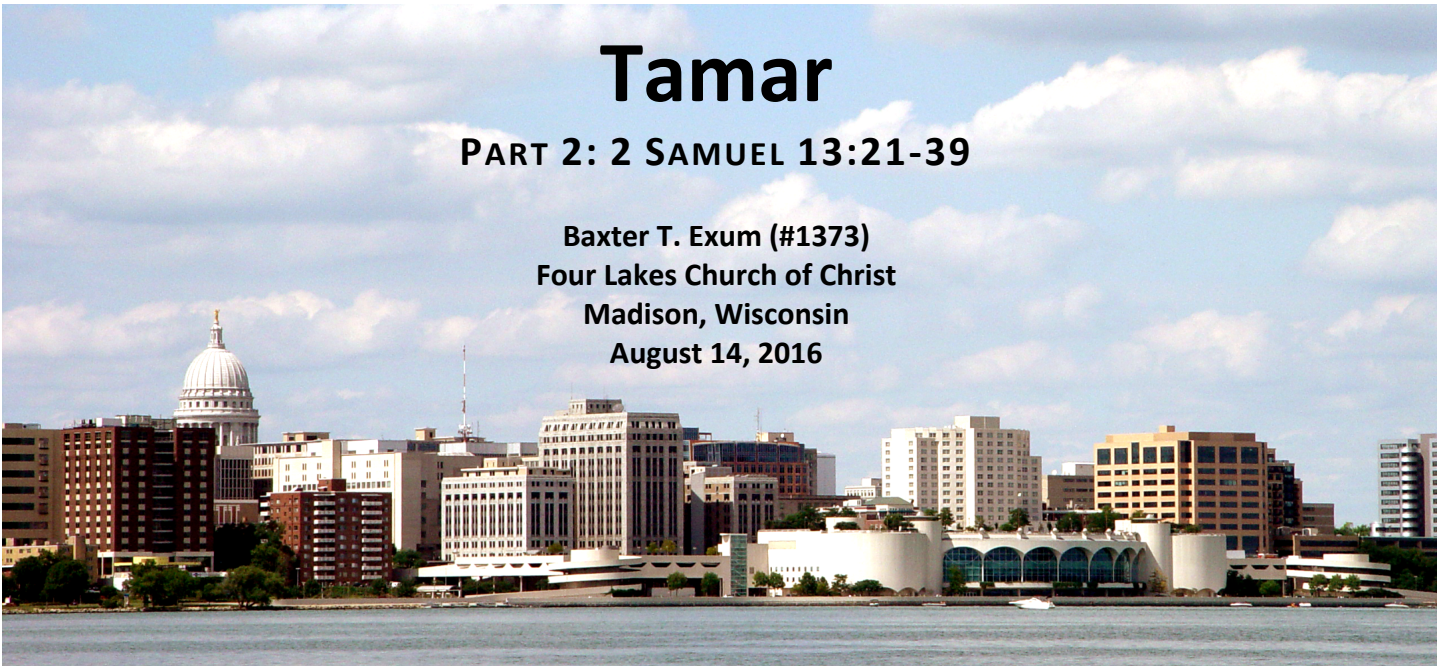


Tamar

PART 2: 2 SAMUEL 13:21-39

Baxter T. Exum (#1373)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
August 14, 2016



If you were with us last week, then you know that we started a two part series on Tamar. This is a part of a much larger summer series focused on some of the more interesting women in the Bible. And although Tamar is not exactly the star of this chapter, one of the women of this congregation has asked that we study some lessons based on this tragic chapter in Tamar's life. As we learned last week, Tamar was an incredibly strong young woman, and we would certainly expect this, as she is the daughter of King David.

By way of review, I'm putting the chart on the wall up here again, primarily as a reminder of what happens in this chapter. In the first twenty verses, we have Amnon (King David's firstborn son), and this young man thinks he is madly in love with his sister, Tamar – with, again, Tamar being the daughter of King David, but by another of David's four wives. Amnon is torn up by this struggle that is going on in his own mind. He wants his sister, but he seems to know that it's wrong. However, just as he is struggling with this, the text tells us in 2 Samuel 13:3, ***“But Amnon had a friend...”*** That friend, of course, is Amnon's cousin, Jonadab, and Jonadab pretty much tells Amnon to just go ahead, “Do whatever it is that will make you feel good!” [paraphrased]. And even beyond that, Jonadab helps Amnon develop a plan, a plan that Amnon (very unfortunately) carries out against the wishes and despite the strong objections of his sister.

