

Christmas Hope: Bathsheba

DARRELL DELANEY

Whenever you meet someone, there is always a story behind their eyes. Some parts they would readily share with you; other parts they would rather not. If we heard the full story on people, it wouldn't be long before you heard some brokenness in it. Humanity is full of brokenness, and sometimes we would rather not discuss it, or consider it taboo. However, Matthew, in today's episode, mentions the name of someone in the genealogy of Jesus, Bathsheba; and there is a deeper story behind her name. In today's episode of *Groundwork*, we will tell her story and see that even in spite of brokenness, God still intervenes. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part four of five in our Advent series, and we have been looking at Jesus' genealogy from the book of Matthew; and we realize that there are stories behind these names listed here. We notice that Matthew intentionally put the names of five women into his genealogy, and we have been unpacking these stories.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and it is not too unusual in the Bible to encounter a family tree or a genealogy. You get some in the Old Testament. Luke has one in his gospel, too; and you know, most of the time when you read a family tree, your eyes kind of glaze over because it is just name after name. Some of them are hard to pronounce. Once in a while, somebody famous pops up, but most of the names you don't know. But with Matthew, he intentionally spiced it up so that, if your eyes were starting to glaze over early on, all of a sudden, you would encounter a woman's name, which is weird; and then a woman's name whose story we don't often tell in Sunday school, like Tamar, you know...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Who tricked her father-in-law, of all people, into making her pregnant; or we get Rahab, a prostitute from Jericho. We get Ruth, who was an outsider from Moab, and so forth and so on. So, Matthew wants us to widen our eyes a little bit; and so, we have looked at three women. In our final episode, we will look at the last woman who gets mentioned, way at the end of Matthew 1, and her name won't be too much of a surprise; but today's name...actually, it is not in there. It is referring to Bathsheba, but Matthew doesn't put that name in specifically, does he?

DARRELL DELANEY

No, he doesn't. Like we read right here in Matthew 1. It says: ^{5b}Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. So, it says: Uriah's wife. And if you know your history...and Matthew knew his audience knew their history...Uriah the Hittite's wife...Oh, he means Bathsheba! It is interesting that she is referred to as...it is just implied that her name is there. You know who she is, but they don't name her in the scripture. I thought

that was very interesting.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I always think that, in a way, referring to Bathsheba as Uriah's wife is a way of kind of twisting the knife a little bit for David...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because, not only did he do something wrong with Bathsheba, as we are going to see when we retell her story, he does something even worse to Uriah; and so, I think it is almost a way of not letting David off the hook here at all. Once we see Uriah's wife, oh, boy; a dark cloud comes over this family tree because it is not a very pretty story.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, I consider the book of Chronicles to be David's highlight film. This doesn't make it into the highlight film. This is actually the deep down and dirty and broken story of Bathsheba and Uriah and what happened to them; and Matthew knows that when he says her name or he alludes to her, that it is going to kind of a taboo subject...it is going to be something you don't want to talk about in Sunday school; and you know, we just need to tell a little bit about Bathsheba. She is definitely one who needs to be mentioned here. She is the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, which we said. Eliam and Uriah the Hittite were both a part of David's army at one time, and this story begins in 2 Samuel 11*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. ²One evening, David got up from his bed and walked around the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, ³and David sent someone to find out about her, and the man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." ⁴Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. ⁵The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

DARRELL DELANEY

Man, when they set this story up with *when kings go off to war* and David didn't go off with them, you already know something is up. I don't know why David doesn't go. The Bible is not clear on that. I mean, maybe he was just confident in the fact that: Oh, yeah; I've got some trained guys. They are going to take care of it. Or if he just got overconfident. I don't know what it was, but he was supposed to be fighting. It was the fighting season. He is not there with them; and the old saying goes: an idle mind is the devil's playground...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

He is actually having some idle time, and he happens to see Bathsheba. If he had gone to war, we might not even be reading something like this. We might have a whole different story.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No...you know, the great preacher Haddon Robinson had a well-known sermon on this, Darrell; and he speculated that David was sort of having a midlife crisis, that he was just bored. I mean, it used to be fun to go out and fight wars and, you know, now he doesn't even want to do it. He is just kind of bored. He is kind of having a midlife crisis. So, send Joab, send the army out. I'll just stay here, right? Well, you know, it

is sort of...a midlife crisis can be a very bad time for temptation because you are looking for something to spice up your life, right? He is bored. Well, there is a pretty woman next door, naked and beautiful, and so I [David] want to find out who she is; and he does; and he invites her over, and they end up sleeping together.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, what is interesting to me about this is that David is breaking commandments...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Left and right.

