



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 5 - Number 7
The week of December 15, 2019

Sermon Series: *Advent Unobscured*
Knots in the Family Tree
Matthew 1:1-17

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Main Point: Jesus is the One whom all of humanity longed for and needed.

In Defense of Christmas Cheer
by Trevin Wax¹

'Tis the season to be jolly!

Strike that. First, we need a few evangelical leaders to register complaints about our culture's overly sentimentalized, consumerist take on Christmas. It seems that every year I come across blog posts chiding Christians for allowing the shopping season to overtake the church's calendar. Or bemoaning the early encroachment of Christmas music ("It's the most wonderful time of the" — NOT YET!). Or reminding us that the real reason for the season must remain front and center in a world of sentimental mush.

The most recent take comes from Scot McKnight, who says that the Charles Dickens vision of Christmas ("about joy and singing and big family dinners and dashing to and fro giving and receiving, and caring for the poor and turkeys and frosty windows") isn't really Christian at all. In contrast, Scot lays out all the themes of the first Christmas, and these themes are about Israel, the Messiah, and a family under threat; they have nothing to do with snuggled up families watching snow and decorating Christmas trees.

Scot is absolutely right about Charles Dickens' view of Christmas not being synonymous with the Bible's. But behold a very good point, with a perfectly wrong conclusion! "I say the less Dickens the better," he writes.

Bah humbug to Scot's bah humbug!

I agree we need more emphasis on the real meaning of Christmas, but I believe, in this, Dickens is our ally, not our foe. Why? Because the Dickens vision of Christmas would be impossible apart from a society in which the values of Christianity had taken root. G. K. Chesterton described Dickens' Christmas as a defense of "eating, drinking and praying which to moderns appears irreverent, for the holy day which is really a holiday."

"Joy and singing and big family dinners and giving and receiving and caring for the poor" may not be what the original Christmas was all about, but it's certainly part of Christianity as an atmosphere, is it not? And no one succeeded at creating "atmosphere" better than Dickens.

Should we not marvel that even in our increasingly secular age people still sing carols packed with biblical truth every year? "Joy to the world," indeed. As a fragmented society, we've lost the shared culture of "music that everyone knows," except in those rare instances when a song communicates such joy that everyone starts to sing along. (Cue Pharrell's "Happy," please!) And except, once a year, when we reach back in time and listen to holiday recordings older than our parents, and sing along to hymns older than our great-grandparents. Sing along, ye cluttered aisles of Walmart!

Should we not marvel that in a world of broken homes that big family dinners still take place? That reunions still happen, and that people put aside their differences to share a meal? When Jesus spoke about His coming kingdom, He talked about food and drink, and the table. Surely in our Christmas celebrations we can hear a faint echo pointing us to the Church's great feast at the end of time!

Should we not marvel that, in a dog-eat-dog world of competition run by the evolutionary motto of "survival of the fittest," our culture devotes time to running "to and fro giving and receiving and caring for the poor?" It was Dickens who wrote of Christmas from the perspective of the poor, lifting up the needs of the forgotten in a bold challenge to the powers that be. Surely, we can see in this the image of the mother and Child, unknown the world, known to the heavens.

Christianity is not generosity, but generosity is part of Christianity. Who knows? Perhaps when caught up in the moment of cultural gratitude, the secular heart may long for Someone to thank. But what of the sentimental mush included on the table for Christmas? What of the dangers of consumerism that infiltrate our Christmas cheer?

There's no doubt those problems exist, but at the Christmas table, I'm not one to insist that the only thing we eat is carved turkey and mashed potatoes. Pass the banana pudding and Grandma's sweet potato casserole, please. Yes, let's make sure to glean sustenance from the main dish, but a few sugar cookies won't ruin the meal. Scot is right to remind the church about our mission "to tell the real story about Christmas, about a God who entered into the world in a socially shamed family in order to lift the socially shamed to the highest name ever." Yes and Amen.

Playing Scrooge to his Scrooge, however, I would only add: the Dickens vision of Christmas does not take away from the truth, but complements it. 'Tis the season for joy and feasting! So give me a hearty helping of meat and potatoes, and another slice of Dickens' pie.

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STEP ONE . . .

OBSERVATION

What does the text say?

~ Matthew 1:1-17 ~

¹ 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.

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

1. Above the word **genealogy** in verse 1 write the word **genesis**.
2. Place brackets around **David** and **Abraham** in verses 1 and 17.
3. Draw a line from David to the right margin and write: Jesus is a true son of Abraham.
4. Draw a line from Abraham to the right margin and write: Jesus is a true heir of David.
5. In verses 3-6 circle the names of the four women listed.
6. Double underline the phrase in verse 16: **Joseph the husband of Mary**.
7. In the right margin of verse 16 write: The pattern of 'the father of' is broken.
8. Place a † over **Jesus Christ** in verse 1 and over **Christ** in verse 17.

