

The Lord's Message: A Message for Cracked Pots: Faithfulness

Date: December 4, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Genesis 38: 1-19, 24-26 & Matthew 1:1,3

Last Sunday we started our Advent season with "A Message for Cracked Pots". We are looking at the genealogy of Jesus. One could make the assumption that all the people found in Jesus' family tree would be saints. After all, He is the Son of Holy God. We quickly discovered that even with the most faithful of people, Abraham, we are all sinners. The Good News is if we give our life to God then God can build up faith in us. This gives us Hope for what God can accomplish in our lives.

In every person's family tree are skeletons. I once asked my grandmother about our family history. She told me that my great-great-great-great grandfather was hung for stealing horses and my great-great-great-great grandmother drank too much shine and went to the outhouse, lit up her corn cob pipe, and blew up. I do not know if my grandmother was kidding, but I decided to not ask her any more questions about our family history.

Now the Bible, God's Holy Word, does not make light or gloss over sin. The Bible puts it right out in the open for all to read and learn about what sin is. In the Old Testament Cain killed his brother Abel all because God liked Abel's offering better than Cain's. Noah, after the flood, planted a vineyard and got drunk off his own wine. He laid there naked in his tent. When his son, Canaan, came in to his father's tent and saw him naked he ran and told his brothers about this. They went in and covered up their father. In the New Testament, the Bible does not gloss over Peter denying he knows Jesus three times or Judas' betrayal of Christ. Neither does it gloss over Saul, or Paul, rounding up people of the way, believers in Christ, and putting them in prison where they might be tortured or even having them stoned to death.

This morning the Holy Spirit is directing us to look at the life of a man who left his family, his faith, and his God. We are to ponder two questions this morning: What was the cause of this? Is restoration possible?

Let us pray.

Whew, what a passage of scripture that Larry just read. Judah is one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Each one of these sons would become the patriarch of a tribe of Israel. Judah would also be the patriarch of the lineage of royal kings starting with David and ending with Jesus. In this passage of scripture, Judah is far from his family, far from his faith and far from God. How did all of this happen?

The Bible sometimes does not give us a clear picture of how Judah fell from grace. We have to gently read between the pages. We must do this very carefully, so as not to say something that is not in the Bible or to come up with a different conclusion than what the Holy Spirit is directing us to.

I believe that Judah's fall from grace started with an act of jealousy. In **Genesis 37**, Joseph is the 11th brother and is highly loved by his father, Jacob. Jacob gives Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors. God gives Joseph dreams about how all of Joseph's brothers, father, and mother will bow down to him. This makes his brothers very upset. When Jacob sends Joseph out to check on his brothers, the brothers are filled with jealousy and rage. They hatch a plan to remove the coat from Joseph and rip it up and tell their father that a wild animal had attacked Joseph and all they found was this torn coat. After taking the coat, Joseph is tossed in a dry cistern. It happens that the brothers see a caravan of Midianite merchants. In **Genesis 37:26-27**, Judah tells his brothers that instead of killing Joseph that they should sell him as a slave to these merchants. This is what they do, **Genesis 37:28**.

When they get back home, they tell their father the story of the Joseph being killed by a wild animal. You could probably guess how Jacob reacted. You do not have to guess, because the Bible tell us in verses 34-35.

Now, we need to read between the lines. Judah sees the reaction of his father and regrets his decision to have Joseph sold into slavery. He is filled with remorse, but he is not willing to confess to his father what he has done. I believe that he does not want to be around the pain that he and his other brothers have inflicted, so he leaves the family. In turn, he runs away from his faith and God. He becomes a Canaanite, an idol worshipper. He goes to live with a Canaanite named Hirah. Biblical names are important. Hirah means liberty or anger. Judah thinks that he is liberated, but he cannot get away from sin. This causes him to be filled with anger. Removing himself from the family and God does not solve this problem. You can not run from sin. If you do not confess your sin, then there is no forgiveness.

Hirah hooks Judah up with a wife. She is most likely a Canaanite prostitute. We are never told her name. Only that she is the daughter of Shua. Shua means humiliation. She produces for him three sons named Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er means awake. Onan means pain. Shelah means petition. Er marries a Canaanite woman named Tamar. Tamar means date palm, like a fruit. She is very smart and cunning. We will find out about these traits later on.

Judah does not raise up his sons to know God. Instead his sons become part of the culture around them. A warning to all of us parents and grandparents. If you do not raise up your children or grandchildren to know Jesus, then the world will raise them for you. If you do raise your children or grandchildren to know Jesus, and if they then if run away from the Lord, God will always be at work to bring them back. This is found in the Bible in **Proverbs 22:6**.

The results of Judah not raising up his sons to know God are that they turn out very wicked and God takes the life of both of them.

Now Judah started out with three sons and God has taken the life of two. He is concerned for the life of his youngest son, Shelah. It is also his responsibility to provide for his first son's widow, Tamar. So, he tells Tamar to stay in his house until Shelah is old enough to be married. Of course, he is lying to Tamar.

Events unfold where Judah's wife dies. He mourns for her for the period of time. Shelah grows up and is of marrying age. He should become the husband of Tamar. Tamar sees that Judah is not fulfilling his obligation. She decides to take matters into her hands. I told you that she was smart and cunning.

She knows that Judah is going to the area where the prostitutes are located. I suspect the Judah often went there and this is probably where he found his wife and he may have even gone there when his wife was alive. Judah is not a very honorable man. Tamar knows this. Look at verses 13-16a.

Now payment has to be made for service rendered. Tamar knows this and look at verses 16b-18. Why is having his signet, cord and staff important to Tamar? The reason is presented in verses 24-26. Tamar is pregnant. This shows disloyalty to the family of Judah, her being with a man outside of the family. The punishment for this is death. Tamar knows that without a man, she will have no one to care for her. In this male dominated culture, a widow without a son cannot purchase food and other supplies to live and also has no place in which to live. With Tamar having Judah's signet, cord and staff, Tamar has not been disloyal to the family of Judah, but Judah has been disloyal to her, verse 26.

You might be thinking how can this troubled family lineage produce the great kings of Judah, David and Solomon? Or even how could Jesus come from this family lineage? The Good News is that through God and His Son Jesus, we can repent of our sinful ways and returned to God. Judah was living far from God. Judah was living far from his family. This sinful act awakened in him a desire to return back to God. God used this act to call Judah back to faith. At the end of verse 26, the Bible reads, “he did not sleep with her again.” Judah realized what he had done.

Later in the book of Genesis, we know that Judah went with the brothers to purchase grain in Egypt. So, Judah was back with the family. After Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he tells them to bring the entire family to Egypt. They are to settle in the area known as Goshen. Who does Jacob, his father, send to get directions from Joseph? **Genesis 46:28** tells us the person is Judah. Judah is now the son that Jacob depends upon. Judah is faithful to Jacob and faithful to God.

When Jacob is about to die, he calls in the family and pronounces blessing on all of them. In **Genesis 49:8**, Jacob says “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you.” Jacob says this because of the faith in God that Judah is now displaying.

Look at **Matthew 1:3**. This is all part of God’s wonderful grace. A once unfaithful Jewish man and a Canaanite woman are in God’s plan of redemption. God never gave up on Judah. Even though Judah did an atrocious act, when he repented, God restored him to faith. We will at some point in our lives wander away from our faith in God, but God will never stop loving us. This proves how much God loves each one of us. God takes cracked pots, and if we repent of our sin, God will restore us back to faith. Amen.