DARRELL DELANEY

The very commandments that he writes so many songs about...that he sings a lot of songs about; and you see that, you know, he struggles with sin, just like everyone else. Even though he is a man after God's own heart, he struggles with these sins. He commits adultery with this woman, Bathsheba. He covets his neighbor's wife, that is something you are not supposed to do. You are breaking the commandments. The scripture says if you are guilty of one, you are pretty much guilty of all of them. And I hate when some people try to portray Bathsheba as some sort of temptress or some sort of seductress, because it does not portray her in that way...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

DARRELL DELANEY

But if we are actually honest about this, this is the pain of this verse. There is a power dynamic. This is the king, and he is coming to this woman, and maybe she has the ability to refuse him, maybe she doesn't. It could have cost her her life. There are some people who have said, at worst case, this could be a rape; and then there are some at best case, even if there could be one, this was adultery where both were consenting. Either way, it is a brokenness that cannot be ignored.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and they are not equals. I mean, David is the king. I mean, there is a power dynamic. She couldn't say no. Whether it was a rape, it was, you know, certainly something that she was not really in a position to slap David's face and say: Get away from me. No; so, it is on David. I mean, there is no question. The story is, as you say, the book of Chronicles cleans up David's story, but Samuel here, 2 Samuel, gives us the straight scoop, and it isn't good for David. It is an R-rated story; like the story of Tamar that we began this series with, it is not the kind of thing you tell little kids; it is not a Sunday school or vacation Bible school story; but it happened, and Matthew at least thought: I cannot delete from Jesus' family tree the fact that this happened. It would be easy to do...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But I am not going to do it. I am going to include Uriah's wife, and put it just that way, so to throw a spotlight on that; and some of the reasons why he did that we will look at in just a moment.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee. Part four of a five-part series of Advent, based on Matthew 1; most of which is the family tree of Jesus, and today we have gotten to the fourth woman who gets mentioned. After Tamar,

Rahab, and Ruth, we get Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. There is pride and adultery and coveting and power dynamics going on here between the king and one of his subjects. This is deep.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is, and the plot thickens because she says those two words: I'm pregnant. She sends a message to David to let him know that; and now, his response after he knows that he has had an affair. This is going to become a kind of a secret that is going to get out here in about nine months. So, he has to decide, what is he going to do, because it is pretty hard to hide a belly poking out when you are pregnant.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Very hard to hide, and the other problem is, what folks back in ancient Israel didn't know about how babies get made could fill a book, but they could count, and they knew Uriah had been gone for too long for it to be his child. So, if Bathsheba turns up pregnant, everybody knows it is not Uriah. They may not know right away it is David, but they know it is not Uriah; and so, David has to figure out a way that maybe people would say: Oh, well, sure; Bathsheba is pregnant and it is Uriah's kid. How could I do that?

DARRELL DELANEY

So, he goes about trying to cover this up; and so, we see in the verses here, where this conspiracy begins to cover up the sins. ⁶So David sends word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. ⁷ When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. ⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

So, it is interesting that that *go home and wash your feet* thing, that is kind of a euphemism for oh, go ahead, go sleep with your wife; enjoy your time at home, take a little break from the war; but Uriah is so focused on being faithful to serve God's army, that he won't go home.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; David is all business at first: Yes, well, Uriah...I sent for you because I needed a briefing...

DARRELL DELANEY

How's the weather...

SCOTT HOEZEE

How about them Tigers? How is the war going? I see; thank you. Well, thank you for the briefing; now go on home to that pretty wife of yours, okay? No worries. But Uriah won't do it; and you know, Darrell, we are beginning to see already here something that is a complete truism in politics: the coverup is almost always worse than the crime.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The crime can be bad. Watergate was bad; but if it ended there, and if they had just come clean, it probably wouldn't have cost Nixon the presidency; but the coverup...the coverup killed it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, the coverup is always worse than the crime, and boy, that is going to end up being true here; and Uriah is such a good guy that he won't go home. He is going to sleep with the servants. He is not technically on furlough or on vacation. So, he is not going to do what his men in the field cannot do. So, he didn't go home;

and of course, this is going to make David a little crazy, right? Because when you are really feeling guilty, when you really know you have done it wrong, to encounter somebody who is so good and who is doing it all right, it is like: Man, now I look even worse by comparison!

