

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Senior Pastor Titus Green**  
**December 22, 2024**  
**Deeply Rooted (LOVE)**  
**Matthew 1**

This morning, we are continuing our Advent studies from the genealogy of Jesus. These are the people God the Father used to bring God the Son into this world. Over the last few weeks, we've taken a closer look at some of their stories and the circumstances of their lives, and in the process, we've learned about the themes of Advent: hope, peace, and joy. This morning, we return to Jesus' family tree with the goal of learning about the fourth theme of Advent: love.

***Matthew 1:1–17***

***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.***

So, why in the world does Matthew start the very first chapter of the very first book of the New Testament with this list of names no one can pronounce? It doesn't seem like the best way to get people hooked into the story of Jesus. What gives?

Matthew is writing this book to a primarily Jewish audience. And, like other Middle Eastern cultures, ancestry was exceptionally important to first century Jews. Things like the ownership of land and property were passed down from generation to generation within a family. So, genealogies were used to settle disputes over the use of land. Positions of leadership and authority were also related to your family. For instance, in order to serve as a priest in Israel, you had to be able to prove that you were descended from Moses' brother, Aaron and the tribe of Levi. Kings were all chosen from the royal line of David.

So, the family tree was a critical part of a Jew's identity. I mean, just to be considered a Jew meant that you were able to trace your lineage all the way back to Father Abraham.

So, this list of names at the beginning of Matthew is anything but meaningless or random. Matthew is establishing Jesus' credentials. Jesus is distinctly Jewish as a descendent of Abraham. He has the right to sit on David's throne as a member of David's royal family. And why are those things important? Because they show that Jesus has the credentials to be the Messiah – the One God

promised to send who would defeat the enemy of God and reverse the curse of sin and set up an eternal Kingdom on the throne of David.

Matthew includes all the big names and important stories that tell you what you need to know about Jesus the Messiah. Abraham? Check. Isaac and Jacob and David and Solomon? They're all included.

But Matthew does something completely unexpected. He throws in names that aren't necessary to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. On four separate occasions, Matthew includes references to women. It wasn't necessary to include women, not because they were unimportant but because things like belonging to a certain tribe or having been qualified to be king were conveyed through the men of the family, not the women. So, it's interesting that the Holy Spirit stirs Matthew to include women in the ancestry of Jesus.

Even more, the women who are included represent stories that most self-respecting families would try to forget. Four unexpected women...

Look at verse 3:

***and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar,***

Judah is a big name in the history of Israel. The tribe of Judah is named after him. The terms "Jew" and "Judaism" are taken from his name. He's a really big deal, so you would certainly expect his name to be included. But you would never expect Tamar.

Her story is found in Genesis 38. Right after Judah and his brothers sold Joseph into slavery, Judah left the family behind. He married a Canaanite woman and had 3 sons, and then his wife died. One of his sons also married a Canaanite woman whose name was Tamar.

Judah's son was put to death because of his great wickedness before he and Tamar could have children. So, Judah's second son married her. He was also so wicked that God killed him before they could have children. Judah promised that he would send his youngest son to marry Tamar, but he never did. That left Tamar destitute and without any hope for her future.

So, Tamar made a plan. She heard that Judah was going to check on his flocks. She dressed up like a local prostitute and positioned herself alongside the road that Judah was traveling. Given Judah's track record, she was banking on the fact that he would choose sin and she was right. Judah told her he would give her a young goat for her services, but he didn't have one with him. So, he gave her a security deposit in the form of his shepherd's staff and his signet, which was like an ancient form of ID.

Judah went his way, and so did Tamar. She wound up pregnant, and when Judah heard about it, he insisted she be put to death for her sin. As he stands in front of the crowd, he demands to know what filthy man would do this to a widowed woman. At that moment, Tamar produced Judah's staff and signet and said, "The man who owns these!"

The story ends with Tamar giving birth to twins, Perez and Zerah. It's a dark story in Israel's history. A non-Jewish woman. Scandal. Lies. Unwed pregnancy. And here it is, purposely included in the family tree of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. This is the family of Jesus. This is His story. These are His credentials.

Now, look at verses 5&6:

***and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.***

As Matthew continues the family tree of Jesus, the Holy Spirit stirs him to include two more women: Rahab and Ruth.

Rahab's story is found in Joshua 2. The people of Israel have come to the land God promised to give them. It's a land filled with wicked nations that will have to be defeated by Israel. The first battle they come to is against the city of Jericho.

Part of the strategy that God gave Israel's leader, Joshua, was to send spies into the city so they could get the lay of the land. The spies enter the city, and it seems that the only hotel they can find is operated by a local prostitute. Her name was Rahab. She had heard about the God of Israel and wanted to be part of what God was doing. And guess what, God wanted her to be part of what He was doing. Long story short, this non-Jewish, Canaanite Prostitute helps the spies of Israel and becomes part of God's people. And God's plan was not only for her to be part of His people...it was for her to be part of Christ's family. God wanted to bring His Son into this world for people like her, through people like her.

So, we have the first two women Matthew mentions. Tamar, a non-Jewish woman who pretended to be a prostitute. And, we have Rahab, a non-Jewish woman who really was a prostitute.

The other woman in verse 5 is Ruth. Who was Ruth? Her story is found in the book that bears her name. She wasn't a Jewish woman; she was a Moabite. That would have been scandalous for multiple reasons. Genesis 19:37 tells us that people of Moab were descended from an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters. These people were considered to be so unclean that the Old Testament Law forbade Moabites from entering the congregation of the Lord in worship at the Temple.

