

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

TRANSITION

Thank you so much Andrea...

I so appreciate your courage in facing such difficult circumstances in your life, but even more than that, it's so helpful to hear how the Lord has been with you every step of the way and worked in your life!

I am sure there may be some people listening this morning, who have been encouraged, to hope again in the Lord, to be reminded that he is with them, and to let Him to renew their strength.

PRAYER (MINISTRY MOMENT?)

Let's take a moment to pray...

(What is God wanting to do here and now?)

INTRODUCTION

Well, we are in our JUSTICE SERIES and we have been looking at all kinds of challenging topics; racism, privilege, discrimination, poverty, and Xenophobia. Today I wanted to talk about;

Gender-Based Violence

Now due to the subject, I want to put out a warning, that some of this might be difficult for sensitive listeners.

This subject, by its very nature, might be a trigger for some people. I am going to be as careful as I can to deal with this in a sensitive and careful manner, but the subject is what it is – and I want people to be understanding of that.

It is also not really young kid friendly, so parents, please take whatever steps you need to take with that.

Gender-Based Violence...

This is a hard topic to preach on for so many reasons.

One, because I know that some of you watching from home, or here in-person, have been victims of gender-based violence. Or perhaps you have loved ones, or family members who have experienced this.

Secondly, there may be some people here or at home listening who have been the perpetrators. So much goes on behind closed doors or in secret - so I speak to you today, not knowing all of your story.

As a father, a husband, a brother and a son, this is also a hard topic as it is the horrible reality of the world that my loved ones are living in.

Globally, one in three women will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. In South Africa, up to 6 women are killed every day, more than half by their partner.

Here in South Africa, we also have shocking reputation of having the highest reported rape cases in the world – 66,000 – and how many have gone un-reported??!!

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/rape-statistics-by-country>

According to a survey conducted by the South African Medical Research Council; *approximately one in four men surveyed admitted to committing rape.*

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/rape-statistics-by-country>

These stats both break my heart, and make me mad. This is shocking. Men of South Africa, it doesn't matter who you are, or what justifications you think you have – there is simply no excuse for this wickedness.

Before I press on, I just want to make sure everyone understands exactly what we mean by the phrase 'Gender-Based Violence.'

What is Gender Based Violence? (GBV)

Gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of violations against women and girls and includes any number of behaviours that serve to undermine the physical, sexual and emotional integrity of women.

This is captured in the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women as: *“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”*

[\(United Nations, 1995, n.p.\).](#)

I should also add, as the world's thinking on 'gender' shifts, and gender is a very complicated subject for our culture, as that thinking shifts, so do the definitions of gender-based violence. But what I understand is, that we all live in society with too much violence of many kinds, and it is not always gender related – so, many of today's principles apply to wherever violence is found.

So today I wanted to share with you a pretty horrible story in the Bible. It is probably not a passage you have heard a sermon on before in the church. It is one of those bible stories that would never be read at bedtime. It does not have a neat and a happy ending.

It is a story of a family, where a sister was raped, and no one did anything about it. Shockingly, it was in fact in King David's family. While it is hard story, I think it has many points that connect to our justice series, and Gender-based Violence, so we are not going to avoid it.

2 Samuel 13:1

In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. ² 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. ³ Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.

⁴ 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." ⁵ "Go to bed and pretend to be ill,"

Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.' "

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand."

⁷ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him." ⁸ So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down.

She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. ⁹ Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat. "Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him.

¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom.

¹¹ But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister." ¹² "No, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing.

¹³ 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.”¹⁴ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

It is a heart-breaking and disgusting story. But it is in the bible, and it's here for a reason. The bible does not try and hide anything. So neither should we. Here is my first point today.

1. Gender-based violence is a reality

A devastating reality, that nobody wants to have to think about, or talk about. So sad in the story of Tamar, was that the violence was from within her own home. Here own family! Her half-brother, Amnon, who was assisted by his evil 'adviser' Jonadab.

Clearly there was no thought given by these men to what Tamar thought and wanted – she was forced against her will. This was not a spur of the moment act either – this was a well planned-out and deceptive scheme.

I'm sure like me, you are clenching your teeth with the injustice of this rape, and while you read it, you want to try and shout out to Tamar, not to go into that room alone with her brother.

