Amnon and Tamar

II Sam 13:1-22 Moses Kang

Key Verse: II Sam 13:12 "Don't 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."

 Today's passage is a very gloomy story. I couldn't find any encouraging words from today's passage. So, I didn't want to read the passage, and also, I didn't want to prepare the message for today's passage. I was tempted to switch the message turn with the next messenger. But I stopped because the next messenger would have the same problem as I had.

 Embracing today's passage is like swallowing bitter medication. However, there is a saying that although good medication tastes bitter in the mouth, it's good for health. I pray that today's passage might be a good medication for our spiritual health.

 In Chapter 12, God sent the prophet Nathan to help David repent his sins of adultery and murder. At Nathan's conviction, David repented before God without any excuses. God declared the forgiveness of David's sin instantly***, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."***This gives us the impression that solving sin problem is easy. So, we might misunderstand that it would be ok for us to commit sins. Because we know that if we repent, God would forgive us of our sins anyway. But forgiveness of sin is not that simple. We, sometimes don't pay attention to the entire picture of the forgiveness of sins. God just said, ***"You are not going to die."*** But God also told David the terrible things that would happen to him and his family even before he repented of his sin. **We need to pay attention to the 3 different things that committing sins brings to us, which are**

**1. Judgment of sin(Rom 6:23)**

**2. Discipline for sin(Heb. 12:11)**

**3. The consequences of sin(Exod. 20:5).**

The wages of sin is death. God's forgiveness is about the exemption from the judgment of sin, which is eternal condemnation. However, we are not free from God's discipline for sin and the consequences of sin. Although we are forgiven, we will suffer the consequences of sin until we feel how terrible it is.

 Then, why does God allow us to suffer from the consequences of sin? When God created us, God put many safety precautions into our bodies so that we may keep our bodies safe and sound on earth. This includes the sense of hunger, thirst, pain, sometimes fear. If we go up to a high place, we feel scared. Therefore we automatically will be very careful. This instinctual fear of height help us preserves our lives. What if God didn't put the feeling of hunger in us? What if God didn't put the feeling of thirst in us? We might not remember to eat or drink many days until we collapse. But hunger and thirst are one of the most excruciating senses of pain. But these pains are necessary for our health, and are beneficial to us.

 The same principle works similarly for our spiritual health. Why do we keep sinning against God and other people? It is because there are pleasures in sinning. Temptations are always sweet. What if there was no bitterness that comes from the consequences of sins, but only sweet forgiveness of sins. It would encourage us to keep on sinning. However, there is God's discipline for sin and there are consequences of sin. God teaches us what terrible outcome would follow after sinning. It helps us not to keep on sinning. When we taste the bitterness of the fruit of sins, we learn that sin is not desirable, rather it is terrible. It is like taking bitter medication. We are like spiritual infant, not knowing the seriousness of sinning. However, God who is our loving Father teaches us that sinning is never desirable, but much more terrible and ugly than we think. This is what today's passage is going to teach us.

**I. Sin grows**

 Chapter 13 opens by telling us that Absalom's sister, Tamar, is beautiful. David's first born son, Amnon, fell in love with Tamar. There is nothing wrong with a young boy falling in love with a beautiful girl. At that time, inter marriage between half brothers and sisters was permissible. However, Amnon's love grew into nothing but pure lust. What is the difference between lust and true love? Simply speaking, lust is a very selfish desire, but true love is sacrificial, caring for others. He desired her so much that he became obsessed with her. He was frustrated to the point that he is making himself sick over her. Verse 2b explain the reason for his sickness. It reads, ***"For she was a Virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her."***

 Tamar was a virgin, which is declaring her righteousness before God. She was not a kind of girl whom Amnon could find any chance to have an unlawful sexual relation with. He was frustrated because he couldn't get what he wanted. He didn't do any bad things yet, but his heart condition became very ugly already. His distorted desire for a woman should end here and find the way to seek true love. However, when he keeps stewing in his consuming lust, the devil sent him a helper. Amnon's cousin, Jonadab was a very shrewd man. This shrewd friend had a plan for him. These two ugly men conspired a plot, deceiving King David and innocent girl. They planned to play upon the kindness of a woman who is trying to care for him. One man's evil desire grew double into the production of two men's devious plan.

