

Date: February 18-19, 2023
Title: *Hidden Hurts #7 - Abuse (Tamar)*
Scripture: 2 Samuel 13
Speaker: Kurt Bjorklund

Good morning. It's good to be together. I just want to reiterate something that you should have heard earlier, if you have young children, this would be a great weekend to take advantage of Kidzburgh. The content of this message may drive some questions. The flip side is, it's probably never too early to start talking about some things, but if you don't want to have the conversation today, Kidzburgh is available.

I will give you just a couple of moments, if you want to take your child(ren) to Kidzburgh, by highlighting a Wednesday night service in the Chapel. This Wednesday begins what's traditionally known as Lent, Ash Wednesday. So, we will have an Ash Wednesday service in our chapel on Wednesday night, and then every Wednesday night for the next seven weeks until Easter week. Good Friday week, there will be a 45-minute gathering meditation in the chapel. Different staff will be leading this time, it'll be a great way to focus on the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Again, that'll be Wednesday nights, 7:00 pm in the chapel at the Wexford campus. It will also stream online, but only on one platform. Normally we stream on multiple platforms. But these Lenten services will only stream on church online, which is live.orchardhillchurch.com and only during that time, it won't be preserved to replay later. So, we actually have to get there at 7:00 pm to partake in it, which will be a great way just to consider this season and all that it's about. I just want to encourage you to know that that's starting this Wednesday night.

Let's pray together, God, as we come here today to continue just to look at your word and how it relates to the hurts that we have. I pray especially that you would speak to any of us who have walked through this dark journey. And, God, I pray that you would let my words reflect your word in content, tone, and emphasis. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've been in this series that we've called *Hidden Hurts*, the idea has been really simple, many of us portray ourselves not in a bad way or a pretend way as people who are happy and together. Yet underneath there are often hurts that we carry.

Today we're going to talk about one that probably is more hidden than most, the idea of abuse. The reason I say that this can be more hidden than many other hurts is because this is one that sometimes even the people closest to you don't know the depth through which maybe you've had to walk. Maybe you haven't even told your spouse, people who you grew up with, or even your best friends. It is not that you've

tried to keep it from people or you wouldn't talk about it. It's just it hasn't been probed in explored in a way that it felt like it was something that needed to come out.

So today we're going to talk about abuse. According to one research-based data, 1 in 5 women, in their lifetime, will have experienced either an attempted or complete rape. 24.8% of men will experience some kind of sexual violence at some point in their life against them. 81% of women and 43% of men will have experienced sexual harassment. 1 in 3 women, who have experienced either an attempted or a completed rape will experience it between the ages of 11 and 17. 1 in 4 men, who experienced sexual violence, will be subjected to it between the ages of 11 and 17.

The total number of people in 2018 who experienced either an attempted or completed rape is 734,630. 1 in 4 women at 33 of the largest universities in our country experienced a sexual assault while on campus. For women, 51% of victims of assaults were from an intimate partner while 40% were at the hands of an acquaintance. For men, those numbers were 52% by an acquaintance and 15% by a stranger. Now, those numbers are staggering.

What that means is, if you were just to look around this room, there would be hundreds of people who have had direct experience with sexual assault. It also means in your family, chances are that there is at least one person, if not two, three, or four people, especially if you go out a circle, who have experienced this directly in their life.

It is one thing to talk about statistics, but when we talk about stories, it goes from just being a tragic statistic to being a devastating story. Some of us, when we were kids, the people who should have protected us, instead experienced somebody taking advantage of us. Some of us, went on a date just hoping to have a good time and somebody assaulted us. Some of us married somebody and thought that they would be for us, but instead, they turned into the person who was against us. It isn't just things that are expressed as sexual. There can be physical violence that doesn't express itself as sexual, though any physical abuse has a sexual element to it because it's about power.

It can be verbal abuse. It can be name-calling. It can be when somebody fails to take care of things that they should take care of. Maybe it is dealing with their own addiction and hoisting it onto you or their financial irresponsibility or very simple neglect. Either way, abuse is pervasive, or persuasive and pervasive. Today we're going to talk about abuse as we look at the scriptures, which follow what we've been doing, as we've been working our way through 1st and 2nd Samuel, to study the stories that happened in David's life.

One thing the Bible does is, it does not edit out the ugly parts of the story. In fact, this is one of the reasons I believe that you can take the Bible seriously and believe that it's inspired. Because if you and I were writing a story about our family, we would leave the story we're looking at today out. I mean, you might whisper it here and there, but you wouldn't probably put it in print. Now we come to 2 Samuel 13, we see this story preserved. One of the questions that we must ask is, why is it preserved? What's it here for?

