

#97

December 15th, 2019

Third Sunday of Advent

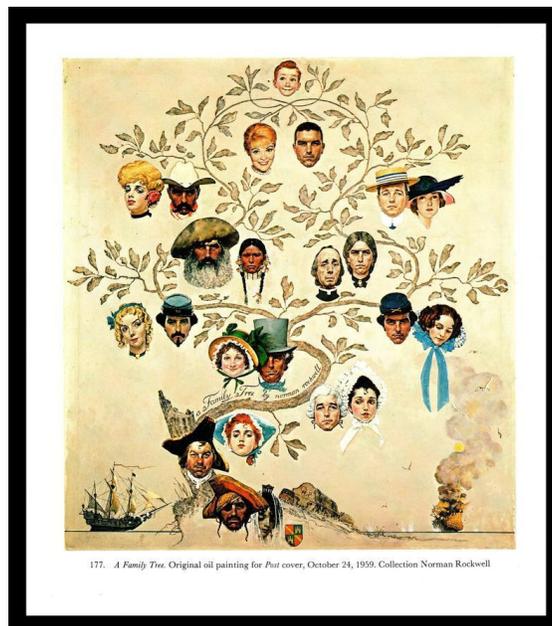
Unlikely Women Who Bring Glory to God: Bathsheba

1 Kings 1:11-21, 29 (ESV)

¹¹ Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, “Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king and David our lord does not know it? ¹² Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. ¹³ Go in at once to King David, and say to him, ‘Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying, “Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne”? Why then is Adonijah king?’ ¹⁴ Then while you are still speaking with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words.”

¹⁵ So Bathsheba went to the king in his chamber (now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending to the king). ¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed and paid homage to the king, and the king said, “What do you desire?” ¹⁷ She said to him, “My lord, you swore to your servant by the Lord your God, saying, ‘Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.’ ¹⁸ And now, behold, Adonijah is king, although you, my lord the king, do not know it. ¹⁹ He has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army, but Solomon your servant he has not invited. ²⁰ And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. ²¹ Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted offenders.”

²⁹ And the king swore, saying, “As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, ³⁰ as I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, ‘Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,’ even so will I do this day.”



Do you know your grandmothers? What do you know about your great grandmothers? Do you even know the name of your great grandmother's mother? What can you tell me about their lives?

There are several popular TV shows about researching genealogy. Perhaps the most well-known is "Finding Your Roots" hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. on PBS.

Many people get very interested in their genealogy tree wanting to know the names and stories of their ancestors. They want to know their roots. The Erbeles have a book that traces their lineage back to the early 1500's in Germany.

I have to stop and ask myself: If my children's grandchildren will not even remember my name, what is important for me to leave for future generations? What do I want to be carried on? How does God see my fleeting life? If God sees and knows me, am I fulfilling what I am called to be and do?

Matthew's Gospel starts with a long list of 42 generations of ancestors that lead to the birth of Jesus Christ. It has been called the forgotten chapter in the Christmas Story. Most of the names are names of men. It is expected. Genealogy was very important. In the biblical world a man had to know his tribe in order to survive and survival depended on knowing how you fit into your tribe. A man's status was proven by his genealogy. For a man in biblical days not to have a genealogy was the equivalent of a man today being caught abroad without a passport or losing his social security card.

Genealogy was used to settle land disputes and make sure land was not transferred to other tribes. Genealogy determined priesthood and the heir to the throne.

The same principle applies directly to the Christmas story. "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world . . . And everyone went to his own town to register." (Luke 2:1, 3) That meant that each man must return to his ancestral hometown—the town from which his family had originally come. The only way you could be sure about your ancestral hometown was to know your genealogy.

Matthew 1 establishes Jesus as part of the royal family of David, which was critical for any Jew wanting to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

It proves that Jesus Christ had historical roots. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law." Jesus had a human family tree. He had a mother and father and a history.

As a Hebrew writing, probably to Hebrews, Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. Why? So that the Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled. He also wanted us to know that Jesus did not just drop down from heaven like the Greek gods but that he was fully human with a long lineage.

In Genesis 12 God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. We know that blessing to be Jesus.

How many prophets talk about the Messiah, the Son of David, born in Bethlehem, the city of David? In 2 Samuel 7:13, God speaks to king David about one coming after him, "He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son." That was a categorical promise of God to the great king of his people. David thought God was talking about Solomon. Today we know who that King is.

Andrew's Uncle Tom took a DNA test and found out he has Indonesian relatives. My mother-in-law says that is quite possible. Her great grandfather was a sailor in the South Pacific before settling in New England. We all know what sailors do on shore leave after months on a boat.

A family tree can contain many surprises that we would rather not talk about. The Bible makes no attempt to varnish over the true character of individuals – even the ancestors of the sinless Christ.



We find 5 women included in Matthew's list. Like many of the men, they reveal a colorful past. We have looked at Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth.

We have seen that God can use us and redeem us from all situations. God is not afraid to come in to our messy lives and guide us into new life.

God's grace and redemption is available for all generations, in all places and in all people – even for you and me. That is why we so eagerly anticipate and celebrate Christmas lighting the candles of faith, hope and joy.

Today we come to the 4th woman. In this list she is identified as the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Who is she? Bathsheba.

