

September 29, 2013
Weird Stories in the Bible

Mr. Wrong
Genesis 19:30-38

Opening words: Two weeks ago, I began my newest sermon series, *Weird Stories in the Bible*. I will be glad to admit I did not select these passages of scripture. They came from our high school class, who assigned that task to one question-filled young man. He did a wonderful job of selecting some odd stories. This is the truth. They are stories that come from the Bible, but they don't sound like they should be found in the Bible. For this reason, they are not read annually like the nativity or the passion. This may be the only time you ever hear these scriptures read in church. Maybe that is a good thing?

Today's weird story revolves around Lot. Do you remember his story? He was Abraham's nephew and business partner. For professional gain, he decided to live in the original "sin cities", Sodom and Gomorrah. It may have been a wise business move, but it did nothing for him personally. The cities were so sinful, God decides to destroy them. However, Lot and his family are given an opportunity to escape. They run for their lives. Lot loses everything, except his daughters. With nowhere else to live, they strike up residency in a cave. From this dark location they did two things. First, they thought about the events of their past. Second, they began to worry about their future. To say the least, their options were limited. With this little bit of understanding, may God give you ease to hear today's weird story, Genesis 19:30-38. Let me call this message *Mr. Wrong*.

Genesis 19:30-38 Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹ One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children—as is the custom all over the earth. ³² Let's get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line through our father."
³³ That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and slept with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.
³⁴ The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I slept with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him so we can preserve our family line through our father."
³⁵ So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.
³⁶ So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab; he is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸ The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites of today.

Isaac Watts once said, "*Learning to trust is one of life's most difficult tasks.*" Unless you have been living in a cave this week, you know Iran's newly elected President, Hassan Rauhani, spoke at the United Nations. I do not claim to be an expert on Middle Eastern politics, but his words seemed much more moderate than his radical predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. There was a sense of relief in the air and a spirit of hopefulness was born. Some had even hoped he would shake hands with President Obama, who spoke on the same day. We learned on Thursday our Secretary of State spoke with his Iranian counterpart. The Iranian president said the right words and did the right things. However, not everyone trusts him. Israel called him a fake, a professional politician, who can't be trusted. Do you believe the new Iranian president is sincere? Do you believe he is a fake? Let me ask a more personal question. Do you have a hard time trusting other people? Do you have a hard time trusting yourself? I am a preacher, so I have to ask you this next question. How far do you trust God? Isaac Watt's words are correct, *learning to trust is one of life's most difficult tasks.* If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

Every few weeks I have lunch with a good friend by the name of Byron. We met years ago when we were both serving in the old Cleveland District. We have several things in common. One of those things is we are both victims of blind dates. Today, I am here and he is serving the Streetsboro United Methodist Church. We meet in the middle of our parishes. The closest to the middle is Deerfield's finest bistro, The Circle Restaurant. Have you ever been to The Circle Restaurant? The food is good and the customers are colorful. (I would recommend the Mexican Omelet.) Even though we meet regularly, we have no set agenda. We talk about nothing. We talk about the latest gossip floating around the annual conference. There always seems to be an imploding church or a questionable appointment. We talk about our colleagues who are eyeing retirement. We review the silly things we did years ago. We talk about our families and our churches.

The other day he asked, "What are you preaching on these days?" I told him about this sermon series, *Weird Stories in the Bible*. He shook his head and smiled. He said, "Tell me about it." I gave him the history of the series and the past few messages. I told him we have looked at 2 Kings 2:23-25, the forty-two teenagers who were eaten by bears. I told him we looked at Genesis 9:20-29, Noah's drunkenness in his birthday suit. I told him next week we are going to look at Genesis 5:21-24, Enoch's eternity. I told him this week we will be looking at Genesis 19:30-38, Lot impregnating his daughters. Byron is much more analytical than I.

He asked me what I knew about the story of Lot's daughters. As a father of two girls, I know the story bothers me. I know my high school biology teacher is jumping up and down every time I read it. I know my left eye begins to drift every time I read it. I know Lot was qualified for both a "World's Greatest Day" tee shirt and a "World's Greatest Grandpa" coffee mug. Byron said, "So you don't know anything about the story?" I said, "No!" He said the story of Lot's daughters is a story of survival. From the young women's perspective, all the men in their world had been killed at Sodom and

Gomorrah. The only male left to father their children and carry on the race was their father, Lot. In their desperateness to survive, they took matters into their own hands. For two consecutive nights, they got Dad drunk and had their way with him, sexually. A short time later they discovered they were pregnant. There is no other way to say it. They messed everything up because they didn't trust God. The two babies born from the one-night-stands with their father would be the fathers of two new nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites. Both of those nations would be enemies of Abraham's descendants, God's Chosen people. There is no other way to say it. The story teaches us about the importance of trust. How many messes have you created in your life because you failed to trust God?