I'm going to begin in 2 Samuel 13, with this account of David, Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom. David is the patriarch. He has a son Absalom from one wife. He has a son Amnon from another wife. David practiced polygamy. Then Absalom had a sister named Tamar. So, the half-sister to Amnon is where we read about this abuse. Here's what it says, "In the course of time, Amnon, son of David, fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom, son of David. Amnon became so obsessed with his sister, Tamar, that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her. Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. And he asked Amnon, 'Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?' Amnon said to him, 'I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.'"

The story starts, as Amnon confesses to Jonadab this desire that he has. And one of the things that we see here is that there will always be somebody in your life if you look hard enough, who will give you a justification to do things that are against the very things that God has for you. There will always be somebody who will say, "Here's a way that you can do it. You deserve it. Go ahead. This is not anything that should be out of bounds." So, we must be careful to whom we listen.

What happens in the intervening verses is that Amnon does what Jonadab tells him to do. Amnon begins this ruse of pretending to be sick. He says that basically what he needs to feel better is for Tamar to cook for him, come into his chambers and make him a meal. We pick up the story when she comes into his chambers. Here's what it says, verse 11, "But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and he said, 'Come to bed with me, my sister.' 'No, my brother!' she said to him. 'Don't force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel. Do not do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.' But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her. Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said, 'Get up and get out!' 'No!' she said to him. 'Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you've already done to me.' But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and he said, 'Get this

woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.' So, his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went."

Sometimes when an abuser gets what he or she wants, they hate the person that they took advantage of. Here Tamar does the outward signs of grieving, tearing her robe as if to say I'm no longer a virgin and taking on these marks of grief.

Then we read this in verse 20, "Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now. My sister, he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart.' And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon. Neither good nor bad. He hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister."

The question for this text, as well as in a way for our situation, especially if you've lived through something, is, why is this text here? Where is God? What can we learn? So let me suggest three things that don't work when we face abuse like what we see in this text. Plus, two things that might be helpful.

First, what do we learn that isn't helpful? I'd like to say it isn't helpful to ignore it. We see David doing this in verse 21. It says that David was furious, but he didn't do anything. He just said, "I'm mad about this." We know this because when you read through the text, David didn't address this issue.

What happens for some of us is we will face something either personally or in our orbit of relationships, and we'll say the best thing I can do is put it aside, move on, and forget about it. Act like it never happened. Now it's possible that David didn't act in this way because he didn't feel like he had any moral ground to stand on. Certainly, he had just been through this public knowledge of everyone becoming aware that he had a son with the Bathsheba who died, then he had plotted to have Uriah killed. He may have said, I don't have anything I can say. It may be because he was practicing polygamy, he had multiple wives and probably some concubines from what we can tell. That he felt like, you know, Amnon, the young men are just doing what they've watched me do, maybe not forcing themselves, but it's just them doing what they do.

And can I just say, I told you I was going to talk about polygamy at some point? Here's my little blurb on this. It appears that in the Old Testament that this was practiced widely. And when you read the Old Testament, you may think, oh, is that like okay or

was this an accommodation? But if you go back to Genesis 2, what you see is that God made them male and female. He made it so that the two of them would come together and be married. There wasn't a third. Then Jesus picks this up in the Gospels and he says from the beginning, this is God's design, basically that there are two in marriage, male and female. So, God's plan was not for David to be married to multiple women. Maybe David felt like since, "I violated the plan, I don't have anything to say."

But whenever you or I ignore something. Step back from something rather than stepping into it, rather than addressing it, we can almost be guaranteed that it won't get better. If your house had a leak, like a little discoloration on a ceiling or a wall somewhere. So let me just ask you, if you've ever had one of those, what happens if you look at it and you say, yeah, it'll probably get better. It doesn't, right? It just gets worse if you let the leak go. This is a leak that isn't being addressed, if you simply say, I'm ignoring it. This is what happened to David.

Although he was furious, he did nothing. What he did not address, Absalom decided to address, and that leads us to the second thing that does not work. This is what Absalom tried to do, he tried to avenge it. If you read verses 23 through 29, what you see is that Absalom lies in wait, and he says, "There will be a moment when I can get back at Amnon for what he's done." So, he arranges a hunt. He invites his brother Amnon, and all the other king's sons to go. And when he's on the hunt, he kills Amnon. Then what happens is he sets up a revolt against David and his kingship, the kingdom, so the family degenerates into complete chaos. The kingdom degenerates into chaos because in part, this was vengeance that Absalom decided to take. Now, you may think, well, somebody needs to get even. Even at that time, it felt right. There wasn't law enforcement the way there is now. So, Absalom may have said the only way that Amnon is going to pay is if I make him pay.