Yet unfortunately, the story of Tamar, is the story of many people we know – whether they share their story with you or not. Gender-based violence is the reality of many women in South Africa – not just rape, but assault, domestic violence, murder.

So the first thing I want us all to understand today is that this is a reality. Don't pretend it's not real. Let's read what happens next in this story from verse 15;

2 Samuel 13:15

Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, “Get up and get out!”¹⁶ “No!” she said to him. “Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.” But he refused to listen to her.

¹⁷ He called his personal servant and said, “Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.”¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

2. The injustice falls unfairly on the victim

The injustice of the violence that fell on Tamar was completely unfair. Furthermore, the injustice was not just the rape, but it just seemed to get worse from there in how she was treated after the rape. Tamar was rejected, even though Amnon initially claimed this was about love! So many lessons we could talk about here – the huge difference between love and lust.

These verses describe in detail the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical turmoil that Tamar experienced. The aftershock of the event was devastating for her. I will mention some of the things that the story reveals; the...

- **Burden of shame**

Almost unbelievably, experiences like this bring feelings of shame. Too often, gender-based violence goes un-reported. Either because the victim feels to ashamed to relive the ordeal, or for fear of judgement. There have been cases that made the media recently, where taxi drivers claimed that women were asking to be raped because of the way they dressed. These ridiculous accusations make victims think twice about reporting their abuser.

It is bad enough that someone goes through this violence at the hand of a family member or by a stranger, but the shame they are forced to carry is another injustice.

I know there are also some cultures, where the rape would be dealt with by forcing the perpetrator to marry the victim – can you imagine the torment that that must be for the victim? Here is another;

- **Forced to be silent**

Look with me at 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. (2 Samuel 13:20)

Absalom did not handle this well at all – he was more concerned about how things would look, and he tried to keep her quiet. The combination of the rape, Amnon’s rejection of her afterwards, and Absalom’s treatment by silencing her, heaped so much more on Tamar shame and desolation – she was a broken woman.

In verse 21 we read of David’s reaction and other dynamics in the family;

When King David heard all this, he was furious. ²² And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. (2 Samuel 13:21)

We see that David got furious, but here is the sad part. It does not seem like he did anything about it. Justice was not done. It would appear that Amnon received no punishment, and life went on as normal!

3. Silence is not an option of the church

David and Absalom's lack of action make me mad! There was no one who would stand up for Tamar. This was not acceptable then, and it is not acceptable now.

- **Justice must be done to protect the victim and future victims**

This violence was never properly dealt with in David's family. It simmered and caused tensions, to the point that two years later, we read that Absalom took revenge, and set a trap so that Amnon would be killed.

But Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "My lord should not think that they killed all the princes; only Amnon is dead. This has been Absalom's express intention ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. ³³ My lord the king should not be concerned about the report that all the king's sons are dead. Only Amnon is dead." (2 Samuel 13:32)

Here is the problem though - This is not real justice – Amnon was never held to account for what he did.

If you are facing a situation of violence, either once off, or ongoing, I urge you to report it – speak up. If you can't speak up, speak to someone else who can help you – speak to anyone of the church staff, the pastors, our counselling ministry. Speak to us and we can help you speak up. Perpetrators need to be brought to justice – to stop them reaching more victims, to teach them that it is not acceptable, even if it is common in our society.

- **Victims need help to be restored**

One of the reasons Tamar's story makes me mad is because of the treatment she received – she lived with a shame placed on her that she should never have been made to carry – that was wrong. That was unjust.

If you are a victim of violence, please don't sit with the pain and the shame in silence – there is help available for you, there is restoration for you. Again, come and speak to one of us, we can link you with the right people and help you. We can link you with a safe house if that is what is needed.

4. How you treat others in your life is important

So many of the issues we have looked at in our 'Justice is..' series have to do with our treatment of others. I want to challenge you all today – how are you treating people – whether it is those of different gender, a different race, a different socio-economic status, different beliefs?

Remember that all people are created by God. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made.

Remember that we are called to respect and love each other. Jesus taught us, love each other as I have loved you.

And remember that we are called to live justly.

Finally, remember that if you are a victim, there is no place so deep and dark that Jesus cannot reach you, to rescue you and save you.