

# Hopkins South Monterey

## United Methodist Church

Affecting Lives Through Jesus Christ

Scripture & Sermon

November 27, 2022

Pastor Kelsey

Matthew 1:1-17

NRSV

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, 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 Aram, 4 and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab 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 King David.

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 Salathiel, and Salathiel 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, who bore Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

## Prayers & Sermon

*God of the ages,  
in scripture we hear stories of people like us—  
ordinary people,  
people who longed to know you,  
people who longed to follow you,  
people who made mistakes,  
people who tried to grow—  
old, young,  
native, immigrant,  
new to the faith, lifelong believer.  
In scripture we hear stories of people like us,  
so just as you walked with them,  
help us to hear and remember all the ways that you walk with us.  
We are listening.  
We are grateful.  
We are yours.  
Amen.*

Today starts the Advent season, the time leading up to Christmas, a time of preparation and reflection on the coming of Christ. We will be using and following the theme *From Generation to Generation*... inspired by a line from Mary's magnificat, her song of protest and praise, in Luke 1:48b-50: "Surely from now on all generations will be blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name, His mercy is for those who fear him **from generation to generation.**" Mary understood that the good news, the gospel, is and was bigger than her. Christ's work has been in process for generations, continued through the spirit of God, and lived out and passed on from generation to generation of people. This idea leads us to think about how our stories, scriptures, and traditions of Christmas are all passed down to us throughout many generations.

We will be visiting all of the Christmas story scriptures throughout the series, piecing together Jesus's beginnings. As we read these familiar narratives, I encourage you to particularly think about: What did each person pass on or contribute? How did they either participate in God's liberation and love—or try to thwart God's justice? What can we learn from them, and what is our role now? What will we pass on the next generation?

The theme also encourages us to think about more than just where we have come from. The root word of "generation" is "gen" meaning "origin" or "birth." So our theme is also a call to action. We will be thinking about these questions: What are we being called to generate or bring forth? What have your ancestors and those who have come before you passed on for you to continue? Who are the spiritual elders in your community who planted the seeds for the things that are now blooming? What seeds are you planting for the future?

From Generation to Generation... reminds us of the ways our lives, histories, actions, and stories are interconnected and woven together. The work of God is always

unfolding—in and through us. This advent, may you remember that you belong—to a story detached into the wrinkles of time, to generations that have come before and will come after, to a love that won't let you go.

We are starting our Christmas story-telling by starting with where, or who, Jesus comes from. Jesus's genealogy. The first 17 verses of Matthew give us a long line of who came before Jesus, starting with Abraham, directly to David through to Joseph. Before we dig into the who and what a bit more, I thought I would bring you another translation of this scripture to bring another perspective and a little bit of insight into who each of the ancestors of Jesus are. I am going to share the First Nations Version of Matthew 1:1-17. "The First Nations Version New Testament is a new translation of the Sacred Scriptures by and for Native North Americans. The idea for this project began in 2002 while Terry and Darlene lived on the Hopi Indian reservation in Northern Arizona. They were looking for ways to tell the story of the Bible to Native Americans, in a culturally relevant context." One of the things that is unique about this translation is that they maintain the meanings of each of the names in their original language, instead of giving the names in English. Perhaps this translation will help remind you of some of the people's stories.

#### ▶ Matthew's Genealogy

"Here is the recorded ancestry of creator sets free (Jesus) The chosen one, a descendant of much loved one (David) and father of many nations (Abraham); and father of many nations (Abraham) to much loved one (David). His ancestors were father of many nations (Abraham), he made us laugh (Isaac), heel grabber (Jacob), give him praise (Judah) and his brothers, he breaks through (Perez), and his brother First Light (Zerah), whose Mother was Fruit of Palm Tree (Tamar); Circle of Tipis (Hezron), Lifted up (Ram), Noble relative (Amminadab), talks with snakes (Nahshon), he makes peace (Salmon), moves with strength (Boaz), who mother was Boastful Woman (Rahab), He works hard (Obed), whose mother was Beautiful Friends (Ruth), original man (Jesse), who was the Father of the great chief Much Loved One (David). From Much Loved one to the removal to Village of confusion the ancestors of Creator Sets Free. Much Loved One (David), stands in peace (Solomon), Whose Mother, Daughter of Seven (Bathsheba), was the wife of Fire from Creator (Uriah), Big People Maker (Rehoboam), He is My Father (Abijah), Gather the People (Asa), He Makes Wrongs Right Again (Jehoshaphat), Creator is Above (Jehoram), My Great Power (Uzziah), Creator has no Equal (Jotham), Held by Creator (Ahaz), He Will Be Strong (Hezekiah), He made them Forget (Manasseh), Burden Bearer (Amon), Good Medicine (Josiah), Chose by Creator (Jeconiah) and his brothers. At the time of the removal to Village of confusion from the removal to Village of confusion to the birth of Creator sets free, his ancestors were Chosen by Creator (Jeconiah), Ask Creator (Shealtiel), Born in Village of Confusion (Zerubbabel), Father Boasts in Him (Abihud), He Builds Up (Eliakim), He Helps (Azor), Stands with a Good Heart (Zadok), Stands Firm (Achim), Power of Creator (Eliud), Creator Helps Him (Eleazar), Gifted by Creator (Matthan), Heel Grabber (Jacob), He Gives Sons (Joseph), who was the husband of Bitter Tears (Mary), who gave birth to Creator Sets Free (Jesus) who is The Chosen One. And so there were 14 Generations from father of many nations to much loved one, 14 more Generations from much loved

