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Date: 27 April 2025

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, I want to ask you this morning to turn with me to Matthew's Gospel. Matthew 1-17. I know what some of you are thinking right now.

I know. I called my mom this week and I told her what I was preaching on and she said, oh no. This is the part of the passage or part of the Bible that we typically skip over when we are reading through, isn't it?

We are not interested in genealogy very much. We don't understand it that much and we don't know the people that are in this genealogy. So it is easier to just fly on by and get on to the good stuff and the meat.

Well, I want to tell you today, I want to rest, calm your nerves a little bit and tell you I am not going to read through the genealogy. Now, in the first service I had a big amen from somebody when I said I wasn't going to be reading through the genealogy.

I am not going to stumble over these names and try to read through the genealogy knowing that you are probably not interested to begin with. However, there is a purpose and a reason this is included in Scripture.

[1 : 09] And I think it is important that we read all of the Scripture. And I think that there are things in this genealogy that we can glean from, we can learn from, we can take it and apply it to our lives.

And I don't know who here today needs to hear this message, maybe all of us. But there are some here today who need to really hear what I'm going to share.

Because I knew, even all night last night as I was trying to sleep, it kept getting in my mind going, Is this really the right sermon? Is genealogy really what I'm supposed to bring?

I get one shot a year sometimes. Is this really, and God kept bringing me back to this was the message that he wanted me to speak. So I know there are individuals here today, if not all of us, who need to hear this.

The other day I was watching Dateline. This is mine and Michelle's regular routine. It comes on on Friday nights. And normally, many weeks, I'm online teaching pastors in Peru on Friday nights.

[2 : 18] Most of you already know this. But we teach Friday morning and Friday night, two hours at a time. Same material but different groups.

And we have close to 100 that log on on Zoom and have been in our courses since the fall, or really August, of 2020. We're seeing God do some really remarkable and wonderful things.

And we've invited you at any time. Anytime you want to log on and just see it, let me know. We'll give you the Zoom link and you can just get on and watch. It is amazing. We don't start on Friday nights until 9 o'clock at night because these pastors and church leaders have worked all day.

They're tired. They're worn out. But they're gaining so much. And it's not me as a teacher. It's the material that it's impacting their ministries and changing their churches.

But we record Dateline on Friday night. Michelle and I have a regular routine. We get up on Saturday mornings and we watch Dateline. And a couple of weeks ago, we saw one that was extremely interesting.

[3 : 28] There was a murder that had taken place, usually Dateline's based on that. And they had DNA at the crime scene. And so they put that in the FBI database, which is CODIS.

But there were no matches for that DNA. Now, if there had been a match, it would have been solved and whammo, bammo. It's history. DNA is, I don't even know, one in a trillion, zillion people that it'll match.

So the detectives, they continued to try to solve this crime for years but never could get an exact match on the DNA. They went around to all the family, all the friends, all the people in the circles of people that knew them, kept taking DNA tests and never could get a hit.

So years went by. And finally, science changed and developed. And get this. If y'all watch Dateline, you know. But if you don't, you may not know this.

They can take DNA and develop a picture of the individual that it belongs to today. Now, even detectives thought, no, that's not going to work.

[4 : 42] It's not going to help us. But you know what? They had no choice. They were at their ropes in. They had nowhere else to turn. And years had gone by. So they got approval to spend the money.

I think it was like \$5,000 or something that their budget really didn't have to put into this. But they wanted to solve this crime. So they paid the money. They sent the DNA off to the lab.

And a few weeks later, they get a picture of an individual that they believed that that DNA belonged to. And at first, they went back to family. And they were like, do you know this individual?

And they were like, we don't know that person. And so they talked to more people and their circle of friends. And everybody kept saying, we don't know that individual.

So, of course, the detectives were discouraged. And they were thinking, well, that was a waste of time. Until finally, a young man said, I know who that is. I know.

[5 : 39] And he gave the detectives the name of the individual. And they began going to that individual and investigating him, even to the point where they got his DNA sample.

And guess what? It was a perfect match. And they took the DNA that was at the crime scene and his DNA match. And you all know what that means. It's a closed case.

And they solved that cold case murder from years ago. Now, most Americans today, we're not very interested in genealogy, are we? If we are, usually it's only out of curiosity.

We kind of want to know where we came from. We want to know a little bit. But we really aren't like, say, England that has royal bloodlines. And they want to really trace their bloodline and prove who they are or where they came from.

