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Matthew 1:1-17

Peace in Our Past

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Matthew 1:1-17 The Message

The family tree of Jesus Christ, David’s son, Abraham’s son: Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob, Jacob had Judah and his brothers, Judah had Perez and Zerah (the mother was Tamar), Perez had Hezron, Hezron had Aram, Aram had Amminadab, Amminadab had Nahshon, Nahshon had Salmon, Salmon had Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Boaz had Obed (Ruth was the mother), Obed had Jesse, Jesse had David, and David became king. David had Solomon (Uriah’s wife was the mother), Solomon had Rehoboam, Rehoboam had Abijah, Abijah had Asa, Asa had Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat had Joram, Joram had Uzziah, Uzziah had Jotham, Jotham had Ahaz, Ahaz had Hezekiah, Hezekiah had Manasseh, Manasseh had Amon, Amon had Josiah, Josiah had Jehoiachin and his brothers, and then the people were taken into the Babylonian exile. When the Babylonian exile ended, Jeconiah had Shealtiel, Shealtiel had Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel had Abiud, Abiud had Eliakim, Eliakim had Azor, Azor had Zadok, Zadok had Achim, Achim had Eliud, Eliud had Eleazar, Eleazar had Matthan, Matthan had Jacob, Jacob had Joseph, Mary’s husband, the Mary who gave birth to Jesus, the Jesus who was called Christ. 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.

During these weeks of Advent as we wait for Christmas, we are talking about Finding Peace. Finding Peace in our church, in our community, in our families, in our lives. Last week Roy shared from the Prophet Isaiah about turning our swords into plows and spears into pruning tools. He talked about turning the sword of pride, when we know that we’re right and everyone else is wrong, turning that into the plowshare of understanding. He talked about beating our sword of hurt, which we use to cover up our pain and our insecurities, into the plowshare of consolation. And taking our sword of fear when we are facing the unknown and turning into a plowshare of solidarity.

Today we look at finding peace in our past. Our scripture was from the very beginning of Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew is the first Gospel in the New Testament not because it was written first, it wasn’t, but because it is a wonderful bridge between the Jewish Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament. Matthew has the most references to the Hebrew Bible and Matthew genealogy’s at the very beginning would have been the normal and expected way to introduce and commend Jesus to his Jewish audience[[1]](#footnote-2). There are three parts to the genealogy, reminding the people of the time of Abraham, the time of the Kings like David, and the exile and restoration.

But did you catch it? Five women are mentioned, and these women all had a scandalous past. Tamar is listed. The story is in Genesis 38; it is some exciting stuff. Tamar posed as a prostitute so that her father-in-law, Judah, would fulfill his obligation according to the customs of Levirate marriage that said if your husband died, you had to marry his brother. Tamar had to go to such desperate measures to trick her father-in-law because Judah didn’t do what he was supposed to do. After Judah figured out that he had been tricked, he said that Tamar was more righteous than he was because he did not give Tamar his son to marry.

Then we have Rabab. The first thing wrong with Rahab is that she was a Canaanite. When the Hebrew people came to the promised land, there was one problem. It wasn’t empty, the Canaanite people were there. The Hebrew people said God was going to destroy the Canaanites and drive them out of the promised land. It didn’t work as well as the Hebrew people had hoped. The second thing wrong with Rahab is that she was a prostitute. She also was the one who saved Joshua and his spies by hiding them and then lying to the police about their presence.

Then there is Ruth, another foreigner. She is a Moabite, not an Israelite. Ruth became a widow and followed her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth meets a family member, Boaz, when she is gleaning the fields and Naomi sends her daughter-in-law to seduce Boaz so that he will marry her. I am telling you, it is scandalous stuff!

The wife of Uriah is listed. That is Bathsheba, the woman that King David had an affair with and when she became pregnant, King David had her husband murdered. King David made Uriah carry the orders to his superiors that he was to be put in the front of the line in the battle. He carried his own death warrant!

Jesus’ mother Mary is the fifth woman that is listed. We know her story of becoming pregnant not from her fiancée but from the Holy Spirit.

Women are never listed in genealogies in the Bibles. Men are so prominent in genealogies that when the Apostle Paul gives our genealogy in Romans and in 1 Corinthians, he traces our sin back to Adam. We all know that it was Eve who ate the apple first.

Jesus’ genealogy has a lot to say about how God works in history. The women listed all had a past and as scandalous as their pasts were, these women were who God embraced to be Jesus’ ancestors. God takes their scandal, their brokenness and uses it for good. In the same way God heals our broken and tattered past, God heals our scandal and helps us every day to find peace in our heart. God takes all of Tamar and Rahab and Ruth and Bathsheba and Mary and God doesn’t hide their past. God makes them a part of God’s family in Jesus.

God embraces the outcast, the poor, the humble, the fallen, the sinful, and God makes us all a part of God’s family. We try to hide the things that we have done wrong, the times that we have messed up, we become consumed by guilt. Remember these women. God doesn’t work in guilt. God doesn’t make their past be a roadblock. God accepts us, all of us, and God helps us to find forgiveness with God and with ourselves. That’s what this time of year is all about. God comes to earth in a little baby, God becomes one of us, God turns to us.

In just a few minutes we will share in the gift of Holy Communion together. Some come to this table wracked with guilt, barely able to lift their eyes to receive the bread and the cup of Christ. Others come to the table asking for the strength to take one more step. Others come asking for help to be able to forgive themselves, giving thanks that God has already forgiven them. Others come asking to be filled up because they have are running on empty and have nothing left to give. Others come consumed with sadness because they feel lost, and alone and afraid. As we come today, may we make peace with our past in our heart. May we find healing from our brokenness at this table of grace. This is the table of grace, this is the table of love. Come to the table of grace. This is God’s table, it’s not yours or mine. Come to table of peace, come to the table of love, come to the table of joy (The Faith We Sing 2264).

1. http://www.chedmyers.org/blog/2010/12/02/second-week-advent-nice-boy-good-family-mt-11-25 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)