

fit for a

KING

Jamari Rahab Ruth Bathsheba Mary

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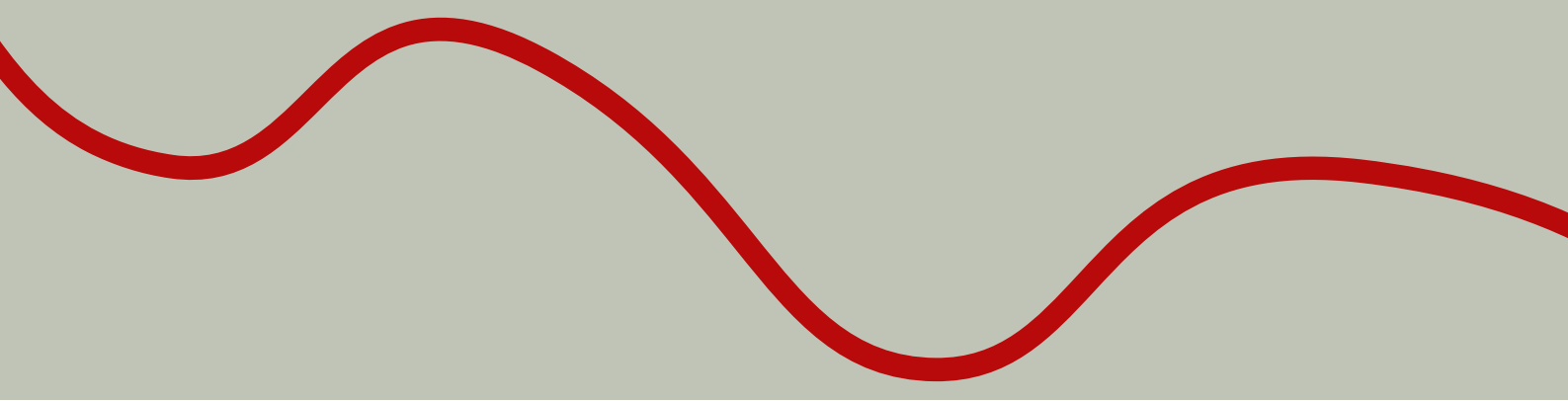
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FIT FOR A KING

Outsiders. Difficult pasts. Powerless.
Voiceless. Women.

There are five women mentioned in Matthew's account of Jesus's genealogy. In a time and a place that did not mention – or apparently particularly care about – the women in a person's lineage; when first sons were all that really mattered; when women were primarily valued for their ability to produce that first son, why did Matthew find it important to mention, not one, but five women when accounting the lineage of Jesus?

And not just any five women: five somewhat problematic women. Women whose stories aren't neat and clean. Women who don't necessarily fit in a nice, gift-wrapped package. While there were obviously many women in Jesus's lineage who weren't mentioned, why did Matthew pick these five? Of the five, three weren't even Israelites, God's chosen people. Four, maybe all five, would have been labeled as sexual sinners. They all would have made their Israelite neighbors uncomfortable. They were probably gossiped about, left out of social circles, and shunned. So why, we are right to ask, did Matthew include them in Jesus's genealogy?

Because even as outsiders, even though their culture would have cast them out, God's grace covered them. Where they made others uncomfortable, God redeemed their pasts and their futures. God gave them a voice, cared for their situations, and gave them a hope for a future. God took a woman who acted as a prostitute, a woman who was an actual prostitute, a foreigner, an adulterer/victim of rape, and a misunderstood virgin and made them fit for a king.

And he wants to do the same for you. Regardless of your circumstances or your past, He wants to redeem your story. This Advent Season, we will learn from the stories of these five women - Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary – what it means to be redeemed through Christ's hope, faith, joy, and peace, so that we, too, can be fit for a king.



TAMAR



WEEK 1: HOPE

CANDLE LIGHTING

Tamar had hoped to be a good wife. She had hoped to continue the line of her husband's family. She had hoped to fulfill her duty and find her place through the only way available to her: by bearing sons. But Tamar, a foreigner, widowed twice over and childless, had no place or voice in her society. At a time when her worth was measured by her ability to bear sons, and her future was dependent on that same ability, Tamar hoped audaciously and boldly.

Though she was mistreated by her two husbands and their father, she hoped in the future that had been promised to their family and the part she could play in that promise.

Tamar's story isn't simple or easy for us to understand, but here's what we do know: God honored Tamar's hope, she was called righteous, and she bore a son who continued the line of Judah – the line of Jesus. And Matthew saw fit to include her in his account of his lineage.

Today, on this first Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Hope. Let Tamar's story remind you to boldly hope in Christ. Ours is a living hope given us through the resurrections of Tamar's descendent, Jesus Christ, and a promised future inheritance that is eternal.

READING

- Genesis 9:18-27
- Genesis 37:1-38:6
- Genesis 38:7-19
- Genesis 38:24-30

QUESTIONS

After reading about and studying Tamar, what do you think about her actions? Why?

Tamar had been used, abused, and abandoned? Can you relate to Tamar?

Tamar had hoped for a son; what did God do for her?

Tamar kindled hope and acted on it; in what areas are you frustrated about waiting? How is God asking you to hope?

Like Tamar, we all have hopes and dreams for our future. What kinds of things do you hope for?

Read Isaiah 55:8-13. This first week of Advent, meditate and reflect on the hope of God.

