

Lighting of the First Advent Candle:

Lighting a candle is a simple yet profound act. It is a testimony to the power of light over darkness. Even the light of one candle can reveal our faces as we stand near the candle. As we light the candle, we begin our journey to Christmas, a day of joy and celebration.

The first candle on the Advent wreath is called the Prophecy candle, it opens the period that anticipates Christmas and remembers those who first spoke the promise of the coming Christ child.

[[Light one Violet Candle]]

Isaiah 9:2-7

*2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

*3 You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*4 For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

*5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

*6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

*Father in Heaven,
Long ago your prophets spoke and told us that you would bring
salvation and peace into our fallen world. On this first Sunday of
Advent we begin a spiritual pilgrimage as we joyously anticipate
Christmas Day, a reminder of the birth of our savior. Give us
your peace that through us all may know the peace that only
Christ brings. In his name we pray. Amen.*

“A Royal Lineage” // Matthew 1:1-17 //
Come Let Us Adore Him

If you have your Bibles begin turning to Matthew 1. If you’re using one of the Bibles in the pew rack you’ll find our text on page _____.

Let me tell you where we’re going for the next 4 weeks. For the month of December we’re going to walk through Matthew’s account of the early life of Jesus. We’re calling the series “Come Let Us Adore Him.” We’ll cover Matthew chapters 1 and 2. And the story we find there, isn’t your typical Christmas narrative.

Week 1, today: “Jesus’ Royal Family”

Week 2: The Birth of Christ

Week 3: The Visit of the Magi

Week 4: King Herod and the Killing of the Innocents

As we walk through these 4 weeks we constantly be asking, “What does Matthew want us to know about Jesus? And how does that change who we are?”

INTRO TO MATTHEW:

Before we read our passage, let me give you a little background on Matthew and his gospel:

Author: Technically Anonymous. Name of the author doesn’t occur in the pages of the book. The early church accepted Matthew (who was often called Levi the tax collector) to be the author. Matthew was a Jew. He grew up in a Jewish, Hebrew family. His gospel is filled with OT references.

Date: Likely written sometime in the mid 60’s. To give you a reference point James and Galatians were likely the first books of the NT written sometime around AD 49. Revelation was the last written around AD 90.

Provenance: It’s likely that Matthew was living in Palestine when he wrote the book. And it’s likely that he wrote the book for Jews—to convert them to belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. For instance, in John’s gospel, he’ll say things like: “Jesus went to Jerusalem to observe Passover, a feast of the Jews.” John explains the Jewish custom of Passover because John expected Gentiles to read his gospel account. Matthew leaves all of the Jewish customs unexplained. So, it’s likely he’s writing to a Jewish audience.

Purpose: If you were to sit down this afternoon and read all of Matthew, and then ask, “What is Matthew trying to do in this gospel account?” He’s trying to do at least 4 things:

1. Jesus is the Messiah of Israel, the fulfillment of the OT promises.
2. The Kingdom of God has appeared, inaugurated by the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.
3. There is a continuity between the fulfillment of some of the particular promises to Abraham and the universal promise of salvation to all people. When God promised to bless Abraham and increase him and give him a land, those promises find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.
4. The church is to transcend ethnic and cultural limitations. The people Jesus came into the world for isn’t just Jewish, it’s made up of every tribe and tongue.

We’ll see several of these in our passage today.

Today we are beginning the Matthew’s gospel. And Matthew begins in a curious way. He begins with a genealogy: a list of Jesus ancestors, his family line.

SERMON TEXT

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, 8 and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now, be honest. How many of you gave up after Amminadab? How many of you, when you come to a section like this in your Bible reading plan think, "I'll just skim this section."

I want you to see this morning, however, that who your family is tells people a lot about you. And Matthew begins his gospel with a list of names precisely because this is Jesus family, and if you will take a moment to get to know Jesus' family, you'll learn who Jesus is and what he came to do, and how that changes you.