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, David is abusing his power to try and make this conspiracy happen...that is the first thing. The second thing is, my Bible teacher taught me in school that there is a theme of faithful foreigners. They always make choices that are better than even the people of Israel...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we have here Uriah, who is *not* an Israelite, but he is shown as a model of integrity in this story: I won't go home and sleep with my wife when my fellow soldiers are out here fighting. What kind of a person would I be? So, he is using his integrity, which I believe that also makes David crazy, and it also shows how broken humanity can be. It is one thing to sin, and it is another to cover it up, like you said.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; well, it didn't work. It actually...we won't read this part, but David tries again. He finds out Uriah didn't go home. He calls him back. He says: Why didn't you go home? Go home tonight, would you, please? Please. And Uriah is like: Nope, no; not while my men are sleeping in tents, and you know, eating bad food. I am not going to go home to a nice homecooked meal and enjoy my wife while they are out there. I cannot do it; I couldn't look them in the eye when I went back to the front if I did that. Okay; this is not going to work...

DARRELL DELANEY

Now you are forcing my hand...

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in the morning, David...this is verse 14:

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. ¹⁵In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

That is exactly what ends up happening. So, David tucks a note into Uriah's pocket that contains his death sentence, which is really cold. It is like Tony Soprano or some mobster move in the Mafia. That is cold. Put the death sentence in his own pocket, send him in, and then, he basically tells General Joab: Hang him out to dry. I want him dead; don't ask me why. Talk about the coverup being worse than the crime, that is it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Not only does David sin, but he covers up the sin with a worse sin. I don't even think at that point his behavior, where he is not able to even think through: What am I going to do about this baby that is coming? Now, he is getting the father who is supposed to be the answer to why the baby is here, killed; and so, that makes it even more of a problem. So, now we need to see that sin and brokenness don't just harm one individual, they harm everyone who is connected to it. Sin and brokenness continue to permeate relationships in different circles of people, and David's behavior in this passage is showing this; and then, he gets a report back that Uriah is dead. So then he says: Oh, don't worry about it; it's okay; don't worry about it. But originally, if he was back to his old self before the "midlife crisis" that you mentioned, he probably would have been furious to lose one man; but then he lost some men, but then Uriah was dead, and he was okay with that. That shows how insidious and how sin can mess your mind.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so then, he acts like a nice guy. He goes to Bathsheba and says: So sorry about your husband. Why don't you come stay with me? So now, it can look like Bathsheba's baby is David's and it's okay; because,

you know, it happened after Uriah died, right? He is just being nice to her. So, he is being totally fake, and he is thinking he has gotten away with it, but I love the last line in verse 27 of 2 Samuel 11: But the thing David had done displeased the Lord. And that is all the text says: the thing David had done displeased the Lord. I'll say!

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when you get so far caught into sin, God has to intervene and do something about it; and that last line: but this thing displeased the Lord...he wants to address this situation. So, let's stay tuned and find out just how God does that.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this Advent episode of a series from Matthew 1. David the king—the man after God's own heart, as the Bible says—the best king Israel ever had...second only to his son, Solomon, who will be coming up next...has sinned and behaved about as badly as any human being can sin. He coveted his neighbor's wife, he took his neighbor's wife, he had an adulterous affair with his neighbor's wife, and when it didn't work to cover it up through some normal ways, he took the extreme step of murdering her husband, so that he could then be nice to Bathsheba, take her into the palace, and then the baby would look like it was David's, and it was, but it would look legit. This is how the man after God's own heart behaved.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, he probably should be called a mess after God's own heart at this point because this is messy, and Matthew does not glaze over the fact that that is messy; and again, I think it is very, very hopeful for people who have messy lives and messy stories that in spite of the brokenness and in spite of the sin and pain, God can still use and intervene in the situation. It reminds me of one of my favorite TV shows that I used to watch called *Intervention*, where there is this guy or girl who happens to have a problem, an addiction of some sort, and they are destroying their own lives with it, and then in intervention they have a psychiatrist or a therapist and they have the family. They all surprise this loved one and say: Hey, listen; I know you thought you were going to the mall, but you actually are going to be intervened with right now. We love you; we see you destroying your life; we want you to stop; and please, please change. So, they beg and plead with this person to try to get them to make better decisions and change their lives; and I feel like, in this situation, if that person doesn't get that intervention, then that life will continue in the wrong direction; and I think that we need to understand that our lives are sinful and broken, and if God doesn't intervene, then we are going to be on that path.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and the problem, you know, with situations like this is we are often unaware of it. We need somebody to intervene, we need somebody to knock us between the eyes and say: Wake up! God does that with the prophet Nathan. So, we move into the next chapter, 2 Samuel 12:

The Lord sent Nathan [the prophet] to David. (And then Nathan tells David a little story.) When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup, even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." ⁵David burned with anger against the man, and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶He must pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity." ^{7a}Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

DARRELL DELANEY

Zinger!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Boom!

