

MONDAY
8 MARCH
2 Kings 5:1-15
Psalm 42:1-2; 43:1-4
Luke 4:24-30

TUESDAY
9 MARCH
Song of the
Three 2. 11-20
or Daniel 2:20-23
Psalm 25:3-10
Matthew 18:21-end

WEDNESDAY
10 MARCH
Deuteronomy
4:1. 5-9
Psalm 147:13-end
Matthew 5:17-19

THURSDAY
11 MARCH
Jeremiah 7:23-28
Psalm 95:1-2. 6-end
Luke 11:14-23

FRIDAY
12 MARCH
Hosea 14
Psalm
81:6-10. 13. 16
Mark 12:28-34

SATURDAY
13 MARCH
Hosea 5:15 – 6:6
Psalm 51:1-2.
17-end
Luke 18:9-14

REFLECTION

The major themes of rebellion, repentance and forgiveness which flowed through last week's readings persist this week, with increased emphasis on obedience. This is highlighted in Monday's text from 2 Kings. Sent to Israel for healing from leprosy, Aramean commandeer Naaman initially refuses to comply with Elisha's simple instructions to bathe seven times in the Jordan, because it is demeaning for a man of his stature. Persuaded to obey, he is healed and acknowledges the primacy of the Lord. This is the obedience that Moses instils into the Hebrew exiles in Wednesday's reading from Deuteronomy. On the cusp of entering the promised land, he exhorts them to listen to God and follow God's laws faithfully. Jesus reinforces this with his declaration, in Wednesday's Gospel, that he has come not to abolish but to fulfil the Law. Then on Friday he distils that Law's essence to love God and one's neighbour.

The week closes with Jesus describing the contrasting ways of the Pharisee and the tax collector at prayer in the Temple. In the humility of the tax collector, admitting his sinfulness and pleading for mercy, resides the obedience God seeks from us.



The Pharisee and tax collector, St Mary Abbots Church, Kensington, London. Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

PRAYER

Living Christ,
 through the example of your life-giving obedience
 that led to death on the cross,
 may we truly learn to love our neighbour as ourselves.
 In your mercy guide us and all creation
 into the presence of our heavenly Father.

MOTHERHOOD IN THE BIBLE

PART II – FIVE SCANDALOUS MOTHERS

Becky Mynett continues her series about motherhood in the Bible.

Matthew's Gospel opens with the "genealogy of Jesus the Messiah", a list of forty-two fathers from Abraham to "Joseph the husband of Mary". In addition to Mary, there are just four mothers whom Matthew thought worth mentioning. But they are not the virtuous matriarchs you might expect. We might even call them the five scandalous mothers!

Firstly, there is Tamar, whose story is related in Genesis 38. She was married to Judah's eldest son, but failed to conceive before he died. Judah told his second son, Onan, to marry Tamar so she could have a child. This child would have counted as his brother's offspring, so Onan wasn't keen and failed to make Tamar pregnant before he too died. Judah's third son was too young to marry, but when he grew up he still did not marry Tamar. She decided to take matters into her own hands, disguised herself as a prostitute and was duly propositioned by her father-in-law, to whom she bore twins.

Next we have Rahab, who really was a prostitute. Her story, related in the book of Joshua, tells how she helped Joshua's spies, and she and her family were spared when Jericho was destroyed. She became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth, who is the next mother to be mentioned. She of course has a whole book named after her. Like the others, she was a foreigner and, although perhaps less scandalous, she laid at Boaz's feet to gain his attention, which was hardly usual.

The fourth mother is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, who was essentially raped by King David (see 2 Samuel 11), who then had her husband killed so he could marry her.

Why mention these women? They are all in some way outsiders, and (like all women of their time) are at the mercy of men. But God works through them, as he works through Mary, a not-yet-married teenager who was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit.



Judah and Tamar (c. 1650-1660), Residenzgalerie Salzburg

LIVE
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
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 and
 Heather Smith

Third week of Lent

Monday 8 March to
 Saturday 13 March
 2021

WEEK