That doesn't really interest us too much. But we do so more out of curiosity. In the late 90s, I had a 12-month time span where I had five family members to die on my father's side.

[6 : 42] It was both of his parents, his brother, and an aunt and an uncle. Well, that spiraled my dad into getting interested into genealogy. And he traced the Rafferty family line on his side of the family all the way back into the 1700s when the first of the Rafferty's came from Ireland through Virginia to the United States.

But again, usually we're not very interested in genealogy. We just, if we do so, we're doing it out of just curiosity. However, today we're learning more and more about genealogy and the benefits of knowing our family line and how that affects our health.

If there's a trait of cancer that runs through our family line, we want to know that. So that maybe we can do things that prevent it ahead of time. Or, like I said just a minute ago, the DNA can help law enforcement solve a lot of crimes that would have been unsolvable years ago.

But again, usually we're more likely just curious. When we see those Ancestry.com commercials on the television or other commercials for other organizations doing DNA tests, we've probably been tempted.

Yeah, I want to just see. I've always been told I'm Scotch-Irish, but what else is mixed in there? You know, where else do I come from? And we just do so out of curiosity.

[8 : 07] But for the Jews, it was different, wasn't it? Why was it different? Well, the Jews, they knew the prophecy in Isaiah that said the Messiah would come through the family line of David.

And so they knew very clearly that if someone showed up on the scene and said, I'm the Messiah, if they could not trace that individual back through the family line of David, then they dismissed that person's claim of being the Messiah.

Listen to Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 through 5. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear.

[9 : 12] But with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. Any respectable Jew knew that prophecy, and they knew that the Messiah, this was a reference to the Messiah, and that he would come through the family line of David.

And therefore they kept meticulous records and focused on the genealogy, so that they would be able to approve or dismiss people's claims of being the Messiah.

This is why in Matthew's gospel account he begins with the genealogy. We skip over it and move on. But he was writing to the Jews, first and foremost.

He wanted them to understand who Jesus Christ was and that he was the Messiah. In order for the Jews to accept that though, you had to establish first and foremost that he was from the family line of David.

[10:24] Now in addition to proving that Jesus did indeed come from the family line of David, and therefore he was qualified to be the Messiah, the list of genealogy also reveals some other extraordinary truths.

And so today my focus of this message is not to prove to you that Jesus was the Son of God and came through the family line of David. But I think we can take this genealogy that's in Matthew chapter 1, and we can pull out some very important truths that are found in these scriptures.

We can pull out some interesting facts about individuals' lives, and how they lived, and what God did through them. And I think we can take that to uplift us, encourage us, strengthen us, and help us to apply those to our lives as we try to serve God and walk with him closer each and every day.

When you look at this genealogy, you see that there's 46 individuals in Matthew's account. And it was a time span of 2,000 years.

Now think about that. How old is the United States? Roughly about 250 years. Now we're talking 2,000 years of this genealogy.

[11:40] And all these ancestors of Jesus, they all lived very different lives and very different lifestyles. Some of them were heroes of the faith, like Abraham, Isaac, and David, some came from outside Israel and had very questionable reputations, like Rahab and Tamar.

Many were very ordinary, and we know almost nothing about them, or very little. And a few of them, like Manasseh, was actually a very wicked and very evil man.

And we wonder, how could God include a man like Manasseh? How could he include him in the genealogy of Jesus Christ?

Listen in 2 Kings 21, verses 1 through 3. Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign. And he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Hephzibah, and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

[12:57] For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah, his father, had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab, king of Israel, had done and worshipped all the hosts of heaven and served them.

If you really go back and begin to explore the life of Manasseh, which we get accounts here in 2 Kings, but also 2 Chronicles, you know, an outline of his life and the sinfulness of this man would sicken you because not only did he defile the temple of God, Solomon's temple, by bringing in altars and making sacrifices to pagan gods, he even sacrificed his own son to these pagan gods.

And so when you look at the genealogy, and there you see his name, Manasseh, you wonder how could God put a man like that in the family line of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ?

How could God forgive him of the things he's done? But not only that, how could he put him in that family line? If you read in 2 Chronicles and you see more about Manasseh, you'll see that God brought justice to Manasseh.

He punished him and had him exiled to Babylon because of his sinfulness and because he led Israel to worship false gods and to commit such sins.

[14:32] But when Manasseh had heartfelt repentance, he turned away from his sin and asked God to forgive him. God also forgave him, brought him back from Babylon, restored him in Judah and restored him to his position as king over the southern kingdom.