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, I think that this story is very creative, because, number one, God's intervention was to send Nathan to speak to David as one of God's messengers, but because Nathan...and there is that power dynamic again...Nathan the prophet is going to David the king, so he cannot literally just walk up and say: Hey, you're wrong, because he might lose his head, literally, over that, right? So, he has to create this parable so that David can figure it out, but then he turns it around and says: Oh, wait; that is you. So then, he is convicted by his own words. He deserves to die; he deserves to pay four times over, and he doesn't realize he has sinned against the Lord until that story concludes. So then, he says that in verse 13. He says, "I have sinned against the Lord." And he realizes this is a turning point where he needs to come back. Sometimes we need God to arrest our attention and convict us or we wouldn't come back. I think that is true, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like how Frederick Buechner retold this story once where David gets all huffy about, you know, the poor little lamb, you know. He has killed a human being.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

David has murdered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, but he is all up in arms about this little lamb now because it is kind of cute, you know, in the story; and Buechner says: At this point, the prophet Nathan handed David a hand mirror and said: the rich man, David...that is him; you know, the one with the crown. You are the man.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, yes; eventually David says: I have sinned against the Lord, but Nathan goes on to predict that there are going to be consequences to this. David is going to be forgiven, right? He is going to stay king, but Nathan predicts that there is going to be major trouble in David's own household. The child that Bathsheba is bearing right now is going to die. She will have another one, who will be Solomon, but the child is going to die. You are going to have rebellion in your household. That will happen later with Absalom and Amnon and all that ugliness. You did this in secret, but I am going to punish you in public, is what God says.

So, it is a very, very difficult story; and you know, Darrell, I am imagining people listening to this episode. It is in December. Christmas is probably a week off or less, or you could imagine us as pastors on the fourth...we did a series on Matthew...I did do this one time...and you are preaching on this on the fourth Sunday of Advent, the last Sunday before Christmas. Christmas could be two, three, four days away; and you are telling this ugly story of sin, and people are thinking: It's Christmas! It's sparkly, *Silent Night*, you know, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*...why do we have to see Bathsheba and David and Uriah? Well, the reason is because there is no reason to celebrate Christmas if we cannot honestly look at this kind of brokenness, which is why Jesus came.

DARRELL DELANEY

This brokenness, like you mentioned, Scott, is all over scripture, and it is all over our lives. It shows why we need a savior...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I love the fact that the Bible is not going to shrink back when there is drama. Drama starts in the book of Genesis; right in Chapter 3 we've got some brokenness; and history...humanity...is always going to have a level of brokenness in it. When I tell my story, there is brokenness in it; when you tell your story, there is brokenness in it; and God sees our sinful state and our pain and our sin, our problems, and decides to intervene. He says: I am going to save them. I am going to help them. He brings his Son into this picture. We cannot even have Jesus' birth without some brokenness in his own genealogy. So, that right there should let you know that even when you look at this, and you look at the names...the name Tamar, the name Rahab, the name Bathsheba...when you look at these names, there is always going to be a story behind it. The story includes human brokenness, but that is why we need a savior, and that is the advent of what we are looking for. We are looking for Christ to come back; we are looking for him to help us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; we are living between two advents, we always say. Advent looks back to the first advent...the first arrival of Jesus, but it also looks ahead to the second Advent...to the second coming of Jesus; and that is going to be the time when all will be made well; all of our sins will be forgiven; all of our brokenness will be healed; all of the brokenness we see in this story, which happens over and over. Jesus came to forgive it all, thanks be to God.

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of the women in Jesus' genealogy by looking at Christmas hope in the story of Mary.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee.

***Correction:** The audio of this program misstates the reference for this passage as 1 Samuel 11. The correct reference is 2 Samuel 11.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/christmas-hope-bathsheba>

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