And Ruth was a Moabite girl who is married to a Jewish man who has abandoned God's word. That man dies, leaving Ruth a childless widow. His father and brother died, as well. So, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, found themselves in a desperate spot. Naomi decided to return to Israel and Israel's God and in a beautiful scene, Ruth chooses to come to Israel with Naomi.

So, this young, non-Jewish Moabite widow enters the people of God. And God redeems her through a man named Boaz. She would have been an outcast, but God wants her in the family of Jesus.

Look at the last woman in the ancestry of Jesus in verse 6:

***and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,***

As Matthew writes this part of the genealogy, I find it really interesting the way he writes. He doesn't call her by her name, Bathsheba. He openly refers to the deep scandal that was part of her story. David took a woman who wasn't his wife. She was the wife of Uriah, a non-Jewish member of David's army. So, Bathsheba was a Gentile by marriage. David committed adultery with her. She got pregnant and David tried to cover it up by having her husband killed in battle. And here she is in the family of Jesus.

So, think about how Matthew lays out the credentials of Jesus, this document that every Jew would want to see to establish Christ's social standing and identity. He shows all the big, important connections that would prove Jesus is the son of Abraham and the son of David, qualified to be the promised Messiah. But Matthew includes names and stories that seem completely unnecessary to

show that Jesus is the Messiah. Names and stories most families would bury and hide and try to forget.

So, what's He doing? Remember what I've been saying every week about the genealogy of Jesus. These stories don't just tell us how God brought Jesus into this world; they tell us why. They don't just reveal the identity of Jesus the Messiah, they reveal the heart of Jesus the Messiah.

His heart is for broken, sinful outcasts. He isn't ashamed to be associated with sinners. He wants them in His family. He didn't just come for the Jews. He came for the nations. He came for heroes of the faith like Abraham. He came for prodigal sons like Judah. He came for desperate women like Tamar. He came for immoral outcasts like Rahab. He came for helpless widows like Ruth. He came for adulterers like David and Bathsheba. He came for you and for me. He came on a mission to make sinners His family.

John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Why did God send Jesus? Because He so loved this world. He did not want sinners to have to perish in their sin.

Romans 5:7-8.

*For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

The love of God compelled Jesus to come to this earth on a mission to die in our place. To suffer for our sin so that we could be forgiven and restored to God.

Ephesians 1:5

*In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ,*

It is the love of God that chooses to bring sinners into the family of Jesus. Though we are separated from God by our sin, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we can be forgiven our sin and adopted into the family of God.

The heart of God is filled with gracious love for sinners. That's why Jesus came. And that's what Matthew is letting us see from the very beginning of his account of the life of Christ. Jesus is the Messiah sent by God the Father on a mission of love to broken sinners.

And that gives us our big idea for today.

### **Big Idea: The family of Jesus is deeply rooted in the gracious love of God**

People aren't included in the family of Jesus because they deserve to be. You can go through every member of Jesus family tree and, though the names change, the story remains the same. None of them deserve to be included. But God is full of mercy and grace and abounding in steadfast love. Gracious love has been His heart from the very beginning of this world and culminates in the person and work of Jesus the Christ. God so loved this world that He gave us Jesus.

That's what Christmas is all about. That's what we learn from the family tree of Jesus. And, as we close, I want to give you two points to reflect on as we seek to be deeply rooted in the gracious love of God.

## 1. God's gracious love extends to the worst of sinners.

Judah and Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, David and Bathsheba...liars, adulterers, even murderers. All of them in the family of Jesus. All of them used by God. God's gracious love extends to the worst of sinners.

Friend, you may think you are too far gone for God to love and use. You may think you've exhausted God's patience and kindness. But let His family tree be a reminder to you: God's love is inexhaustible, and His grace is greater than your sin.

I may not know your story. I may not know your worst sins or the parts of your story you wish could remain a secret. I may not know what motivated you to be here today. But I do know this: God loves you and has poured out His grace for you in Jesus.

If you are willing acknowledge your sin and trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to forgive your sin and restore you to God, you can be part of the family of Jesus. You can know that God is your Father and heaven is your home. Won't you come to Jesus today? Won't you receive the gift of Jesus through faith today?

## 2. God's gracious love writes a story that's meant to be shared.

If we learn anything at all from the genealogy of Jesus, it's that God wants people to know the story of His grace and love. It's meant to be shared.

And, church, that's our call in Christ, to share the love of God with a broken and sinful world. The first Sunday in January, we will come back to the very last passage in the Gospel of Mark and see the mission Christ has given us as His people. It's a mission to share the truth about Jesus. To give the people in our lives the greatest gift that has ever been given, the good news that Jesus saves any and all who will trust in.

So, let me ask you this: what names are you praying will be included in the family of Jesus? Who in your life might be far from God but close to you? How might God desire to use you to share the truth about Jesus with them?

Will you invite them to join you for Christmas Eve? Will you pray for an opportunity to tell them the story of Jesus this Christmas?

The family tree of Jesus is deeply rooted in the gracious love of God. Praise be to God for His indescribable gift.

### Prayer/Response

If you have taken Christ's grace for granted, admit it to Him and repent. He will forgive you.  
If your love for Christ has grown cold, admit it to Him and repent. He will forgive you.

If your heart has become calloused towards lost people,

- Ask Christ to convince you, He is the only way.
- Ask Christ to break your heart over the destiny of all those who die without Him...

For all of those here today who have yet to receive Christ, today you can confess your sins to God.

- Believe/receive Christ's death on the cross for you by faith.
- And He will forgive you and rescue you.