God is a remarkable and almighty God, especially when we repent of our sin and turn back to him and ask forgiveness of that sin. But we look at it as like, why would God want a man like that? Why would God want Manasseh to be in the family line of the Messiah? But what we learn from this list of people who come from different walks of life and who lived very different lives spiritually is

that we cannot limit or stop God's work and his will from advancing and being accomplished. We can't stop it. God's will will be done. God works through all types of people, some extraordinary and some very common.

I learned that when I went to seminary. I was in Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The first year I was there was 1992 and it didn't take me long to realize there's some really weird people here.

[15:59] I was there when they were cleaning house of the seminaries and they were cleaning up Southern Seminary. You had a social work program there that attracted, it was the only Southern Baptist seminary that had a social work program and it attracted a lot of, did I say that out loud a minute ago?

It attracted a lot of different people. But you know what God told me? God told me, I call all kinds of people, you call strange, indifferent.

He said, but I call, I call them to ministry to reach all kinds of people. Jeff's not going to reach all people. Jeff's not going to connect with all kinds of people.

But that guy over there might. That guy over there, that lady over there might. You know, so God calls all kinds of people to reach all kinds of people. And just as God chose all kinds of people to be a part of Jesus' ancestral tree, he uses all kinds of people today.

And he will continue to use all types of people in the future to accomplish his will. And this is what I want you to hear. If you don't hear anything else, this is what I want you to hear and what I want you to take away from this message.

[17:20] What I want you to take away from the genealogy of Matthew. God wants to use you. God has a place for you, not only in his family, not only in his kingdom, but God wants to use you in the work that he is doing upon this earth until the day either we leave or until he comes again.

God does not save us for us to sit on the sidelines and wait for him to return. God calls us to be a part of his family, to receive the forgiveness of our sins, but then to join him in the work that he's doing.

God doesn't need us. He can accomplish anything he wants to accomplish and never use a single person. But he wants to include us.

He wants to allow us to have the privilege of offering him our lives and him taking us and using us to do great and magnificent and mighty things in us.

And you might be sitting here today and thinking, I don't have anything to offer. I don't know what I would do. I'm not good enough.

[18:45] I'm not experienced enough. I'm not trained enough. I don't have anything. Well, when I was 16 years of age, I began feeling God calling me into ministry.

Now in Kentucky, where I grew up, churches called their pastor Brother So-and-So. And I kept going, God, Brother Rafferty just doesn't sound right.

So I can't do it. Sorry. And it scared me to death. People with my church would walk up to me out of the blue and go, you're going to be a preacher, aren't you? And I'd be like, nope, not me.

Not going to do it. You're wrong about that. And you know, I fought God for probably two years. I was a senior in high school, 18 years of age, and I finally broke. And I said, God, I don't know what you're doing.

I don't know why you want me. I have nothing to offer you. You know, I'm not qualified. I'm not capable.

[19:49] I'm not sure I even want to do that. But I tell you what, I'll give you my life, and you take me, and you do with me whatever you will.

And if it ends in failure, it's your fault. You know, I still to this day don't feel qualified. I still don't feel capable. I still wonder why God chose me.

You know, I look around, I've got a brother, I've got a sister, I've got others in my family, and I wonder why God chose me out of them.

I'm the youngest, you know, and I just wonder, but I said, God, you take me and you do with me whatever you will.

And that's the way I've served since that day is that I gave God my life and said, you take me. Now, you might be sitting here today too, and you might be thinking, I don't have anything to offer.

[20:51] I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm not experienced enough. I don't have anything to offer God, but I'll promise you one thing. If you'll come to the altar, to the feet of Jesus and say, God, here I

am.

I don't know what you want. I don't know why you want me, but I'll give you my life, and I'll serve you faithfully and obediently through the best of my ability, through the power of God's Holy Spirit that works in me.

God doesn't need us, but he wants to include us and use us. And you look around. We don't have to even go outside the walls of this church to look around and see some mighty and magnificent things that God has been doing here in this church.

People's lives have been changed. We see more people coming every week, and we see God doing some magnificent things. Here I am a country bumpkin boy from Whitesville, Kentucky, and God's using me to get on the internet and train pastors in Peru.

I never dreamed that that would be something God would do in my life. You may not be dreaming about what God could do with you.

[22 : 19] Have you got natural talents of singing? Brian's got a few chairs still up here. He said most of his choir members have a natural talent to sing. He's got a few seats that he's wanting to, no, I'm just kidding.