Last week, then, we had a one-point sermon! And the main idea last week ****PPT**** came from that statement in verse 3, ***“But Amnon had a friend.”*** And we learned that sometimes our friends (or those we think are our friends) will sometimes try to lead us down a very dark path. We studied Paul's warning about the danger of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, the danger of being dragged along by the neck as we are tempted to sin. We studied King Solomon's warning in Proverbs 13:20, ***“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”*** Amnon was indeed ***“the companion of fools,”*** and he certainly suffered and caused much suffering because of it.

As we come back to the second half of 2 Samuel 13, we pick up with verse 21. Again, up to this point, Amnon has assaulted his sister, he immediately turns on her and kicks her out of the house, Tamar makes it as public as she can (in her own way, so that others will know what has happened), their brother Absalom comes on the scene and seems to perhaps be plotting some kind of revenge as he tells his sister to keep this to herself. And that brings us to 2 Samuel 13:21. Last week I said we'd be looking at a lesson for parents as we look at how King David handles this situation. Let's look, then, at what happens next, in 2 Samuel 13:21-39,

21 Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry. 22 But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar. 23 Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold now, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant." 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be burdensome to you." Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Absalom commanded his servants, saying, "See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." 29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 Now it was while they were on the way that the report came to David, saying, "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left." 31 Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants were standing by with clothes torn. 32 Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, 'all the king's sons are dead,' for only Amnon is dead."

34 Now Absalom had fled. And the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain. 35 Jonadab said to the king, "Behold, the king's sons have come; according to your servant's word, so it happened." 36 As soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted their voices and wept; and also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

37 Now Absalom fled and went to Talmi the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. 38 So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 The heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

Last week, I said we would be looking at David's reaction, and that is exactly what we've done. Did you notice what King David did here? His son assaults his daughter, and King David does nothing! And as with last week, today's lesson will also have one point, and the point is: King David does nothing! As a father of both the perpetrator and the victim, David does nothing! As a king ruling over this situation, David does nothing!

Going back up to the first few verses in this passage, we find in verse 21 that King David was ***"angry."*** In fact, he was ***"very angry."*** But that anger did not translate into doing anything! In fact, we find in verse 23 that this goes on for two full years. It almost seems that David is rather clueless as a father. During this time, the text says (in verse 22) that, ***"...Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar."*** As parents, can we even imagine one child not talking to another

child for two years? Admittedly, there have been times (in the early years) when I have thought that that might be a welcome relief, but this is between children who seem to be adults at this point. One is so angry against the other that they do not speak for two years. And David (as a king and as a father) does nothing.

Now in my mind, I'm asking the question, "Why?" Why does David not speak up here? Why does David not step in and punish Amnon for committing this horrific act against his own sister? I mean, here is a young man in a position of privilege, a position of power, who allows his lust to get completely out of control, even to the point that he uses his power to take advantage of someone much weaker, and then he immediately takes steps to cover up the crime! Does that sound familiar? Who are we talking about here? We are talking about Amnon taking advantage of his sister. But aren't we also talking about King David himself and the sin he committed against the young woman Bathsheba? As Amnon grew up, this (in his mind) is how kings treat women. I would suggest, then, that King David was severely handicapped here, in that he was leading his family from a position of great moral weakness. The king's affair with Bathsheba was well known, not only all throughout the kingdom, but certainly in the king's own family. David is most likely thinking to himself, then, "How can I discipline my son, when he was actually just following my example? I would be a hypocrite to discipline my son over this." As parents, we need to be aware of this, that our own behavior might actually undermine what we are trying to teach our children. If we want our children to grow up to be faithful spouses, if we want them to avoid various addictions and destructive behavior, if we want them to grow up to be generous well-adjusted members of society, then we need to be so careful about our own behavior. I would note, though: Just because we have made mistakes as parents doesn't mean we can't bring up our children in the right way. Ideally, David should have acknowledged his sin to his own son and then should have explained that just as God punished me, so I must also punish you. But that is not what happens. So, the point here is: David does nothing, and part of the reason might be that he knows that he personally has been a terrible example.