But here's what we know about God in Scripture, and that is God tells us not to take vengeance, which doesn't mean that we don't hold somebody accountable. If somebody has wronged you, there's a right time to hold them accountable, a right way to hold them accountable. But when we take vengeance, what we're doing is we're not leaving room for the vengeance of God. Here's what Romans 12:17-20 says, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what's right in the eyes of everyone. If it's possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it's mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he's thirsty, give them something to drink.'"

What is happening here is that in the New Testament, we're told that we should leave room for the vengeance of God. Every time you and I say, I'm going to make sure

somebody pays for what they've done, we aren't leaving room for the vengeance or the wrath of God. And when we take the opportunity to say, I'm going to make somebody pay, what we end up doing is continuing to bring the angst and the weight of what has been into our own life. Instead of saying, I can trust God.

Miroslav Volf, a Croatian who's written several books on theology. He lived in Croatia during a very difficult, war-torn time, where he saw his village pillaged, death, and the atrocities of war. At one point he wrote, "My thesis that the practice of nonviolence requires belief in divine vengeance will be unpopular with many Christians, especially theologians in the West." So he says, that to practice nonviolence or not taking vengeance, we need to believe that there's a God who will make things right, that there's a God who will bring justice, that there's a God who brings about and judges the things that are wrong, and brings to the surface the things that are wrong." He says, "This won't be popular in the West." He says to the person who's inclined to dismiss it, "I suggest imagining that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone. Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have first been plundered. Then burned and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, and whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. The topic of this lecture is a Christian attitude toward violence. And the thesis is we should not retaliate since God is a perfect, non-coercive love. Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God's refusal to judge and the scorched land soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die."

And here's what he's saying, the only way that you and I can walk away from saying I'm going to avenge is to believe that there's a God who will one day set things right, that there's a God who will hold people accountable. Without it, you'll be prone not to just say God is loving and everything's good, but to say I must take vengeance.

So, it doesn't work to ignore it. I don't think it works well to avenge it. But there's one other thing that doesn't appear to work here, and this is what I'm going to say is Tamar's approach. You may think this is insensitive, but this is the idea of memorializing it. The reason I say this and the reason it even may feel insensitive is to say, well, she was caught in her culture.

What she did is she went and lived as a desolate woman in the house of her brother as he told her to do. She didn't have a lot of recourse or options. But in a sense, what she did was she chose to identify primarily as a victim. One of the things that happen when we memorialize what happens to us, we continue to let those things that happened to us define us. When we let them define us, what happens is they become our identity. When it becomes our identity, then we are not capable of living life as anything other than a victim of what happened to us.

But what happens when we remember and address what happened to us, is we're able to let it refine us. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, this can be especially powerful because God has said some things about you, about who you are that defines you. If you're defined by what God says about you, and what the future God has for you, then you don't have to be defined by what happened to you or where you've been.

Here is what I mean. In Ephesians 1, we are told that God has chosen people for himself. And what that means is if you're a follower of Jesus, you've been called by God, chosen by God. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, Romans 5 tells us that for a good person, some people may dare to die, but rarely will somebody die for just somebody else. But because of God's love for us, while we were still sinners, he died for us. This tells you that you are loved, that you're valuable. So, you're chosen, you're loved, and you're valuable.

Ephesians 2:8-9 is often quoted to talk about how our salvation, our standing with God isn't based on what we do. Here's what it says, "For us by grace that you've been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it's a gift of God - not by work, so that no one can boast." Your standing, your status, my standing, my status, isn't because of what I do. It is because of what Jesus Christ has done. What defines me is not what I have done. It's what Jesus has done on my behalf. And then he says this in verse 10, "For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

And that word, handiwork, is a word that can mean work of art. So, what God says about you, is if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you're chosen, you're loved, you're valuable, and you are a work of art. But our tendency can sometimes be to say, I'm defined by my past. But what can define you, what can define me, is ultimately the hope that we have in Jesus Christ about who we are and what our future is. You see, the message of Jesus Christ isn't just that Jesus came to die for your sins so that one day you can go to a good place instead of a bad place. There is an element of that. But it's that God is going to restore and rebuild all that's broken in your life. And that's where hope is.