We all know very well that a story can be very different depending on who is doing the talking. Just last week one of my teenagers said she was called to the principal's room. Of course, she was innocent. It was the other girls and she was just caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. It just happened that the ball jumped off the wall and hit the other person.

When I talk to couples in marital difficulties, I know I will hear different views of the same event. I have to ask myself: When I get into a disagreement, how often can say it is at least partially my fault.

There is much to be said about David, but today we are focusing on Bathsheba.

There is not a word in the Bible condemning Bathsheba.

There is no mention of love in the stories about Bathsheba. David loved his first wife, Michal and he loved Jonathan and people loved David. His previous marriages were for political alliances.

Bathsheba and David were married after Uriah was killed because she was carrying his child conceived in adultery.

The child died as the prophet Nathan had predicted. We do not know her reaction. She probably cried in agony as much as we know David did.

David went in to console her and they had a second son named Solomon. Years went by and as David grew weaker, she grew stronger.

In today's Scripture reading Adonijah, the oldest living son of David, claims the throne. He is popular and many agree that he should be king even though David is still alive. Because she was a step-mother and Solomon was a half-brother, this is very bad news. They were not even invited to the inauguration.

Nathan speaks to Bathsheba and she listen to him. I believe God has a plan and that our God is a Sovereign God. But I totally believe that our choices matters. We can choose how we will live, whom we will listen. For sure we can choose the way that can take so many detours and many bumps, if we refuse to listen to God. She listened to the prophet Nathan's advice. Bathsheba went into the room where David was in bed with a very pretty woman named Abishag.

David welcomed her and asked what she wanted. Following the advice of Nathan, Bathsheba developed a brilliant speech in which she warned David what was happening behind his back. *"My lord, you swore to your servant by the Lord your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne. But now suddenly Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it"* Bathsheba made David suspicious of Adonijah by describing the support of the army. She told him that only Solomon of all the children was loyal to David. She appealed to David's protective nature by telling him she feared for her life. Then she reminded David that he was still king and not Adonijah.

This was all that was needed to rouse David to pronounce Solomon as king and to step down. "As surely as the Lord lives, who has rescued me from every danger, your son Solomon will be the next king and will sit on my throne this very day, just as I vowed to you before the Lord, the God of Israel."

Bathsheba instantly became very powerful. She was the first queen mother in the history of Israel.

At first Solomon allowed his half-brother Adonijah to live, but the situation had to be resolved, and no-one knew this better than Bathsheba. Prodded into action by his mother, Solomon snuffed out the threat posed by his half-brother by ordering his death. There was no trial, just a swift execution.



Suppose you could pick your family tree the way you pick a Christmas tree. What kind of pedigree would you pick for yourself? Would you have a lot of shady characters and unwed mothers? One baby did pick his own pedigree and look what he chose: an ordinary human family with scoundrels and saints mixed together! God chooses you with your shady past to be part of His kingdom. Your sins do not prevent God from using you.

What prevents you from serving God and being a part of His plan? What is preventing you today from giving your heart and life to God?

When you read the stories of these ancestors, the hero of this story is God. His grace shines through the blackest of human sin as he chooses flawed men and women and places them in Jesus' family tree.

We don't know about every person on this list, but of the ones we know about, nearly all of them had notable moral failures on their spiritual resumes.

This genealogy of men and women includes liars, murderers, thieves, adulterers and harlots. It is by no means a "clean" family tree and is a stinging rebuke to judgmental self-righteousness.

Jesus was born into a sinful family. He came from a long line of sinners. Why? So that the grace of God might be richly displayed.

This genealogy is in the Bible to let us know that he had a background a lot like yours and mine. He called himself "the friend of sinners," and he said he didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He said, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." (Luke 19:10)

No matter what your past looks like, or your present feels like, no matter where you've been or what you've done, God can give you a fresh start.

Four Unlikely Women: Tamar, Rahab the Harlot, Ruth, Bathsheba.

They are pictures of incest, immorality, prostitution, lying, deception, adultery, political intrigue. Three of them are Gentiles. All four are in the line that leads to Jesus Christ!

If you come from a family like this, you can't exactly boast of your heritage. When you read the stories of these four women—and of the men on the list—you aren't supposed to focus on the sin, but on the grace of God.

It's almost Christmastime and many will be traveling home to spend time with families. Some of you don't feel too good about that. You would rather not be going home this year, but you have to. You may have family members who embarrass you. Some of you are going to have to spend time with people who have hurt you deeply in the past. Fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts and grandparents and distant relatives. Some of them you'll be glad to see. The others? Some of them you'd rather not ever see again.

Jesus understands the way you feel. He came from a disreputable family. His family tree was decorated with notable sinners. He knows what it is like to have relatives who embarrass you. He knows all about a dysfunctional family situation.

There is a lot of dysfunction in Jesus' family tree. There is a lot of brokenness and a lot of pain. He knows exactly what you are going through this year at Christmastime.

This unlikely list of unlikely people may be the greatest chapter on the grace of God in all the Bible. In these forgotten names from the past God turns the spotlight of his holy grace on fallen men and women, and through their lives, we see what the grace of God can do.