

The Mercy in the Mess as told by Matthew (Matthew 1:1-17)

We will read this whole passage out of respect for God's Word

- Afterward, I will explain to you why this is of great interest

Let's be honest, for most of us that was a bit tedious to read

- That's okay, we can be honest
- We are not saying that we did not value it—we just did not know why it was **of immediate value**—other than the fact that it is in the Bible

We are not a culture that really values genealogies (comparatively)

- If we were writing the NT, we would not begin it this way
- You have to start with something that **grabs the attention**—for most of us, this doesn't (e.g. movies)

But the ancient world knew the same thing...

- You start with something that will grab your reader's attention
 - Mark starts with:
 - Colorful Characters!
 - John the Baptist comes wearing camel skin, and eating bugs dipped in honey and told everyone they better repent!
 - Because One was coming of whom John wasn't even worthy of stooping down to untie his sandals
 - And He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!
 - Sky opens... convulsing demons
 - Luke starts with:
 - Bold claims of being a better book!
 - Many people have written about Jesus (non-canonical)
 - But I (a historian) have carefully investigated everything from the beginning
 - And I am going to give you an exact and orderly (eyewitness) account so that you may know with certainty about Jesus! (I.e. the real, inside story)
 - John stars with:
 - Mysterious, intriguing language and revelation!
 - He calls Jesus the Word
 - **In the beginning was the Word—the Word was with God, and the Word was God**
 - Everything that was ever created was created through Him
 - All life is in Him
 - And He... took on human flesh and came to dwell among us!
 - Matthew starts with:
 - **"The book of the genealogy of Jesus..."**
 - Then list 46 *different* names, but repeats them in his phraseology, so that we read 86 names in total (can't pronounce—don't know)—before we get to Jesus
 - Not exactly a page turner by our modern standards

And yet

- In the first 2 centuries after Christ, Matthew was the most widely read Gospel
- And, when the early Christians assembled the books that would become the NT, they agreed, **"Ooh, we gotta start with Matthew—that intro is killer!"**

So what, as modern readers, are we missing when we are tempted to skip the intro?

We have to think of the **purpose** first

- Matthew = The **Expected Messiah King** who fulfills the 2 great covenants given to God's people (Davidic and Abrahamic)
- (Starts with, **"The book of the genealogy of JC, the son of David, the son of Abraham"**)

These were big promises given to Israel with implications for the whole world

- The covenantal promise to King David was that there would be an everlasting rule from his descendants that sat on his throne
 - 2 Samuel 7:16, NASB
 - Jeremiah 23:5-6, NASB
 - Isaiah 9:6-7, NASB
- The covenantal promise to Father Abraham was that from him would come a nation and from that nation would come One through whom the whole world would be blessed
 - Genesis 12:1-3, NASB
 - Genesis 22:18, NASB

Notice what is being said/promised by God in both of these covenants:

- He was saying that one day, One would come through whom God would **extend His loving rule and blessing** to the whole world (E.g. **KINGDOM**)
- Matthew is contending that Jesus is that One! (= **verse 1** is the point of whole genealogy)
- All the ancient hope, held in the midst of failure and horror would be fulfilled in Jesus

Hundreds of years of waiting (700/400)

- Isaiah 25:7-9, NLT

These promises came about in unexpected ways

- From the nature of them you would think that there would be greatness and success and victory after victory for God's people
- But that was never the case
 - Abraham's descendants (the Jews) became slaves (400 years) and wandered in the wilderness
 - "Who will deliver us? Who will bring us into the Promised Land"
 - David's descendants (Kings) were a sordid lot with whom there were lots of ups and downs for God's people
 - "Who will lead us in righteousness? Who will bring us peace?"
 - **Verses 7-11** (good and bad kings)
 - Ended in the Babylonian Captivity—**Exile** (v. 11)
 - **None of this looked like it could possibly be God's plan for God's people**

Isn't that a familiar sentiment for us at times in our own lives and times?

- We share in the hope of these promises...
- Sometimes we look around and say, "**This can't be what God had in mind!?!**"
- But, this **genealogy** is teaching us that **God knows what He is doing**

And Matthew knows what he is doing here

- Not all ancestors included
- Selecting certain ones to tell a certain story (looks very much like ours—broken)
 - The story of:
 - People that should not be included (don't deserve it)
 - Outsiders (Def: Gentiles)
 - Really messy stories with seriously bad choices (big time sin)

4 women (unexpected inclusions x 3—gentiles, women, stories)

Verses 2-3a (Tamar—Canaanite)

- Judah, Er and Onan the real scoundrels (Tamar a desperate, deceived woman)

Verses 4-5a (Rahab—Jerichoite)

Verses 5b-6 (Ruth—Moabite)

- Heart broken outsider
- E.g. Ruth, though a good woman, had a dubious family tree of her own
 - "The Moabites were the product of the incestuous relations of Lot with his two unmarried daughters. In order to preserve the family line, because they had no husbands or brothers, each of the daughters got their father drunk and caused him to unknowingly have sexual relations with them. The son, produced by Lot's union with his oldest daughter, was named Moab."¹ (Cf. Genesis 19:30-38)
- Becomes the Great-Grandmother of the Great King David!

Verse 6b (Bathsheba—Hittite by Marriage)

- Victim of David's sin (which was)

All of these are part of the story and included!!! What does all this teach us?

- Why does Matthew (The Holy Spirit) **choose** to include these 4 women? Why not Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel (wives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)?
 - The Genealogy is **preaching the Gospel** from the very first line
 - The **Good News** is that Jesus is calling those who **don't belong** and who **don't deserve** it
 - The Story is told to the **sinful** and **broken**
 - **I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.** (Jesus in Luke 5:32)

Our lives, our stories, our history, are very much like this

- Deception, adultery, sexual immorality, murder, victimization, injustice, undeserving and outside

But take careful note of where the story lands—**how it all ends: Jesus** (v. 16)

- Not in **brokenness**—but in the promise of something **better**
- Not in **shame**—but in the arrival of **salvation**
- Not in **ruins**—but in the experience of **redemption**
 - **Isaiah 61:1-3, 7, 10-11, NASB**

All that mess is not the end of the story

- God has written us a better ending in Jesus
 - No one is beyond God's inclusive grace (no matter the mess)
- God's merciful love and **sovereignty** are bigger than our mistakes
 - **Psalms 89:30-37, NASB**
 - God is faithful!
- The **invitation** here is to bring your messy story to Jesus
 - God has made a **New Covenant** with us
 - **Luke 22:19-20, NASB**

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7* (Chicago Ill: Moody, 1985), 8.
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