one until the removal to the Village of Confusion and then 14 more from the removal to Creator sets Free the Chosen One.

The Word of God to the People of God, Thanks be to God.

Why are we spending time reading through all these names? And so repetitively! That's 42 generations traced back from Jesus to Abraham, with 46 individuals named if I counted correctly. Only a few are the mothers who gave birth to all these people. Why is this long list taking up space in scrolls and parchments and copied by hand for so many generations? Why is it so important, beyond just an early ancestry.com entry of the who's who of the Old Testament? And wait, wait, wait. We get all the way to the end of this long list, and it leads to Joseph. JOSEPH! The one who, as far as we know, had nothing to do with Jesus's DNA. So what's the point? Well, a lot of people have asked that question through the generations. And even though we now have a thorough family tree for Joseph, we do not have an explanation on the intention behind including this list in the text in writing. There are many guesses by Biblical scholars why we are told Joseph's lineage instead of Mary's. We know that in the Jewish tradition, the legality of the royal throne passes through the paternal line. So, it is likely that Joseph's ancestry was the more available, but also, this was about legitimizing Jesus. Tracing Christ's line through Joseph connects Jesus to David, which fulfilled the prophecies in Isaiah. But, it is also thought that in that time, when a ruler or leader came to power, they had to legitimize their place of authority through their ancestry. So, the author of Matthew, who planned to make a point about Jesus as King of the Jews, and so he needed to make a bold statement that proved Jesus's rightful place. This claim was about more than just the technicality of it, but to the Jewish audience of Matthew's Gospel who were facing oppression, identifying Jesus as rightful ruler was a declaration of political liberation and spiritual empowerment. So, there was importance and power in sharing Jesus's lineage then, even through his adoptive human father's line. But this text has continued to be the start of Matthew's gospel. It wasn't just an FYI pamphlet shared among the believers and faith community of the time, these 17 verses have been passed down and copied and copied and copied and spoken aloud for generations in all languages for generations. Why do we keep telling this technical side of the story? This list of names, some familiar and some unfamiliar? Well, it is because of the stories these names, these generations tell. Even Jesus has a family tree that isn't so perfect. Even Jesus has a family tree with some holes in it and some questionable characters, and some that may have liked to be forgotten by history. Each of those people had a life, have a story. And not just happy and triumphant stories, but real human stories with trauma, hardship, and beauty and triumph. All of the complexity of those humans, with all their highs and lows, leads to Christ. I can't tell you all the stories of each of these 46 people this morning. If I tried, we would be here all day, and probably read a majority of the Old Testament histories. But we can mention a few. One of the things that is interesting about this list of genealogy is that it names only 5 women, one of which is Mary. One of my summers interning at a church in college brought me to a sermon series based on a book called Mother Roots that focused on the 4 women who are named in the genealogy of Jesus. That topic seems to have become a favorite to focus on in the last few years, as it is interesting that in a genealogy that typically would only tell of the males keeping up the line, there are these 4 women listed, but also that we are only told of 4 women. That became the focus of the series artist, Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman.

She created a beautiful piece of art, bringing attention to those 4 ancestors of Jesus and Jesus's mother, Mary. She shared this about her piece:

"While creating this image, I spent a lot of time with the women mentioned in Jesus' genealogy because I had a resounding echo of shame in my body that I had received from engaging with these narratives in my childhood. Their stories held a heaviness of judgment. In my experience, it seemed the primary function of recounting their lives was to show how broken and sinful they were, and how, despite their brokenness, God was merciful enough to use them. The shame I felt was also personal; along the way, I had internalized the message that as a woman, this was my potential for being a part of God's story too. I had been handed some harmful, one-dimensional labels that immediately surfaced when I read their names, such as "harlot," "prostitute," "seductress," and "adulterer," just to name a few. Their importance was not found in the context and particularity of their narratives; instead, they were viewed as rough, oddly-shaped pieces to the puzzle of Jesus' lineage. I had to do some work to unbind myself from the limitations my church had placed on these stories, and I tried to visit these women with a fresh mind and an open heart. What I realized was that these women—despite the loathsome, corrupt systems they were in—found a way to claim their voice and found enough power to survive.

