

Nov. 30, 2014 1st Sunday in Advent

Scripture and Sermon Title: "To Be Announced"

Matthew 1:1-16

Written and preached by Pastor Sherry Keiper

A few weeks ago a new Christian who wanted to begin reading the Bible asked me where to start. I told her to start at the beginning of the New Testament with the book of Matthew. But I told her, she might want to start at verse 17! This passage begins the story of Jesus' birth. Today in the Christian calendar, is the first Sunday in Advent, a time of preparation and anticipation for Christ's birth.

But Matthew begins his gospel, not immediately with the birth of Jesus, but first with a long list of names, most unpronounceable, most unknown. Usually I think, we skip over the first 16 verses to get to the real story (unless we're reading through the Bible, and even then, I don't think we pay much attention to it).

Why did Matthew include it?

I know several of you love doing genealogy. It's become very popular. There are LOTS of books in the library on the hobby of genealogy. Our local library, the Clymer in Pocono Pines, has even started a new section on the history of our township. I've begun doing some research of my own to find out more about my family and its history. It's interesting to me and probably would be to some of you who are related, but the rest of you probably aren't interested. It has no meaning to you. If I started giving the list, you'd fall asleep. (Although there are parts that may wake you up!).

There may be other interesting "branches" in our tree. There is even an old song you may have heard, "I'm my own grandpa."

I find it interesting to know where I came from (and, sometimes, why). Did our ancestors leave their European countries because of famine, or persecution? What caused them to leave their homes and head off into an unknown future?

Matthew is writing to the Jewish people. Genealogies were especially important to the Jewish people. Israel's king had to be a Jew. Later on, he had to be a descendant of David. No one could serve as priest whose name could not be found in the genealogical records.

These names would have been familiar to them. The promised Messiah would come from Abraham (the covenant), he would also come from David. This passage is making them aware that Jesus is from the line of both Abraham and David (the blessing), fulfilling that prophecy. This genealogy fulfills this promise.

As we go through this list, there are names you probably recognize.

The family tree of Jesus Christ, David's son, Abraham's son:

²⁻⁶ Abraham had Isaac,

Abraham – God established a covenant

Isaac had Jacob – deceived his father into order to obtain the birthright

Judah – a brother of Joseph – he had a hand in selling Joseph into slavery

Had a child with Tamar (who posed as a prostitute)

Perez and Zerah (mother – Tamar)

Hezron – went to Egypt

Ram

Amminadab,

Nahshon,

Salmon,

Boaz (his mother was Rahab, a prostitute who put her faith in God and was saved in the fall of Jericho),

Obed (Ruth was the mother), Ruth was of good character, but she was a Moabitess. Deut. 23:3 tells us that “they were shut out of the congregation of the Lord.” The Law was against her, but she cast herself upon God's mercy. She received the grace and mercy of God.

Jesse,

David,

became king.

⁶⁻¹¹ David had Solomon (Uriah's wife was the mother), Bathsheba. Scripture calls David, “a man after God's own heart.” Yet David sinned. He committed adultery and murder. Saints may fall, but there is forgiveness.

Rehoboam

Abijah

Asa
 Jehoshaphat
 Joram
 Uzziah
 Jotham
 Ahaz
 Hezekiah
 Manasseh
 Amon
 Josiah

Jehoiachin and his brothers,
 and then the people were taken into the Babylonian exile.

¹²⁻¹⁶ When the Babylonian exile ended,

Jeconiah
 Shealtiel
 Zerubbabel
 Abiud
 Eliakim
 Azor
 Zadok
 Achim
 Eliud
 Eleazar
 Matthan

Jacob had Joseph, Mary's husband,
 the Mary who gave birth to Jesus,
 the Jesus who was called Christ.

¹⁷ There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David,
 another fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile,
 and yet another fourteen from the Babylonian exile to Christ.

Some of these people have prominent roles in the Old Testament. We can read much about them. Some have terrible reputations (did terrible things)—yet God used them.

Others we know only by the mention of their names in the genealogy. They left no legacy.

Five women are listed, and mostly known for their notoriety. None of them were Jewish.

God made promises... to Abraham, to David, through Isaiah, and the coming of Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham, fulfilled that promise.

I would like to draw several conclusions this morning.

The Promise Will be Fulfilled for Us

First, we are living in between the birth of Jesus (his first coming) and his second coming. In some ways, we are like the Jewish people. We have been given a promise, but we have not yet seen it come to pass. Many years have gone by and we may be losing hope – but

Christmas is coming!!

God kept His word in the past, and he will do so again. We have the promise of Christ's final coming. 2000 years passed between the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment.

The promise the Israelites were awaiting came true in Jesus. "God with us". Matthew's very last words assure us that he will be present with us until the end:

¹⁸ Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, **I am with you always, to the end of the age**".

This Christmas season, as we celebrate Christ's birth, we should be filled with anticipation (expectation).

Include Christ in your Christmas and your Life

This list of names demonstrates that it doesn't matter where you've been, or what you've done. You are still loved by God. You can still be used by him. Jesus came to save all people, not just the ones who "have it all together".

Think of it. He who came to save men from their sins promises to dwell with us and in us. We must confess our sins and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. It is then that He will save us and dwell with us and in us.

As we await the promise, we can live knowing that He is with us. His presence allows our lives to have meaning and purpose.

I pray you will give your life completely to God. Don't walk alone. Let him be your Savior and constant companion.

Lord Jesus, come.