There is a story that is told by William Buchholz in a book that came out years ago. He said, "As I ate breakfast one morning, I overheard two oncologists conversing. One complained bitterly, 'you know, Bob, I just don't understand it. We use the same drugs, the same dosage, the same schedule, and the same entry criteria. Yet I get a 22% response rate and somehow you get a 74% rate. That's unheard of with metastatic cancer. How do you do it?' His colleague replied, 'Well, we both use the same drugs. And then he went on and he name the drugs and I'm going to avoid

butchering the names. Just say one starts with an E, one starts with a P, one starts with the O and one starts with an H.' Then he says, 'You call your treatment EPOH, E-P-O-H.' I tell my patients that I'm giving them HOPE.' He said this, 'As dismal as the statistics are, I emphasize that we have a chance now.'"

That's about cancer, not about an abuse situation. Yet, I think there's an element of truth. If you say I'm defined by what happened rather than by the hope of who God says I am and what my future will be, then you will get stuck on some level. But if you're able to say this is not who I am, I am who God says that I am and my future is as bright as God says, then you will not be memorializing the pain.

Now, how do you do this? What is helpful? Let me just point to Psalm 63. This was written by David; it may feel in some ways weird to point to something David wrote. But here's why, because David wrote this, we're told, when he was in the desert of Judah and at several points in his life, David was fleeing from Saul. Fleeing from Saul may not have been a direct abuse, but certainly when somebody is trying to take your life and drives you from everything that you know. There's an element in which his time in the wilderness was filled with desolation, joylessness, sorrow, confusion, bitterness, and loneliness.

Here is what David does at this moment. Psalm 63:1 says, "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;" This idea of seeking here in the original language has a connotation of 'in the dawn', it's tied to the early things of the morning. What he's saying, my first thought, the thing that I will go to repeatedly first, is to seek you, God, to let you be the first thought of my day. Then in verses 7 and 8, what we see is this, "Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me." This is a word that has a connotation of 'being glued to something.' It's the Hebrew word *dabaq*, and it first appears in Genesis 2:24, where the man and the woman are told, "to come together, to intertwine their lives." So he says, "I'll seek you, God, and I'll cling to you with everything in me." The King James version of this has a phrase for it, "follows hard." Derek Kitchener put it this way, "It's in hot pursuit."

This may seem to some of you to be shallow, to say, seek God, pursue God, cling to God. But here's why I say that this is so important. If you have gone through something, been around somebody who's gone through something, you may say, "Well, where is God in this?" But that very question, the very sense that there's a desire that things could be and should be different is one of the great types of evidence for God. Because if there is no God, then why wouldn't the strong take advantage of the weak? People say, "I'm going to do whatever I want as long as it's good for me." But here your very sense that things should be different tells you where your real hope stands. One day they will be different, the redemption of humanity

isn't just to go to the good place, but God will heal and renew what is broken and lost. You can find part of that now, in the definition that God gives you, and then some of it in the hope of looking ahead.

I love these verses in Psalm 126, *a song of ascents*. Starting at verse five, "Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them." The picture here is that your tears, when brought to God are planted, and will reap a harvest of joy. Your hope, my hope, is not just that this will go away or that the person will pay. It's that God will restore what has been broken in your life and choosing to live there will begin to bring about healing.

I want to take a moment and pray with you. So just bow your heads and close your eyes for a moment. I recognize that for some of us gathered here today, this is a hard topic. And I just want to encourage you to say, God, today I come to you, I'd love to have hope, be able to seek you, and cling to you. Some of us may be here, in the middle of an abusive situation and looking for a way out. Maybe your call today is just to say, God, would you provide a way out? If that's you, feel free to contact the church. We have staff members here who will help you locate resources to find your way free from this. It is never God's will that we live through and endure abuse. Maybe you're here and it's something you suffered long ago. There's a freedom of even being able to sit and listen today. Maybe for you, it's just, God, thank you that you have been my hope. God, I pray today that you would help each one of us wherever we intersect with this, whatever our story is, that you would bring hope and healing. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are going to conclude our time today with one of the great songs of the faith, "It Is Well With My Soul." As it's sung, maybe you're not in a place where you can say that. All you can do is say, God, I'd love for that to be something I could say someday. Maybe you're here, you've been through something, and you can say, "It Is Well With My Soul." If you can, that is a great moment to be able to say, God, whatever's happened to me, I can still proclaim, "It Is Well With My Soul." Maybe you've never been through this, you can just say, God, thank you that "It Is Well With My Soul." You know somebody who's had to walk through it. You can just say, God, would you make them be able to say, "It Is Well With My Soul." as we sing? Would you stand and respond with the team?