RAHAB



WEEK 2: FAITH

CANDLE LIGHTING

Rahab was a prostitute. That is the ugly truth; she was a Canaanite prostitute. With men coming and going from her house, Rahab must have felt confident that the Israelite spies wouldn't be noticed when she invited them in. But when they were noticed, she boldly hid them from her own king.

Why? Why would Rahab the Prostitute do such a thing? It was, at least in part, because of her faith. Rahab showed through her words and actions that she was confident that the city

she lived in would become the Israelites' land, as God had promised them. Rahab showed more faith in this promise than generations of Israelites had, and Rahab was honored for this faith, grafted into not only the chosen people of God, but into the very line of Jesus.

Rahab the Prostitute became Rahab the Rescuer, Rahab the Prophetess, Rahab the Ancestor of Jesus. Today as we light this Candle of Faith, do you feel like you don't belong or that you're too messed up for God? In this Advent Season, consider Rahab, and put your faith in God and trust in his redeeming power for your future.

READING

- Joshua 2
- Joshua 6

QUESTIONS

What declaration does Rahab make about God?

What does she ask the spies for in return for helping them? How does this change her life?

Rahab and her family were locked within the walls of Jericho, waiting. In what ways are you "locked up"? Where is God asking you to have faith?

Read Hebrews 11:1, 31
In this second week of Advent, meditate on Rahab's faith and where God wants you to increase your own faith.

RUTH



WEEK 3: JOY

CANDLE LIGHTING

Ruth's story begins with a crushing tragedy – the death of her husband and both of his brothers, triggering a move from her homeland to a new place and a new people. An outsider, foreigner, and widow, Ruth had no place in her new community. But Ruth's faithfulness – her faithfulness to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and her faithfulness to her new God and people – turned her story of tragedy and isolation to one of joy and acceptance.

Ironically the daughter-in-law of the prostitute Rahab, Ruth became the great-grandmother to King David, and ultimately the ancestor of Jesus.

Today, as we light the Candle of Joy, remember that when life's trials and challenges seem to drag on with no end in sight and we wonder if God even cares, He continues to redeem our future. In our Advent reflection on Ruth's story, we're reminded that God does not forget his people and turns their sorrow to joy.

READING

- Ruth 4

QUESTIONS

What were the life-changing situations Ruth faced? How did she respond? When faced with trials - or even every day annoyances - how do you respond?

How did Ruth show bravery? How did this bravery impact Ruth?

Ruth was an outsider to the Israelites. Why do you think God selected her to be part of Jesus's lineage? Why do you think Matthew decided to include her in his written account?

Read Psalm 30:5. In this second week of Advent, reflect on the joy God brought through his son Jesus and his promise of continued joy into eternity. Where is God asking you to act that may increase your joy?

BATHSHEBA

WEEK 4: PEACE

CANDLE LIGHTING

Bathsheba was an Israelite woman, the daughter of an advisor to King David and the wife of one of his most trusted soldiers. Because her story is told through the lens of David and his sin, it's impossible to totally know the role that Bathsheba played in her own story. We do know that she was the wife of a soldier at a war that David himself probably should have been attending. We know that she was summoned to King David, the most powerful person in Israel, and that he lay with her and then had her husband killed.

For at least a time, Bathsheba's life was in chaos and turmoil. But we also know that through King David's repentance, Solomon was born, making Bathsheba an ancestor of Jesus.

Life is messy and filled with brokenness. Today as we light the Candle of Peace, let Bathsheba's story remind you why Jesus needed to come. Seek the truth of God's abundant forgiveness. Let's celebrate the peace Jesus brought through his birth.



READING:

- 2 Samuel 11 & 12

QUESTIONS:

There are different opinions about the role Bathsheba played in this story - whether or not David and Bathsheba's relationship was consensual. Reading through the story, what is your opinion?

The Israelites were in a time of war, and Bathsheba's situation certainly brought her more chaos. How was her situation brought from chaos into one of peace?

What does it mean to you that Bathsheba is included in Matthew's account of Jesus's lineage?

Read John 16:33. In this fourth week of Advent, reflect on the kind of peace Jesus promises. Where do you need to accept his peace in your life?

MARY



CHRISTMAS EVE: FULFILLMENT

Over the centuries, many ideas have been shared about Mary, many characteristics attributed to her, and often we forget that she was a real, flesh and blood girl and then a woman. She was a teenage girl from Nazareth who gave birth on a dirty stable floor; she was the terrified mom who scurried frantically through the streets of Jerusalem, looking for her lost little boy; she was the woman who had enough influence over Jesus to convince him to liven up a wedding with his first miracle of turning water into wine; she was the grieved mother who wept in the shadow of the cross.

She was very real. But she was also the mother of God incarnate. She boldly, bravely accepted the divine call on her life to give birth to Jesus, to raise him, and to stand at the foot of the cross while he was crucified. This divine call was countercultural - scandalous - and Mary would have been an outcast in her own community. Mary's radical obedience meant she was included in the fulfillment of God's promise to his people - to humanity.

On this Christmas Eve, read Luke 1 and reflect on Mary's prayer. Consider how Christmas is about the celebration of the fulfillment of God's promise to his people and his plan to reconcile humanity to himself.

Adapted from Mary of Nazareth: An Advent Reflection <https://juniaproject.com/mary-women-advent/>

FOR MORE READING

REFERENCES

We are so thankful for many great resources that helped craft and shape this Advent series. Following are a list of resources and references used to help create the study. These are great resources if you want to dig in any more on your own and read more about these amazing women.

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