**II. The sweetness and Bitterness of Sin**

 So Tamar made Amnon a bread and brought it to him while he was lying in bed. But when she came near, he took hold of her and said, ***"come to bed with me, my sister."(13:11***) She immediately resisted, begging him not to do this. She gave him four logical reasons why he should stop; first, Tamar reminded Amnon that his intended act was unlawful; second, Tamar told Amnon that violating her would bring shame upon her; third, Tamar noted that rape would reveal him as a fool in Israel; and fourth, Tamar urged Amnon to ask King David for her in marriage.

 David had 19 named sons and 1 named daughter in the Bible, plus other unnamed children. As David's firstborn son, Amnon would have been in line to succeed David as a crown prince. Yet, due to his rape of Tamar, he lost everything, including the honor as a crown prince, his future, and even his life. Tamar's comments were very wise. It was God given chance for him to turn around in the course of committing the crime. But he refused to listen. He chose to follow his heart's desire. He violated her. Pleasure was momentary. Now right after his action, he began to pay the price. Look at verse 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!""***

 Now that desire had been fulfilled, what was left was an unbearable guilt and shame. As a full grown man, he had to take the shame upon himself. However, like the Adam, he began to blame others for his crime. His shame turned into intense hatred upon Tamar. The sin seems so sweet but that sweetness is immediately replaced with long lasting bitterness, shame and pain. He had no regard for how this would destroy Tamar. But this is the essence of sin. What makes sin so ugly is that it is so selfish that there is no regard for the pain inflicted on the other.

 According to the Law, Amnon must marry her as a protection for her so that she would not be destitute and without financial security. However, Amnon made the matter even worse. He threw her out of the house. Look at verse 19. ***"Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornamented robe she was wearing. She put her hand on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went."***Now throwing Tamar out of the house had sealed the horror of her future. Amnon has ruined her life, ruined her future, and ripped her purity away from her.

 Verse 20 is about Absalom's reaction to Tamar. His first question was about Amnon's presence. He knew that Amnon was a scoundrel and villain. Absalom didn't comfort her. He was not interested in her pain. He said to Tamar, "***Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart."*** Absalom had an ambition to be the next king, but he was the fourth son of David. He didn't want to expose this incident until he became more powerful than Amnon. Absalom had intention to take personal revenge on Amnon. However, It was not only for Tamar, but to build up the ground to remove Amnon as a future political opponent. He was another scoundrel.

 Verse 21 is about King David's reaction. David heard all this and he was furious. David was angry but did nothing about it. David's sin had brought chaos into the kingdom and he was unwilling to deal with his sons and discipline them. David had become like Eli, angry at the sin but unwilling to do anything about it.

 We read today's passage as a story of David's family. We can say that the things that happened were terrible, but we might not take it as seriously because it is about David's story. However, think like this. A father has sons and daughters in the family. The father committed adultery and killed the husband of the woman to cover up. And the father’s first son raped one of the step-daughter and step-brother murdered the first one and ran away. Later, father’s son came back and tried to kill his own father. How horrible it would be! We may not hear this kind of story even in the prison cell.

 The big message from this passage is about the ugliness of sin. The only innocent person is Tamar. Everyone else is full of sins. Amnon is stained with the ugliness of sin. Amnon's friend who advised him is ugly with sin. Absalom is full of sin. David's lack of response or justice is sinful. Sin compounds sin. Sin leads to more sins. Amnon sins, which leads to his friend sinning, which leads to Amnon sinning again, which leads to David sinning, which leads to Absalom sinning. All of this started with the simple sin of Amnon's lust upon Tamar **in his heart**. A sin in the heart, when it was not dealt with, grew into rape and murder. That's exactly what David did in chapter 11.

But today's passage also gives us a hope. When we deal with sin when it is still in our hearts, sin will stop. When sinful desires, like lust, greed, self seeking are born in our hearts, they always look attractive. But we need to know that they are just bait. When we are attracted by something, we need to think about whether it is Satan's bait or a real blessing. Anything that comes from God is real food. Everything else that is not from God is a Satan’s bait. We may have a choice every time.