Now, after studying these names all week, I know that that are many things that Matthew is teaching us about Jesus. I want to show you four:

- I. GOD SOVEREIGNLY CONTROLS HISTORY
- II. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO SHOW US MERCY
- III. GOD'S DESIRE FOR ALL NATIONS
- IV. GOD'S SAVING REST IN CHRIST

I. GOD SOVEREIGNLY CONTROLS HISTORY

What do I mean by that? I mean that the God of the Bible is very much concerned with, and in control of the events of history.

- He's not like the distant god of the deist, who made the world like a clock, and wound it up and walked away.
- He's not like the gods of Ancient Greece and Rome, who were kind of in control, but always had competition from rival gods.
- He's not like the Force in Star Wars. Kind of behind and beneath everything, but made up of chaos and control.

No, the Scriptures present God as sovereignly in control of all things. He made all things. He ordered all things. He sustains all things. And Matthew shows us God's sovereignty in this list of names:

1. God sovereignly overrules nature to give us Christ.

When you read the top and the bottom of this list you see two names: Abraham and Mary.

Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. But he almost died without an heir. God made a promise to Abraham that even though he was old and past his child bearing years, he and Sarah would have a child. Isaac was not born because of Abraham's youth, or strength, or even because of his faith—Isaac was born by a sheer miracle of God's mercy.

The same with Mary. Mary was a virgin. If you look down in verse 16 you'll read:

16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

The "of whom" there is feminine, signifying that Jesus was the biological son of Mary, but not of Joseph. Joseph was not Jesus biological father. We'll see that again next week.

Jesus is not born by will of man, he is born by a sheer miracle of God's mercy. Jesus was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Abraham was at the end of his life, his child bearing days were over. Mary was at the beginning of her life, and her child bearing days had not yet begun because she was a virgin.

God sovereignly overruled nature to give us Christ.

2. God sovereignly overrules custom and convention to give us Christ.

What do I mean by that? Well, in the ancient world, who was it that customarily became the heir to the family? The oldest. The oldest son became the heir. But look at the line of Jesus:

Esau was the older brother to Jacob. Culture and custom stated that Esau should have been the chosen heir. And yet God sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau.

He did the same thing with Isaac. Who was the oldest son of Abraham? Ishmael. And yet God sovereignly overruled the culture and customs of the day to accomplish his plan.

This genealogy shows us that God is sovereignly bending all of history to this moment, when Christ would come into the world. Nature bows to God's sovereignty. Culture and custom kneels to his power.

This is essential for our faith. God's sovereign control over the events of history is crucial, and essential, and necessary for the foundation of our faith. Why?

Because at its core the gospel isn't good advice—it's good news! Advice is something you do. News is something you hear. Matthew begins with a list of names, which is a way saying, "What I'm telling you actually happened in time and space."

One of Christianity's distinguishing features is that it is **actual history**, because the core of Christianity is not a set of principles that Jesus taught us to do, **but something that Jesus came to do for us.**

You see, most religions are built on principles, that really would be true whether the founder of the religion ever lived or not.

- For example, the teachings of Buddhism don't depend on whether or not Buddha ever lived. The principles of living are the key, Buddha was just the mouthpiece.
- The same is true for Islam. Islam is a pattern for how Allah wants you to live. Mohammad was just the prophet. Now, Mohammad, of course was an actual person, but the principles don't depend on him being a real person.

Do you understand why this makes Christianity so different? Our faith depends on events that actually took place in history, because the essence of Christianity isn't what Jesus taught us to do, it's what Jesus came to do for us.

Matthew begins by showing you God's sovereign control over history to accomplish his salvation.

II. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO GIVE US MERCY

Not only does this genealogy show us God's sovereignty. We also see God's faithfulness to give us mercy.

Now there are a lot of names in this list. I read about every single one this week. It took me a while. And we don't have time to read them all here, but let me tell you what this list of names means to you and to me:

God is undeniably faithful to give us his mercy. Let me show you God's faithfulness from this list:

The list is broken into three sections: Abraham to David, David to Jeconiah, and Jeconiah to Joseph.

