots.

Bathsheba—We are probably most familiar with Bathsheba's story. She is known for her sin with King David. Her story is really the story of King David's sin, but it takes two people to commit adultery.

So, there you have it. Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, pens the genealogical record of Jesus. In the record—four women—all outsiders, three of the four have what we would categorize as pretty checkered pasts. What do we learn?

Conclusion from these four: There is hope for me.

¹ There is some evidence that suggests that this might not be the same Rahab, but not enough to get bogged down in for this sermon. It seems to me that the overwhelming evidence supports that this is the same Rahab including the fact that Matthew assumes that his readers would identify with the Rahab that is known in the Old Testament.

3 Spiritual Truths about these four women in Matthew 1

- Stop Comparing yourself to others.
Here is the problem with comparing yourself to others. When you compare yourself with those whom you would consider better than, the result will be pride. When you compare yourself with those whom you consider to be less than, the result will be covetousness and envy. In either, the comparison leads to sin.
- Stop Allowing your past to control your future.
Don't let your past paralyze you. Confess your sin, claim God's forgiveness and righteousness to cover your sin, and live in that freedom. As we say in our Celebrate Recovery program, we all have hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Don't let Satan use these things against you. Just to give you proof of God's grace—we have great examples of God's grace in the ancestry of Jesus. The one who died to provide us the grace to be saved was born into this world by a long line who had already experienced His grace.
- Start Being the person God has called you to be.
God's grace does not give us a license to continue in our sin. Rahab's story serves as a great reminder of this truth. When confronted with the truth about the one true God, Rahab announced, "for your God is God in Heaven above and on earth below." This seems to be the beginning of her faith journey. A faith journey that the writer of Hebrews spoke of when, in his roll call of people of faith, he said of Rahab, "By faith Rahab the prostitute received the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed." (Hebrews 11:31) And, when the Apostle James was explaining the connection of faith to works he mentions Rahab as an example of one who displayed her faith by her works. (James 2:25)

So, Mom, what if you are not quite a Proverbs 31 woman? Be encouraged, God is going to use you. Maybe you will be to your children as Bathsheba was to Solomon—the wisest man who ever lived, some say.

And this is not just a message for Mom, it is for all of us.