

Prayer

Inspire us, Lord Jesus, by the simple beauty of your life; lived so long ago but so powerfully close to us now, by grace. Lift our spirits to fly higher than they have flown before, so that on eagle's wings we catch a vision of our world from Your eyes and live inspired by that sight. Then in all we do, may we be faithful, kind, confident and strong in our witness to the Gospel by which we were saved. We pray this in Your name, Lord Jesus; AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Justice

Pray for regions of the world where there is a lack of confidence in justice, and crime grows, creating a society of fear and violence. Pray for the victims of such violence.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for the people who live near you or in your street*
- *Pray for local shops & businesses*
- *Thank God for the good work done by Christian children's workers.*

Meditation

Lord Jesus Christ, You are love ...
and our hearts are fed by Your compassion:

Lord Jesus Christ, You are peace ...
and we rest in the intimacy of Your care:

Lord Jesus Christ, You are joy ...
and our spirits are enthralled by Your presence!

Lord Jesus Christ, You are power ...
and we are privileged to serve in Your strength:

Lord Jesus Christ, You are wisdom ...
and our minds are thrilled by Your knowledge.

Lord Jesus Christ, You are God
And we are blessed to be called Your servants.

Bible Study - Matthew 1:1-6(b)

¹ *A genealogical record of Jesus the Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:*

² *Abraham was the father of Isaac,*

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,*

Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ *Ram the father of Amminadab,*

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ *Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,*

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

*Obed the father of Jesse,
6 Jesse the father of King David,
David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.*

Review

Yesterday, we began our study of Matthew's Gospel by looking at the title of Jesus, which is given as; 'the Christ, son of David, son of Abraham' (1:1). Today, we continue our study by looking at a major feature of Jesus' genealogy which is the four women who are in it, each of them breaking into the flow of 'father to son' within the genealogy. It is commonly thought that each woman represents a scandal in the story of God's people and therefore prepares us for the story of the scandalous 'virgin birth' of Jesus. The scandals are that Tamar bore her sons by incest, Rahab was a prostitute, Ruth was a foreigner (a Moabite) and Bathsheba bore Solomon to David after adultery. This may be true, but Matthew may not have been concerned about this. He was concerned to ensure that the early Christians understood who Jesus was, and these women do in fact help us understand more about God's plan of Salvation through Jesus.

Tamar - Tamar's story in Genesis 38 is about the faith of a woman which secured the lineage of Judah. She was married Judah's son Er, who died after committing sin. Tamar was then married to Er's brother Onan (a practice called 'Levirate marriage'), and he then died because of sin (Gen 38:7-10). It was Judah's responsibility to provide an heir through his sons but he seemed oblivious to this, but Tamar understood. She disguising herself as a prostitute, became pregnant by Judah, and then exposed him as the father before bearing the twins Perez and Zerah (Gen 38:27ff) who continued Judah's line (1:3). It is interesting that Tamar's story reminds us of Sarah, who had to tell Abraham to be obedient to God (Gen. 21:12); of Rebekah, who bore the twins Jacob and Esau; and of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife who bore Joseph and Benjamin. So Tamar represents the faithful women through whom God secured the Covenant promise through the line of Abraham.

Rahab - Rahab is the prostitute from the story of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 2 and 6. She recognised that Israel's God would overrun Canaan and provided shelter for Joshua's spies before the famous battle of Jericho. Her reward was to be saved from death when Israel came to fight against Jericho, and she provided the signal for the fall of the city. Now it was popularly held in Jesus' day that Rahab was one of the great 'beautiful women' of ancient times, who though a Canaanite, was made righteous by her actions (see Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25). Her inclusion is an example of the unexpected choice of God, and also an example of faith that waits on God.

Ruth - The story of Ruth is a charming love story through which the inheritance of an Israelite man was saved. Ruth, faced with the tragedy of the loss of her husband and other relatives during a time of famine, refused to abandon her Israelite mother-in-law Naomi, staying faithful to her by returning with her to Bethlehem despite danger, poverty and lack of security. She took matters into her own hands and with help from Naomi secured the affections of a wealthy relative Boaz. In this way Ruth secured both the family line and also the well-being of Naomi and became the great-grandmother of King David. Ruth placed her trust in the Lord and was rewarded for that faith.

Bathsheba - 'The wife of Uriah' (1:6) is Bathsheba, with whom David had an adulterous affair (2 Sam 11,12). The consequences of this are an important part of Israel's heritage, and Psalm 51 which describes David's later remorse has a central role in the life of church to this day. The whole story is a reminder to us that however great a King he was, David was not perfect. There is only one perfect character in the Bible, and that is Jesus! At the end of David's life, however, he failed to make sure that Solomon was anointed King in his place. Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:16) then risked her life to remind David of his promise that the crown should go to Solomon, according to God's Word. Solomon then became the King

who built the great Temple in Jerusalem, and it was Bathsheba who was used by God to ensure that David on the right track for the fulfilment of His plans for Jerusalem.

Matthew had enough of the wisdom and Word of God to recognise that these women represented not just themselves, but many others in the salvation history of God's people. He may well have included them because their stories were well known, but that only serves to illustrate the point, which is that women have an important role in the genealogy of Jesus. They illustrate characteristics of faith and humanity within the our genealogy!

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What do the stories of the women teach you about faith, and the purposes of God through the Messiah?
2. Are there other women who you would 'vote for' as worthy of inclusion, if you were writing the genealogy?
3. What are the redeeming features of the men who are shown up by these women?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The women in the genealogy lighten up the first few verses of Matthew. They give the story humour and warmth, and a sense that we are touching real human history. Without their presence, how easy it would be to say that the genealogy was contrived and too perfect! Jesus was born into a human ancestry rich with the history of God's people.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Is the Bible too dominated by men? Some people think that male dominated attitudes make the Bible difficult to read. Spend time reflecting on what you think about this.*
- *Share what you have learned about the genealogy and the women in it with someone else in your church. Explaining it will help you understand it!*

Final Prayer

Come to us now, O God;
Receive our praise,
Hear our confessions,
Forgive us our sins,
Raise us up in faith
Strengthen us in hope
Re-make us in holiness
Set us on Your pathway
So we will see You again in glory!
AMEN!