And so, during this two-year period (as David does nothing), the tension is building. One child assaults another, and dad seems to be ignoring the situation. Can you imagine what that must have been like? For two years, there is no justice. For two years, there has been no restitution. For two years, Tamar has pretty much lived in hiding with Absalom. How often do you think David saw Tamar during that period? I'm assuming they would see each other from time to time. But can you imagine facing your daughter knowing that you have allowed this to happen (not only allowed, but even pushed her into it, telling her to go and make that food for Amnon), with both of you knowing that nothing has been done about it?

And then on the other side of this, how do we think David is interacting with Amnon on a daily basis? With Amnon being next in line for the throne, I'm assuming there must have been some kind of communication from time to time. But as a dad, how can you possibly pretend that everything is okay when this young man has brutally taken advantage of your little girl, his own younger sister. That is a messed up situation. In fact, most of us can hardly even imagine living in a family like this. The whole family would be in a constant state of emotional chaos. Sometimes today we talk about there being an "elephant in the room." There is an elephant in Jerusalem! There is an elephant in the king's palace. And the king himself does nothing.

So, after two years, we find that Absalom takes matters into his own hands as he makes plans to avenge his sister. He now has the cover of time (two years has gone by). And in his plan, he also has the cover of distance (he plans this revenge for a location about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, just far enough out of town to give him a good head start as he flees from the king). The plot revolves around what seems to be some kind of sheep shearing festival. And as you can imagine, in a nation led by a former shepherd, this was a big deal. In my own mind, I imagine something like our county fair, a huge celebration.

And as he hatches this plan, he starts by approaching the king as he invites David to join the festivities. David declines and explains that his presence at such a gathering would be too much of a distraction, a burden. And yet by inviting the king, Absalom has given the impression that this is legit, that he has nothing to hide. Once David has turned down the offer, Absalom then asks King David to allow Amnon to attend. At this point, David seems a little suspicious (in verse 26), ***“Why should he go with you?”*** Notice, though, Absalom ***“urges”*** his father to allow this. Some translations translate this literally as Absalom ***“breaks through”*** to his father to allow this. In other words, he is insistent, and his father gives in. As parents, have we ever been “broken down” by our children to allow them to do something that we have questioned at the beginning? I’m not judging, because I know that parents can get “broken down” by a 3-year old! Absalom urges his father, and King David gives in. So the plan is on track as Amnon (the next in line to the throne) is now an honored guest.

At this feast, however, Absalom commands his servants to wait until Amnon is drunk, and when he is drunk, Absalom will give the command, and the servants will put him to death. This is exactly what happens. With Absalom at a safe distance I am sure, the servants kill Amnon, and the rest of the king’s sons run for their lives.

At this point, there is some confusion as to what has happened. The first report to reach King David is that all of his sons are dead (except for Absalom). In verse 31, the king gets up, tears his clothing, and lies down on the ground. By the way, this is probably what should have happened two years earlier!

Ironically (and perhaps according to Absalom’s plan), Jonadab is the one who comes in to clarify that only Amnon is dead. Remember: Jonadab is the one who gave Amnon the bad advice that led to all of this. Jonadab announces that Absalom is responsible. And what is especially interesting to me is how in verse 33 Jonadab seems to be comforting the king, ***“No therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, ‘all the king’s sons are dead,’ for only Amnon is dead.”*** So, the way this is reported (perhaps by Absalom’s design), the death of Amnon is spun as “good news.” “Good news,” King David, “only Amnon is dead!”

At this point, Absalom runs for his life, and the text tells us that he flees to Geshur. Talmai, the king of Geshur, was the father of Maacah, Absalom’s mother (2 Samuel 3:3). Absalom, then, flees to his maternal grandpa’s house, to his grandfather who is the king of a neighboring nation. This means, of course, that he and his father are separated. David mourns, then, not only for Amnon, but also for this break in the relationship between himself and Absalom. I hope we understand what is going on here: The evil seems to be multiplying – David with Bathsheba, Amnon with Tamar, now we have the murder of Amnon, and now David, instead of going after Absalom, seems to be ignoring this as well, and that will lead to some very difficult times for the nation in the next several chapters.

Conclusion:

So, the main idea this morning is that King David does nothing. The question we’re left with, then, is: What SHOULD David have done? As we close our thoughts on this chapter, I would like to suggest two things David should have done.