If you were to imagine this list as a stock ticker, you know that little line that tracks stock prices here's what it would look like:

Abraham to David would be a steady increase with a couple minor dips. David would be the top of the market, and then everything after would be a continual decline. I'll hit the highlights here:

- Abraham was a sinful idolater who followed God into the land of Canaan.
- Jacob was a trickster and a liar who continually needed the grace of God to rescue him from his own schemes.
- Judah, you'll notice that his twin sons are named alongside their mother Tamar. Well, Tamar was Judah's daughter. We'll come back to that in a moment.
- Rahab was a prostitute.
- Boaz was a good man.
- David was the greatest king in Israel's history.

- Solomon built the temple, but later in life gave his heart to the gods of all the women he married.
- His son Rehoboam split the kingdom in two.
- Asa and Jehoshaphat walked in the ways of the Lord.
- Uzziah followed the Lord until the very end when he became proud which brought about his own destruction.
- Jotham was a good king.
- Ahaz made all of Judah idolatrous. He burned his own sons as human sacrifices. Listen to what 2 Chronicles says of Ahaz:
 - **22** In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the Lord—this same King Ahaz. **23** For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. 2 Chronicles 28:22-23
 - All of the items for the temple that Solomon had built, Ahaz destroyed.
- Hezekiah walked in the ways of David. He cleansed the temple. Restored worship. He reinstated the priesthood.
- Manasseh did what was evil. He rebuilt the high places for people to worship false gods. He built altars to pagan gods in the two courts of the temple. He too, burned his own sons as an offering to false deities. After he was deported to Babylon he repented.
- Amon incurred so much guilt that his own servants killed him.
- Josiah, as 16-year-old king, began to seek the Lord. He cleared out the cities of idolatry. As they were cleaning out the temple they found the book of the Law. Josiah gathered the nation, and read the Law of Moses and consecrated the nation to God.

Church do you see this pattern played out?

- This king did that which was evil.
- This king walked in the ways of the Lord

Over and over and over the genealogy of Jesus shows us God's unrelenting faithfulness to show us mercy. Over and over God could have judged sin.

This mixture of good king, bad king shows us that grace doesn't run in the family. Every single generation must rediscover the faithfulness of God in the gospel.

Listen to me church: because God is good, and because he knows all things, he will judge every sin. He will condemn every sin. He will by holy and separate from sin. And yet he is also patient. He is faithful to give us his mercy.

So let me ask you a few questions:

How engaged are you personally in making sure your family understands the gospel? Are you assuming that God's grace just kind of runs in the family? Let the genealogy of Jesus be a warning to you that you bear a responsibility to pass down that which you have been taught. You cannot make your child a Christian. But here's what you can do:

- You can pray for your child.
- You can teach your child the gospel.
- (I'm not good at that) That's why we have a children's ministry at 9am. You can be yoked up with a great teacher and watch how they teach the Bible to children, then follow their lead. Be their disciple, even as you child is.
- Be faithful to your church. Make church a priority. Don't miss easily.

One more thought on the faithfulness of God to give us his mercy—friend, you may be here today and think that you are beyond the faithful mercy of God. Let me encourage you to take another look at that list:

Manasseh sacrificed his own sons—and even after that he was

not beyond God's reach. He eventually repented of his sins. That means he turned away from his former life and turned to God as his only hope.

As Sam Allberry said, "The family Jesus comes from anticipates the family he has come for."

Jesus came from a family of sinners. Jesus came for a family of sinners. Do you want to be in Jesus family? The only question is if you are willing to turn from your old life and turn to Jesus as your hope, your rescue, your God.

God was so faithful to his promise to show mercy on sinners that he overturned generations of sin and guilt to bring his Son, Jesus into the world-- for you!

