

5. TAMAR

TAKEN IN

Genesis 38:26

“She is more righteous than I”

In Bible terms, Tamar is an outsider. She’s a woman, a non-Jew and a childless widow. In the world of the Bible, marriage and children were the equivalent of social security, the National Health Service and a pension scheme!

You either had family or you were on the street!

Tamar had been married twice before and now her prospects of finding marriage were poor. She needed a child! In that society, it was the duty of the dead husband’s family to provide her with another husband for that very purpose.

It sounds strange to us, but this was all to do with being fair.

However, Judah, Tamar’s father-in-law, did not give his next son to Tamar. This basically commits her to a life of destitution. It’s unfair.

So Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute and seduced her father-in-law! She got pregnant. Judah discovered that Tamar was pregnant and was about to kill her for prostitution.

At the last minute she exposed her father-in-law as the child’s father! Judah was ashamed. Not so much for his sexual immorality, but for the way he had been denying Tamar a husband and, therefore, a share in the family property.

So, in this very earthy story of sexual misconduct, deceit and blackmail, who is the hero? At the end, we find that a direct descendant of Tamar was King David. Of course it is through David’s descendants that Jesus was born. Clearly, God was on Tamar’s side.

God is less concerned with her methods than with the unkind attitudes of the rich and powerful in this story.

Tamar may begin as an outsider but she ends up right at the centre of God’s purposes.

God embraces outsiders until they become insiders