...They were catalysts who propelled the lineage forward. In the bottom left, Tamar holds her father-in-law's insignia, which represents how she assumes his role as the leader of the tribe of Judah and continues its lineage.<sup>1</sup> Moving counterclockwise, Rahab holds the red cord which she lowered to ensure the safety of her family after supplying Israelite spies enough information to achieve victory in Jericho. Next, Ruth holds the wheat that she gleaned from the field. She knows that she must marry again in order to be protected, and so she takes initiative with Boaz.

Bathsheba's name isn't even mentioned in Christ's genealogy; she is referred to as the "wife of Uriah." She withstands abuse from King David, survives the murder of her husband, and ensures that her son Solomon takes the throne. She takes matters into her own hands, becoming, as scholar Dr. Wil Gafney writes, "the queen mother of the united monarchy of Israel."<sup>2</sup> Finally, there is Mary who looks adoringly at the rose which represents her son. Here she holds the love and pride of a beautiful lineage that leads to the birth of her son, the Messiah. These women only wanted to ensure safety for themselves and for their children; in the process they ensured the continuation of the lineage of Christ. Without their brilliance, passion, ingenuity, resourcefulness, creativity, and sacrifice, the lineage would have ended."

Rev. Pittman shared a bit more about each of those women, who act as great examples of Jesus's ancestors, imperfect but strong and they continued on. I invite you to spend some time with Jesus's genealogy in the next week, read the names, and search for them in the old testament, read their stories, learn about the ups and downs, reflect on the ways their stories reflect our own. God worked through those unexpected people and their lives. And their stories, their lives, paved the way for Christ. If all of them can be part of what literally brought Christ to the world, then we can be assured that all of who we are, all of our complex and imperfect stories can also be part of bringing Christ

into the world today. God isn't looking for picture perfect, simple people to bring about the Kingdom, to bring about hope, in our world today. God is looking for real people, flawed people, imperfect people, to make up the story of God at work in the world today. And perhaps, just like the way the imperfect and complex stories of all those that led up to Jesus, our imperfect and complex stories are making up the beautiful picture of what big thing God is doing next. Perhaps our life, our contributions to our family, our community, our church family, are the stories that will make up someone else's spiritual genealogy. And perhaps spending time remembering all those that contributed in big and small ways to the coming of Christ is a reminder to all of us to look at the stories that brought us to be where we are. Looking into our own family trees might bring some grief, or we might find a story we aren't too fond of, but those stories are important too. We aren't meant to ignore the bad bits, but recognize their part in our story and work to do better for ourselves and the generations that come after us. Jesus's genealogy is a reminder of the grace we should and can all give for the complexities of life. God welcomes us, as we are, to join into God's story. May we let go of the anxieties and the self-consciousness of the imperfections that we have and join in the ongoing story of God's work in the world. And may we make room beside us for others to join in alongside.

Poetry Prayer:

Room by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

I asked God—

what about my

finger nail-biting habit

or the way I leave all the cabinets

open in the kitchen?

What about the way I can be dramatic,

drumming up a fight, only to

hand out apologies like souvenirs?

What about the way I second-guess myself,

let shame drive, or stay quiet when I

have something to say?

What about the way I chase accomplishments

like a dog with a bone?

What about the doubt, or the fact

that I'm terrible at prayer and

cannot help but yawn during church?

What about

What about

*What about?*

My baggage might be too big for the van.  
But then  
God called me by my first and middle name,  
which always means business,  
and said:  
Who told you that you were too much?  
Sugar, there is so much room for you here.

So that's when I grabbed a seat  
and we hit the road  
and I knew right then  
that the rumors were true.

There is room.  
There is room.  
*There is room.*

call to confession  
*In God's house, everyone is welcome—  
those who seem like they have it all together,  
and those who feel like their world is falling apart.  
No matter who we are, there's room for us here.  
With that confidence, we turn to God in prayer,  
speaking the truth of our lives.*

*Let us pray:*

prayer of confession  
*God of today and God of tomorrow,  
you say, "Bring your full self. There's room for you here."  
**But we say, "Our lives are too messy."**  
You say, "Bring your hopes and your dreams. There's room for you here."  
**But we say, "It's too risky to hope."**  
You say, "Bring your grief and your prayers. There's room for you here."  
**But we say, "Some things are easier to forget."**  
God of today and God of tomorrow,  
we know in our hearts that there's room for us here.  
**Forgive us for withholding our full selves from you.  
Forgive us for giving only our Sunday best.  
Help us remember, today and tomorrow,  
There's room for every story. Amen.***

words of forgiveness  
*Family of faith,  
We who feel scattered are held together.*

*We who have lost our way are forgiven and found.  
And we who are lonely are brought into the fold and are told,  
"There's room for you here."  
From generation to generation, this is the good news of the gospel.  
In Jesus Christ we are held, forgiven, found, and welcomed.  
Thanks be to God! Amen.*