III. GOD'S DESIRE FOR ALL NATIONS

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus shows us:

- God sovereignly controls history
- God's faithfulness to show us mercy
- God's desire for all nations.

I'm not sure if you noticed this earlier when I read through the passage but there are 4 women mentioned in the genealogy:

- Tamar
- Rahab
- Ruth
- Bathsheba

It's important to note that it wasn't a common practice to include women in ancient genealogies. Why does Matthew include them?

Here's what many of the commentators say: All of these women were sinful and Matthew including them shows how God's grace goes beyond even the most sinful. But I don't think their sinfulness is the unifying factor.

- Tamar was desperate.

- Rahab was a prostitute who repented of her sin, and forsook her people to turn to God.
- Ruth was a godly friend to Naomi.
- And Bathsheeba was abused by king David.

No in this passage, it's not the women who are the standout sinners—it's the men like Ahaz and Rehoboam.

So why does Matthew include these four women?

I believe these four women show us God's desire for the Gentiles. All four of them are gentile women. They aren't Jews. They weren't born into the covenant family. They were aliens. Strangers to the promise. And yet, here they are—included, welcomed, and not just given a place in the corner—they are elevated to the highest seats of the table. They are recorded in the lineage of Jesus!

Friend, God's plan all along has been to save people from every tribe, tongue and nation! The people of God in the Old Testament— the Hebrews, were to be missionaries. God's original promise to Abraham was that he would bless him, yes, but not just that. He promised that through Abraham he would bless all the nations of the earth.

And this promise is fulfilled in the greater Son of Abraham, the Son of David, Jews—the son of Tamar, and Rahab, and Ruth, and Bathsheeba. He's a son of Gentiles as well. He is the redeemer who is making a new Israel, filled with people from every tribe and tongue.

This is one reason why every time we turn around we're promoting another mission offering, or calling one another to invite neighbors to church. This is why we support missionaries, and why we teach discipleship classes on evangelism. It's because Jesus is Lord of all and God's desire is to give the nations to Jesus as his heritage.

IV. GOD'S SAVING REST IN CHRIST

The last verse in our passage today is rather interesting. Look at verse 17:

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Here's what's interesting about this verse: Matthew actually omitted some generations intentionally. He doesn't list every ancestor in the line of Joseph. Matthew removes some generations so that his genealogy will be symmetrical. 3 sets of 14. Why would he do that?

Now, I know it's been a while since you were in math class, but follow me for one moment. 3 sets of 14's is 6 7's. which makes Jesus the 7th 7. Jesus would be beginning of the 7th set.

Now, maybe you know this or maybe you don't, but all throughout the OT the number 7 is a significant number. It points to rest.

- God rested on the 7th day of creation. The Jews followed the Sabbath day of rest.
- Every seven years, the land in Israel was supposed to rest—to lie fallow so it could replenish its nutrients. This was referred to as a Sabbath year of rest.
- In Leviticus 25 we see that every “seventh seven year” is called the “Year of Jubilee,” in which all debts are forgiven and all slaves are freed.

When Matthew writes his gospel account for a Jewish audience who is steeped in the OT he says, “Jesus is the 7th 7.” In other words, “Jesus is the true and better Year of Jubilee. In him all slaves are free. In him all debts are paid. In him you will find saving rest. He is the ultimate rest.

And it's no wonder that in Matthew 12:28 we hear Jesus say these words:

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

You find ultimate rest in Jesus because God is sovereignly in control of history. Who brought you a savior, and will deliver you into his kingdom through his shed blood on the cross, and his resurrection from the empty tomb.

You will ultimate rest in Jesus because though your sins were as scarlet God was faithful to show you mercy and make them white as snow.

You will find ultimate rest in Jesus because he isn't just a savior for the Jews. God's desire was for all nations. His desire was for you! Personally.

You will find ultimate rest in Jesus because he lived as you could not, and died as you should have. And in Christ nothing can separate you from the love of God.

What more do you need at Christmas in 2017 than rest for your soul? In Christ you find that rest.