First of all, as we think about everything the Bible teaches elsewhere concerning the raising of children, it seems to me that David probably should have spent more time simply getting to know his children, being with them. Some have suggested that perhaps David was preoccupied with leading the nation. This would certainly not be the first failure of a public leader with his own family. We think about Eli and his children. We think about Samuel and his children. And we are not expressly told this in this passage, but it seems, at least to me, that there are some huge red flags here that David should have seen, if he had only paid attention. Maybe

anybody could have missed this, but it seems to me that David perhaps should have should have seen, first of all, that his son was madly in love with his daughter. Secondly, it seems to me that he probably should have noticed that there was something seriously wrong after the assault (we have the ripping of sleeves, we have one son mad at the other, we have people not talking to each other for two years, and so on). And then finally, King David probably should have really paid more attention when the son who really hated the other was taking him to a sheep shearing party way out in the middle of nowhere.

As parents, we have a responsibility to know our children as best we can. Obviously, if our children are hiding something from us, there is only so much we can do, especially as they get older. But on the other hand, we see the value here of spending time together, getting to know each other. And this takes more than just time. Yes, time is involved, it cannot be done without spending time together, but many times what we think of as spending time with our children may be very good, but we are not really communicating. Maybe we're watching a movie together, maybe we're on the sidelines at a game, maybe we're there watching them perform a concert, or whatever. Those things are good, but we might not be communicating. There is a need, then, to really get to know what's going on, as best we can. And it seems to me that if David had simply opened his eyes, if he had been aware, so much of this could have been prevented. So first of all, we need to spend time really getting to know our children.

There is a second application to this morning's passage, and that is: Once he was aware, King David should have done something! Instead of doing nothing, he should have done something! In so many other areas of his life, King David was known as being proactive, he was known as somebody who could get things done, he was a mighty and decisive warrior, as a young man he took on a giant, in his later years he stockpiled the materials to prepare for the building of God's temple. Normally, when David saw a problem, he tackled it. But at home, all of that fell apart. At home, David did nothing. And some of these problems were ignored and dragged on for years.

As parents, we know that consistent, loving discipline at home is hard. Discipline is hard work! We find at the beginning of this passage that David was angry. Anger can be good. If one child brutally attacks another child (as Amnon did to Tamar), anger in a parent can be good. Anger can stir us to do something. But in David's case, he got mad, and then did nothing. Now as parents, we need to be very careful not to discipline in anger. We need to calm down so we don't fly off the handle. But when the anger subsides, we actually need to do something, and we need to do it fairly and consistently. The punishment needs to fit the crime.

So many times, I've heard parents get mad and then make some outrageous threat, "I'm going to ground you for a year," "You will never again drive the family car," "I going to burn all of your toys," or whatever. Then, the kid whines, the parent backs down, and the kid has learned a terrible lesson: If I whine loud enough, I will get my way. We see this all the time in Wal-mart or at the grocery store, "So help me, if you don't stop that, I'm going to (whatever)." The kid continues, "whatever" never happens, and the kid has learned that mom or dad is not serious. They learn that if they whine long enough or scream loud enough, mom or dad will cave. That is not a lesson that will help them as they move forward into adulthood. Instead, as parents, it is so important that we stay calm, that we come up with some effective and natural consequences, and that we stick with it in love. One consequence I read this week was for a young man who punched his brother. Instead of lashing out in anger, the parents very calmly explained that he would be making his brother's bed for the rest of the week. I love that – a natural consequence! As Solomon says in Proverbs 29:17, ***"Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul."*** And as Paul says in Ephesians 6:4, ***"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."***

So the lesson this morning is: In response to this terrible act against Tamar, King David did nothing; but instead of doing nothing, 1.) He should have known his children better, and 2.) He should have done something – he should have disciplined Amnon in a way that would have brought at least some sense of justice.

As we close, I'd like to express my thanks to the one who asked that we study Tamar, and I'd also like to give everyone here an invitation. This is an invitation that comes not just from us, but from the Lord himself. We are inviting you this morning to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life. We do that by believing his word, the Bible, by turning away from sin, by confessing him publicly as being the Son of God, and by allowing yourself to be buried with him in water for the forgiveness of your sins. At that point, the Christian life begins. If you have any questions, if you would like to study the scriptures, we hope you will let us know. But if you are ready to obey the gospel immediately, I would be glad to talk with you right now as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com