Today, I want to use this story and talk about three kinds of trust. The first kind of trust deals with trusting **yourself**. How far do you trust yourself? Are you honest about your own abilities? You are probably not as good or bad as you think. No one is an expert in every topic, but no one is completely ignorant. The second kind of trust deals with trusting **others**. There seems to be a lack of trust in the local church. I am not talking about fighting Satan in our world. I am talking about fighting each other in our own building. Do you trust your fellow church members? Do you think they have some hidden agenda? Do you think they are foolish because they don't do things like you? The third kind of trust deals with trusting **God**. How far do you trust God? It appears trusting God with your eternity makes your present more enjoyable. Do the people in your life consider you a trusting person? If you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**"

Do you trust yourself?

It was back in April that 23-year-old Mary Owen was rescued by the National Guard. For six days she had been alone on top of Oregon's 4,600 feet Mount Hood. She had cut her leg badly during a fall. She thought help would come quickly, but she was wrong. She was no novice; she knew what to do. She built a snow cave and melted snow to drink. She spent her time thinking about the loose ends in her life. She admitted it, for the first time in her life she thought about her own death. Her death would have to wait. Once rescued, she was taken to a Portland hospital and got two things she missed the most, French Toast and a bath. Can I ask you a question? Do you think Mary Owen is a hero? She survived the wilderness alone. Do you think Mary Owen is a fool? What was she doing on top of Mount Hood alone? I don't want to sound critical, but I don't think Mary Owen really cares what we think. People like Mary Owen are more concerned about how they feel about themselves.

This is question number one. Do you trust yourself? Lot's daughters really didn't seem to care what others were thinking. The only thing they were concerned about was their opinion about themselves. Some people are uncomfortable telling their world they use a dating site. They don't want to look hard-up. The daughters seem quite comfortable that they are sleeping with dad. They didn't have a clue about the mess they were creating. You know it is true. It is possible to be overconfident. It is possible lack self-confidence. There is a balance we all must strike. Successful people seem to

have the right amount of self-confidence. Do the people in your life consider you self-confident? Edgar Allan Poe once said, *"I have great confidence in fools. My friends call it self-confidence."* If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

Do you trust the people in your life?

It was a beautiful fall Saturday several years ago. Kathryn and I were leaving the Youngstown State University football game early. The score was ugly because the opponent was inferior. We were answering that never-ending question, what are we going to do for dinner? Without warning, my cell phone rang. The voice on the other end of the line was a stranger. The woman had the unpleasant job of telling me that my father-in-law had suffered a stroke. The outcome did not look good, so they encouraged us to come to the hospital as soon as possible. Without a thought, we drove to Canton and found Vern at Altman Hospital. Some of you knew Vern. Some of you remember Vern. He was a guy who valued the truth, so I will tell you the truth about him. Vern was negative and critical. Vern had the ability to ruin any happy occasion. I was not close to him, but I liked him. That is why it was so difficult to walk into that hospital room. Instantly, the nurse asked us to identify ourselves. The nurse took me to the side and said, "The doctor wants to talk to you." When the doctor arrived, he began to ask me questions. Were we going to fight for every breath of life, or we were going to let Vern die with some dignity? I was surprised by these questions. I was not a biological child. I was the son-in-law. No one was the biological child. I looked at the doctor and said, "Can I ask you a question? Why are you asking *me* what to do?" The doctor said, "You didn't know Mr. Heller made you his Power of Attorney?" There was a part of me that was mad at Vern. Why would he put me in that spot? Why would he make me Power of Attorney? I asked Kathryn that question. She said, "I think Vern made a good choice. Vern liked you. Vern respected you. Vern knew you would do what is right. Vern trusted you."

This is question number two. Do you trust the people in your life? It is this question that makes my job so challenging. The truth is, I like all of you. The truth is, I trust all of you. I want to do what Vern would have done - tell you the truth. Within this congregation, there are individuals who don't like or trust other individuals. Within this congregation, there are groups that don't like or trust other groups. There are more days than I care to admit that I am caught in the middle. There is an undercurrent here of distrust. It doesn't really matter if you like each other. It's more important to trust one another. Do you trust everyone sitting in this room? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

Do you trust God?

Jennifer Fulwiler has a passion for spiritual development. She has read countless autobiographies written by people who radically trust God. Her research includes both men and women. Her research includes every branch of the Christian tree. Everyone is different, yet they all hold to certain practices: (How many of these holy habits do you practice?)

1. They accept suffering
2. They accept their morality
3. They make appointments with God
4. They listen in prayer
5. They limit distractions
6. They listen to their friends
7. They offer their obedience to God

This is question number three. Do you trust God? Lot's daughters failed to trust God and created a big mess. How many messes have you created by not trusting God? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

Isaac Watts was right! He once said, *"Learning to trust is one of life's most difficult tasks."* The question each one of us must answer is, who do you trust? Do you trust yourself? Or do you always feel like Mr. or Mrs. 'Wrong'? Do you trust the people in your life? Or do you think you have to do everything in your life because they can't do anything? Do you trust God? In the end, he is the one we must trust. Lot's daughters created a big mess for one reason. They could not trust God. Corrie Ten Boon once said, *"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**