 Our hearts conceive desires. However, not all desires are bad. There are many good desires. But, we are usually thirsty and hungry for evil temptations. Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled***." Being filled means a real satisfaction, happiness and joy. However, when we try to fill our hearts with evil desires and greed, that doesn’t satisfy us. It is like pouring water into the jar that has a big hole at the bottom. Having a good desire is the best way to remove an evil desire. We can be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. We can seek genuine love instead of lust. We can seek joy instead of seeking pleasures. We can work for other's benefit too, instead of seeking only our own. We can be thankful, instead of complaining. We can be kind instead of being rude to others. We can bless others, instead of cursing or judging. When we bless others, that blessing also grows exponentially and comes back to us.

 Let's think about David's response. Why did he not do anything when Tamar was violated? David's own sins are interfering with his ability to rule rightly. His own sins are having an impact on how he is judging the sins of others. He cannot judge rightly because he is guilty of similar thoughts and actions. Part of the ugliness of sin is that it colors us from seeing our own sins and the sins of others clearly. This leaves David's kingdom in hopelessness. Eli's sons were horrible and worthy of death. Samuel's sons were a disaster and did not follow in the ways of his father. Now David's sons are horrible. The book of 1 Samuel began with the problem from the end of the book Judges. There was no king in Israel. Everyone was doing right in their own eyes.

 People were looking for a king who would turn the hearts of the people back to God. People were looking for a ruler who would judge righteously. David has been the one that they had been waiting for. But now it does not look like we have moved forward at all. Our hope is shattered in this chapter. However, God is showing us the big problem of all history through today’s passage. Human leaders are not the solution to our problems. Humanity cannot put its hope in humanity. David is one of the best we could have. No one among us can say that “I am better than David.” Even that David and his family became hopeless. Then, what does this tells us?

 We need a sinless judge who can judge rightly as he would not be biased or colored by his own sins. So God is showing us why he must send his Son from heaven. Humans cannot save themselves nor save others. We need a king who has not sinned and who is not of this world to administer justice for sins. This is why we must listen to Jesus and his words. We are colored, stained and broken by our sins. We cannot see clearly. So we must see the life through the lens that God has given to us through his Son.

 When we read the Bible, we can read the Bible in two different ways. One way is that we can read the Bible by using it as a window. Through the window, we can see through. The other way is by using it as a mirror as a reflection. When we use the Bible as a window, we see the things through the Bible's truth. When we read today's passage with the lens of Jesus, we can see the frailty of David's kingdom, including the hopelessness of humanity. At the same time, we understand why Jesus and his kingdom is our only hope.

 When we read today's passage as a mirror, it reflects on us displaying that we are a sinner. Amnon, Jonadab, David, and Absalom- we are not different from them. In our hearts, we commit the same sins over and over again. We are part of them. We must see that our sins are ugly. We must see the damage our sins cause to ourselves and others. Then we need put our hope in Jesus **and live only by grace**. Self-righteous sinner is worse than the outward sinner who acknowledge his sin. Self-righteousness is the main cause that many Christians live apart from the grace of Jesus. Jesus is the savior we need for what we have done against God and against others.

 One thing that bothers me greatly from this passage was about Tamar. She was such an innocent, wise and caring girl, but she became a victim of evil men. Especially, the end of verse 20 is heart aching, which says ***"Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's home, bitter and desolate."*** She ended her life as a bitter and desolate woman. It was not her fault. But , couldn't she have any other choice for her future? I came to think about Ruth and Rahab. Ruth was a gentile and young widow who had no child. Rahab was also a gentile and shrine prostitute. Their situations was not better than Tamar. However, they had lived different lives due to their faith. I wished Tamar had a good Bible teacher or shepherd. Then, possibly her life would be recorded in a different way, such as ***"Tamar was comforted by the Lord after the event.***"

 We cannot avoid being hurt or hurting others due to our sins and others in this world. However, our lives don't have to end as a tragedy or as victims. Romans 8:28 says, " ***We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."*** If we really trust in God, with this one word, we can live as a victor, not as a victim. We have a hope all the time in Jesus who turns our tragedies into a living hope, which endures forever. Praise Jesus.