Can you, can you teach? We got a lot of teachers in this church. Can you use that talent with our preschool, our children, our youth, even adults?

Can you smile and shake hands? You could serve as greeter. Can you take up the offerings and give me your money? You know, there's so many ways to serve in this church.

We have people that come and put the flowers out every week and beautify our church. We have people that go out on mission trips.

There's something in between. If God is laying it on your heart, don't let anything hold you back and say, I can't do that. I won't do that.

[23 : 25] If God's been pestering you about something, He wants to include you in His work and His ministry and what He's doing.

And you're robbing yourself out of the joy and the privilege of joining God and being a part of what He's doing. And so I would encourage you not to hold back.

Don't hold back. You know, the main purpose that Matthew wrote here was to show us how we could be a part of His kingdom and salvation. But also, we learned from the genealogy that He used all kinds of people.

Another interesting note that I found in my study Bible pointed out that there were four women listed in this genealogy. Now that was shocking and rare that you would have four women in this genealogy.

And not only four women but the women that were included in this genealogy was shocking. There would have been very ethnic and ethical questions by the Jewish readers as they read this passage.

[24 : 33] All of them were more than likely not Israelites. And up until that point they felt God had just come for the Jews and the Jews alone. But now you've got four women who were not Israelites by birth and they seemed to be very scandalous to mention in an ancestral tree of the coming Messiah.

Tamar acted like a prostitute to scam her father-in-law Judah. Rahab was a prostitute and a foreigner but she helped deliver the city of Jericho into the hands of the Israelites and she showed faith in their God.

Ruth was from Moab an enemy of Israel and yet she took care of her mother-in-law Naomi and was praised for being better than seven sons.

And David committed adultery with Bathsheba and yet Bathsheba became the mother of Solomon the wisest king of Israel in all times.

This is a very interesting family line that God chose to bring his son into the world through.

Matthew's genealogy is very interesting because it shows us the good it shows us the bad and it shows us the very ugly and it doesn't leave out anyone who might have been questionable in that day and time and the point Matthew's trying to make is that God sent his son into the world to be the savior for all people Jews Gentiles men and women and no matter who people are or where they come from God's plan of salvation is offered to all people and if he includes us in salvation he wants us to take the gifts and the talents and the experiences of our lives and get plugged in to what he's doing on this earth as Henry Blackaby who wrote the study experiencing God more than 30 years

ago he said look to see where God is working and join him where is God working around your life you know it might not be getting plugged in to something here at church it might be your family it might be you need to lead Bible studies with your family members or your children or your grandchildren there may be other things you may be need to be a witness to a neighbor or a co-worker or visit people in a nursing home and give them hope and encouragement there are so many ways that God can use you and he's laid something on your heart he doesn't call us to serve out of drudgery he doesn't want us to have to dig our heels in and he'll pull us he's laid something on your heart that you love to do you love to do something and God can probably take that and use that to bring glory and honor to him so what is that what is that nagging thing that God keeps tapping on your mind and your heart that he wants you to do don't hold back look at this genealogy and see that God used all kinds of people and if he used people like Manasseh he can use you so today I'm going to close with a couple of questions first of all have you accepted that free gift from Jesus Christ of forgiveness of your sin and to receive him as your Lord and Savior we celebrated that last week with Easter of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and through the death burial and resurrection of Christ we know that we can come to know Jesus

[28 : 28] Christ as our Lord and Savior and that he'll forgive us of whatever your past is it doesn't matter you look at Manasseh God forgave him and restored him God can forgive you God can cleanse you God can purify you and he can bring you into his family if you've not received that why not what is holding you back the other question I want to ask you today for those of you who are children of God who've already received Jesus as your Lord and Savior have you come before God and said take me and use me and do with me whatever you will take me Lord use me to serve you to be a witness and to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ if you've not done that what's holding you back what's keeping you from saying

God take me and bring glory to your name I don't have anything to offer I'm not qualified I'm not capable but I give you my life in just a moment we'll have a time of invitation and if God's saying anything to your heart this morning maybe you need to receive him as your Lord and Savior or maybe you want to say God take me use me or maybe you need to just pray about something I'll be at the front for us to do that let's go to the Lord in prayer Lord I thank you for this day what a wonderful day to be here in the house of God to worship you to praise you to study your word and see how you're in the life changing business and you take individuals like Manasseh you take individuals that we would never think could be used but you use them to bring glory and honor to you and so I pray that you're working in each of our hearts and helping us to see how you want to use us too and we thank you for that we praise you in Jesus name
Amen Amen