

Hope and Tamar

(Preached @ Footscray Baptist Church by Cheryl Williams, November 27th, 2022 - Matthew 1:1-4 & Gen 38)

Hopes, wishes, yearnings.

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, the theme of the day is hope. We wait in hope. The people in Isaiah's time wait in hope, hope that war and conflict would cease, hope that weapons of war could be turned into tools used in food production.

Generations hoped for a Saviour, a Messiah, a Liberator who would do these things. These generations are listed in our reading from Matthew. This is the family tree of Jesus and what is fascinating about the list is that it contains five women – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah and Mary. These women are the mothers and great-great-grandmothers of Jesus.

During advent I want to explore who these women are and why they are in the genealogy, a genealogy which actually has mainly men listed.

The list is there to show that Jesus has descended from David and Abraham, something important to Matthew's community.

So, the first woman we encounter is Tamar. Now there are two Tamar's in the Hebrew Bible. This one was a Canaanite and was married to Judah's son. Unfortunately, he died without having any children. This stopped the bloodline and according to their custom Tamar would marry the next son to see if there could be children. So, she married the next son and for some very complicated reasons he died as well. Judah then agreed that Tamar could marry the youngest son when he was old enough, she waited, Judah sent her back to her parents (which is something that should not have happened at the time) and then reneged on the deal. Tamar is now a widow and childless – something considered shameful, but the kind of person who should be looked after according to the law. She was very vulnerable, no doubt she hoped things would turn around for her, but she was realistic enough to know that this was unlikely to happen. With no power and no one to take care of her, she took things into her own hands, she went about fixing the injustice she experienced.

Judah has come to the Canaanite shrine (even though he was an Israelite, he practiced some of the Canaanite rituals) and looks for a prostitute. Tamar has disguised herself as a prostitute and sells herself to him. She is clever though, she retains some of his personal items. She becomes pregnant and Judah is furious (even though he doesn't know he is the father yet), as this shames his family. He owns her as part of his family, even though he has neglected her. He wants her killed. Tamar was too clever for him and proves that he is the father, by showing his belongings. He has been tricked. As he thinks about it, he remembers that he should have taken care of her, but he hadn't, and so he announces that he has been more wrong than her. So, Tamar, with her shady past is part of Jesus' family tree.

God uses the most unlikely people in great ways. Whilst this story is scandalous it helps us see that God turns things around. It reminds us all, that we should take care of the vulnerable and try to right injustice.

Tamar hoped for a better life and had to act for herself, she had to find a way to protest the injustice she had suffered due to her father-in-law's neglect.

Our Persian friends find themselves in a situation like Tamar – hoping for justice but needing to protest the injustice happening in their country.

We are about to watch a couple of videos about the situation in Iran and then I will invite some in our congregation to share their worries about the situation and their hopes. We will then pray for Iran and light candles in the hope that the light and peace of Christ might come to Iran.

- Videos

- [Aljazeera iranian crackdown on protestors - Google Search](#)

- [What the latest footage from Iran tells us about the regime – video explainer | World news | The Guardian](#)

- [WATCH: A look inside Iran's third month of protests as regime steps up deadly crackdowns | CNN](#)

- Sharing

Prayer time