

Leaving God and Forsaking Family

Gen 38:1-30



Background: What happens when a prominent leader in the community leaves God and forsakes his family for wealth and pleasure? It happens so often these days, it is easy to become callous, until it happens to you and your world is turned upside down. What do you do if you are the victim with no support? Who will rescue the family and confront the abuse? Tune in or come to church this Sunday and discover how God transforms his broken family through an unconventional source. (Please note: This text is not appropriate for children.)

Sermon Text: Gen 38:1-30 (NIV)

I. Judah: Leaving God and Family (38:1-11)

A. Judah's leaving and cleaving (38:1-5 adapted from ESV)

¹ Now it was at about that time that Judah went down, away from his brothers and pitched (his tent) beside an Adullamite man—his name was Hirah. ² There Judah **saw** the daughter of a Canaanite man—his name was Shua, he **took** her (as his wife) and **came** in to her, ³ and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. ⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. ⁵ Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.

B. The family line in jeopardy (38:6-11)

⁶ Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the Lord's sight; so the Lord put him to death. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother." ⁹ But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰ What he did was wicked in the Lord's sight; so the Lord put him to death also. ¹¹ Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's

household until my son Shelah grows up.” For he thought, “He may die too, just like his brothers.” So Tamar went to live in her father’s household.

II. Tamar Entices Judah (38:12-23)

A. Tamar takes matters into her own hands (38:12-14)

¹² After a long time Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him. ¹³ When Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep,” ¹⁴ she took off her widow’s clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.

B. Judah taken in by Tamar’s deception (38:15-19)

¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.” “And what will you give me to sleep with you?” she asked. ¹⁷ “I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,” he said. “Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?” she asked. ¹⁸ He said, “What pledge should I give you?” “Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand,” she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. ¹⁹ After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow’s clothes again.

C. Judah unable to find prostitute and retrieve his pledge (38:20-23)

²⁰ Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. ²¹ He asked the men who lived there, “Where is the shrine prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?” “There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here,” they said. ²² So he went back to Judah and said, “I didn’t find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, ‘There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here.’” ²³ Then Judah said, “Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn’t find her.”

III. Judah Exposed, Tamar Vindicated (38:24-26 verse 26 adapted)

*²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.” Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned to death!” ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. “I am pregnant by the man who owns these,” she said. And she added, “See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.” ²⁶ Judah recognized them and said, “**She is righteous, I’m not**, since I did not give her to my son Shelah. And he did not sleep with her again.*

IV. Tamar Restored by the Lord (38:27-30)

²⁷ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁸ As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” ²⁹ But when he drew back his hand, his brother came

out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named Perez.³⁰ Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions (pick 3)

- a. What good news did you hear from the service Sunday?
- b. "The real problem in this story is the damage done to community by Judah's demeaning of Tamar." People are separated from all other living things by being image-bearers of the living God. This is the foundation of everything we do, that all people have utmost dignity and value and represent the living God. Where in your life do you tend to forget this truth? (I.e. For me (Shawn), it's when I'm driving! It also reminds me of our conversations on race.) Discuss and write down your prayer in this area.
- c. Deception: When is deception wrong? When is it right? Discuss with your group this reality.
- d. Repentance: Judah's transformation begins with repentance. Repentance is not a one-time thing; it is an ongoing action. We keep repenting at deeper and deeper levels as Christ transforms us more and more into his image. If you are willing, can you name a place in your life where you need to repent (or maybe find your closest friend)?
- e. Judah was a failure in every way in this chapter. However, King Jesus will eventually come from him. What does this say about our God's grace? How does this give you hope for the future?