

## **“Can the Church Help Heal?”**

**Text: 2 Samuel 13:1-22**

Church, today we wrestle with a deep and painful truth—one we far too often leave unspoken in our sanctuaries. But if we are to truly be a healing body, a people shaped by the love and justice of Christ, we must face this reality: **sexual and domestic violence is real**. It is present in our communities, in our homes, and—God help us—even in our churches.

Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis, in *The Trauma of Sexual and Domestic Violence*, names the tragic invisibility of Black women in movements for justice. She writes, “...during the historic campaigns for justice, the remaining seeds of unrest and injustices—class and gender/gender identity, which also impact Black women in general, and women and children impacted by sexual and domestic abuse violence specifically—were not historically part of the rhythms of the walk and talk of protests...” (Ellis Davis, Intro xxi).

And so, Church, the question today is not *if* violence exists. The question is: **Can the Church help heal?**

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## **Why / Must Preach This**

Now my brothers may wonder—why is a Black man preaching this sermon?

Because **all justice needs allies**. Because **the body of Christ is not whole when some members are bleeding in silence**. Because I, too, have a Black mother, Black sisters, aunts, nieces, cousins, friends, and a precious Black daughter. Because there are Black women in this very congregation who have shaped my soul and spirit. I preach this for them—and for the Church to be the full expression of Christ’s call to justice.

Let us turn to Scripture for divine wisdom and moral clarity.

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## **A Familiar Story, A Present Pain**

Our text is from 2 Samuel 13. It tells the story of Tamar, daughter of King David and sister to Absalom. Tamar was royalty—beloved, adorned, respected. Yet, she was violated by someone who should have been her protector: her half-brother Amnon.

He manipulated her, isolated her, and raped her. And after he took what he wanted, he cast her aside in disgust.

### **How many Tamars walk among us today?**

Women, men, and people of all gender identities—violated and discarded. Silenced by shame. Wounded by those they trusted. Abandoned by institutions that should have protected them.

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### **Silence is Not Salvation**

When Tamar cried out, **no one came**. When she tore her robe and poured ashes on her head—a public cry for help—**her family told her to be quiet**.

“Don’t take this thing to heart,” her brother Absalom said.  
And David—David, her father, the king, the man after God’s own heart—was angry... but did nothing.

### **Church, how often do we hear the same refrains today?**

- “Don’t cause trouble.”
- “Pray about it.”
- “God will heal you in time.”
- “Forgive and forget.”

But forgiveness, beloved, is not denial. It's not silence.

Rev. Dr. Ellis Davis reimagines Jesus’ words on the cross. Jesus didn’t say, “I forgive you.” He said, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” Perhaps, she suggests, **even Jesus—hurting in his body—could not find it in himself to forgive in that moment, but he knew the heart of a forgiving God** (Ellis Davis, p. 54).

Church, **silence is not healing**. Silence protects perpetrators, not survivors. We must not be like David. We must not be like Absalom. **We must listen, believe, and act.**

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### **A Call to Justice**

Micah 6:8 calls us: “*Do justice. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God.*”

Justice means:

- Believing survivors.
- Creating safe spaces for truth-telling.
- Holding the powerful accountable.
- Preaching clearly that **abuse is sin**, not just against the body but against the image of God in every person.

David failed Tamar. Let **us** not fail those entrusted to us.

We must minister not only to the wounded, but also work for the transformation of the one who wounds. That means prevention, intervention, and **God's justice** for all.

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### **God Sees the Broken**

To those who carry Tamar's story in their own bodies and souls—**hear this truth:**

**God sees you.**

God saw Tamar in her desolation.

God saw Hagar in the wilderness.

God saw the bleeding woman in the crowd.

**And God sees you.**

You are not what was done to you.

You are not your trauma.

**You are a beloved child of the Most High God.**

Your worth is not diminished. Your story is not over. And the God who wept with Tamar, who bled on Calvary, who rolled away the stone—**that God is with you still.**

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### **The Church Must Heal**

If we are to be the Body of Christ, we must be:

- A refuge for the wounded.
- A sanctuary of justice.
- A people of compassion and accountability.

We must preach, teach, and live in a way that **protects the vulnerable and refuses to let abuse hide in silence.**

Tamar lived in desolation because no one fought for her.

**But Church—we must fight.**

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### **Will We Be Silent?**

So I ask you today:

- Will we be silent like David?
- Or will we stand like Christ, arms stretched wide for the wounded?
- Will we cover it up like Absalom?
- Or will we uncover the truth and let the Spirit begin to heal?

Let this church not be another place of silence, but a beacon of hope.

Let us build ministries of restoration.

Let us speak up, show up, and stand up for justice.

Let us protect the dignity of every soul that walks through our doors.

Because **Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free.**

And in His name, **healing is possible.**

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**For His glory. For their healing. For our witness.**

Amen.