Complementary Reading

~ Matthew's Begats ~

By Andrew Peterson

Abraham had Isaac
Isaac, he had Jacob
Jacob, he had Judah and his kin
Then Perez and Zerah
Came from Judah's woman, Tamar
Perez, he brought Hezron up
And then came
Aram, then Amminadab
Then Nahshon, who was then the dad of Salmon
Who with Rahab fathered Boaz
Ruth, she married Boaz who had Obed
Who had Jesse
Jesse, he had David who we know as king
David, he had Solomon by dead Uriah's wife
Solomon, well you all know him
He had good old Rehoboam
Followed by Abijah who had Asa
Asa had Jehoshaphat had Joram had Uzziah
Who had Jotham then Ahaz then Hezekiah
Followed by Manasseh who had Amon
Who was a man
Who was father of a good boy named Josiah
Who grandfathered Jehoiachin
Who caused the Babylonian captivity
Because he was a liar
Then he had Shealtiel, who begat Zerubbabel
Who had Abiud who had Eliakim
Eliakim had Azor who had Zadok who had Akim
Akim was the father of Eliud then
He had Eleazar who had Matthan who had Jacob
Now, listen very closely
I don't want to sing this twice
Jacob was the father of Joseph
The husband of Mary
The mother of Christ

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. In the ancient world genealogies were significant for a person's status was confirmed by them. The opening words harken back to Genesis 2:4 and 5:1 where the same phrase is used in the Greek Old Testament. Matthew's use of **genealogy** or **genesis** (see also Matthew 1:18) indicates that the coming of Jesus is a new beginning. Abraham and David are the two significant people in Jesus' ancestral record. Jesus is a true son of Abraham and a true heir of David. He is the fulfillment of all OT hopes.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. The brothers of Judah are mentioned to show Jesus' link to the twelve patriarchs of Israel.

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. One of the distinguishing characteristics of this genealogy is the mention of five women. The four women mentioned in this paragraph (whose names are italicized) form a striking group: (1) All four were Gentiles; (2) Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute; Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho; (3) They set the precedent for Jesus' birth to an unmarried woman from an obscure background.

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. Matthew's list is selective. In one case the names skip over two generations. He covers only 13 generations over the span of 600 years.

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. In Luke 3:23 Joseph's father is listed as Eli. Jacob was presumably his adoptive father or a relative to whom Joseph succeeded in the absence of a son of his own. Joseph is listed as the husband of Mary. The distinct wording makes it clear that Matthew does not regard Jesus as Joseph's biological son.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Matthew's genealogy is carefully constructed. Jesus' birth is the climax of three groupings of fourteen over forty-two generations. The first grouping of fourteen Matthew mentions is from Abraham to David. It is the period of heroism and greatness. The second grouping of fourteen is from David to the exile to Babylon. It's a period of decline that ultimately ends up in the devastation and destruction of Israel and the captivity in Babylon. The third grouping is from the captivity up to Christ. This is the period of four hundred years of prophetic silence.

The structure of the genealogy can be looked at in at least three ways: (1) The genealogy was a literary device known as a gematria. In Hebrew, each letter bears a numerical value. For instance, the numerical value of David adds up to fourteen (D=4,W=6,D=4). (2) The three groups of fourteen were a convenient mnemonic device listing all the important names. (3) This genealogy is not a record of man's biological productivity. It is a demonstration of God's movement toward the goal of salvation through His Son.

²Do your family a favor and also have fun with your Growth Group by listening to Andrew Peterson's song at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOXeUAZjppI>

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Why did Matthew begin his Gospel with a genealogy? Why was a genealogy important, especially to the Jewish people?

2. **Read Matthew 17:1.** Why is it so important to understand that Jesus is the son of David and the son of Abraham?

3. In what way is this genealogy the story of the Old Testament condensed? What does this indicate about the purpose of the Old Testament?

4. Identify a few people you know something about in this list. What does their appearance tell you about God's grace and human failure?

5. What does it mean to you that Jesus descended from a family of sinners?

6. Who are some people one might not expect to appear in the genealogy of the Messiah?

7. What is the significance of finding Gentiles in Jesus' genealogy?

8. How does this genealogy help you to trust God's promises more fully?

9. Did the people in this list see the promises of God come to pass in during their lifetime?
Are you okay knowing that you may not see the fulfillment of God's promises to you in your lifetime?

10. God is in control over all the circumstances of our lives. He is with us before, during, and after the trials we face.
How does this give you hope in times of distress?

11. What interruption in the genealogical pattern is broken in verse 18 concerning the birth of Christ? Why is that significant?
12. How has this series, Advent Unobscured, helped you get ready for Christmas this year?

A CELTIC PRAYER FOR ADVENT

Jesus, born a refugee: come among us.
Jesus, friend of the poor: come among us.
Jesus, lover of the outcast: come among us.
Christ, food for the hungry: come among us.
Christ, health of the sick: come among us.
Christ, savior of the world: come among us.
Jesus, bringer of good news: come among us.
Jesus, hope of us all: come among us.

STEP FOUR . . .

REFLECTION

*How is the text to be lived out personally?
Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22*

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalms 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Sermon Notes: *Knots in the Family Tree*

Matthew 1:1-17

A Bible Reading Plan for 2019

Sunday, December 15 thru Saturday, December 21, 2019
Titus 1-3, Philemon; Hebrews 1-5; Hebrews 6-9;
Hebrews 10-13; James 1-5; 1 Peter 1-5; 2 Peter 1-3