

Day 14 :: Feb. 18

Today we get an interlude in the long story of Joseph, son of Jacob. And the story that breaks up Joseph's famous story is one where a pregnant widowed prostitute is the hero, and Joseph's brother, great grandson of Abraham himself, is the villain. Goes to show that when it comes to scripture, don't assume anything.

Tamar is a poor widowed alien, the ultimate outcast that God says His people are to care for. She of anyone in scripture should be the recipient of the care and generosity of all of God's people, yet she is treated with disdain by this most godly and Hebrew of families. So, she decides to take care of herself. When her husband is killed, Hebrew law dictates that she should be taken in by the next oldest brother. When he denies her a family (which is the only retirement plan anyone in that day and age could have), he dies as well. So now the care of Tamar falls to the youngest son, who is way too young to care for her at all. So she waits. And when he finally comes of age to marry her, Patriarch Judah won't have it! By Hebrew law, the final obligation to care for this woman, to marry her and give her a family, fell to Judah.

The prostituting of Tamar with Judah looks a bit less dodgy when we realize that she is simply forcing Judah to follow his own laws when he refuses to. And even he recognizes this eventually, declaring her to be more "righteous" than he was. Yes, that's right: a poor widowed alien prostitute is declared right in the eyes of God, while the son of Israel himself is not. And the final kicker is that Tamar is an ancestor of King David, and ultimately of Jesus the Messiah.

Could it be that serving justice is more important than our spiritual heritage? Could it be that caring for the poor, the widow, and the foreigner among us could supersede our desire to be known, to look right, and our reputation? Could it be that God has something to teach us through Tamar?

And now, back to our regularly scheduled program...