**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**27th November 2022**

**Genesis 38: 13-19,24-27**

**Gathering**

It is advent

And back at the beginning again

We find ourselves standing

With the ancestors of the Christ Child

Ancients and First Ones

Whose stories weave our salvation

Women, whose circumstances

Have shaped the story of redemption

And who light a light

In the darker places

Steering the promise

Towards a stable

And a hope

And a promise

Of renewal

Our advent stories

Are ones we rarely hear

Yet are the ancient matriarchs

Of our advent light

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and as we slip into this ancient season called Advent, thank you for the space you made to have us. It is a time to make space for a lot of people and we do that in our worship over the next few weeks (which we do every week of course) but those we make space for this season are ones we knew least, whose stories are hardly told. Yet, their stories are fundamental to the incarnation and the advent hope that is Jesus Christ. Let us gather round them, and meet today, the ancient matriarch, Tamar.

**Prayer**

Holy God

The pause in our advent

The silence of the expectation

The gift we find between us

Holy God

May this season move us all

Stir us all

That you might

Stir up justice in this advent season

Call up the light to condense the darkness

Shake up this world that this new season

Reveals the promise of your kingdom

And in the stories of others

Women we hardly know

Who have been silenced for so long

May we hear your cause

And your plan

And your truth

That now the world can come to rebirth

Through these faithful ones

And might we hear the great traditions of our faith

And the great matriarchs of our sacred history

Call us in this advent time

To hear again your word

Ancient yet new

Ready for our today

That our ears may be pinned back

Our focus sharpened

And incarnation a promise born in us all

Holy God

Great matriarch of heaven

So be it

Amen

**Scripture Introduction**

One of the best-known stories in the bible hides one of the least known… The great family favourite of Joseph… the one of the techni-coloured dream coat fame… surrounds a story you don’t want to tell our children… and so we haven’t… It is the story of Tamar… and it happens between Joseph being sold into slavery… and arriving at the house of Potiphar’s wife…

Judah… brother of Joseph… has three sons… The oldest marries Tamar… but dies before there are any children… Under Leverite code… Tamar should marry the next brother… for her own security and that of any children… who would be known as the children of her original husband… So, Judah marries her to his second son… but he also dies… and if you wish to find out how, then Genesis 38 is where you’ll find that… Probably not best read in church…

But now Judah has two dead sons… and somehow Tamar seems to be implicated… and so Judah is reluctant to marry her to his last and youngest son… in case he also dies… But Tamar has also encountered a lot of loss… with two dead husbands… and still no family… or security…

Judah says she should wait till he is old enough to marry… and so she does… but Tamar finds out that Judah has refused to let his youngest son marry Tamar even though he is now of age…

Tamar thus has no home… no security… no future… no income… and so she takes things into her own hands… in the only way she knows how… and that is to prostitute herself… She discovers that Judah is going up to Timnah to sheer sheep… and she seizes her chance…

**Reading Genesis 38: 13-19,24-27**

**Reflection**

Tamar… perhaps skillfully… or corruptly… manages to work a safe future… but to do that… she has to let someone else do the very worst to herself… in order to survive…

It is a story of how the world is… In this adult story… tucked between the pages of a family favourite… we have insight into whose side God is on… who God identifies with… the women without power…

It is a story that opens advent for us… because it is a story about a powerless woman… who personifies a powerless God… because God is made known… in incarnation… In that moment when God takes on skin… God becomes Tamar… and everyone… who has known such powerless… and God says… I am Tamar… I am one of you…

**Ancient Stories and Ours**

Traditionally advent’s words are about Jesus returning… to renew the world… justly… the season is about waiting for a new world… waiting for justice to walk its way… It is not a quiet… romantic season… but perhaps more an angry one… restless… impatient for the reign of God…

But that restlessness is our continuing story… Tamar is hardly known… but through courageous actions… huge risks for her own and her family security… she challenges that which is unjust… at great cost… This terrible personal story of gender-based violence… is hardly told… Today may be the first time many of us have heard this story… and will be surprised it is right there in the middle of the familiar feel-good story of Joseph…

But the Bible does not hide it… we just don’t notice it… like so much we want to sweep away… But the bible holds it up… that it might speak into its own… as well as our… misogyny… The Bible needs these stories to remind itself… of what happens when power is held by a few… and people are treated without humanity and respect…

And if we can’t hear Tamar’s story today… and become familiar with its misogynistic abuse… then we need to wonder about incarnation… and if we truly believe it… because in incarnation… God purposefully became vulnerable… because that is who God is… vulnerable in the world…

Our songs are all very great in Advent… Lo he comes with clouds descending… but the story is rather of Tamar… and Mary… and a child… surrounded by all the signs God is the least in the story… and struggles in the world… and finds the divine self on the underside of that world… all the way through his life… where the outcome is crucifixion… That’s what happens when you fight for decency, compassion, and justice in the world…

So just before we rush to the stable story… might we look back to remind ourselves… where this story we love so much began… for there… among the ancients… in the genealogy of Jesus… lies Tamar… the first of four women written into the family tree of Jesus… and remind ourselves of her fight for justice and compassion… and who gave birth to this story we gather round in this season… the mother of twins… the mother of the future… the mother of all who have been forgotten…

**Prayers for Others**

If power is in might and wealth

You are a powerless God

And to you we pray

The powerless God

Who is Tamar and all who suffer violence

Who feel the lack of compassion from others

Who are cheapened and abused

Powerless God

Who lives in the company of the least

We pray

May our silences be unfilled with words and answers

And let our emotions and compassion do our praying

Powerless God

Who is in Ukraine and Congo, Syria once more and Yemen

Who lives in conflict and fear

And who feels alone among a powerful few

We pray

For all who are abused

Forgotten

Children and women and men

Who have not been given justice or a safe place

Who cannot thrive because of the limits of our resources

We pray

For all who struggle to find a way

Through illness or opportunity or education

Who feel the cold and the cost of living

We pray

May our silences be unfilled with words and answers

And let our emotions and compassion do our praying

Powerless God

For family and friends

For our neighbours and parish

For all we have and will meet this week

May we find your presence

In those who are powerless

And in this advent of hope and justice

Listen to them

And let their stories stir and soften the world

So be it
Amen

**Benediction**