

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "The Way of Seth"

Scripture: Genesis 5:1-32, Galatians 3:26-29

Rev. Steve Filyk

September 28, 2025

Opener: The God of Abraham Praise 331

Choruses: Hope of the nations (Doerkson), Mighty to Save

Hymn after sermon: In Christ Alone

Closer: Great is thy faithfulness 324

Stories of family trees fascinate us.

Whether it's through Ancestry.ca or family photo albums,
we want to know where we've come from.

Alex Haley did this in a remarkable way in his novel *Roots*.

In *Roots* he traces the lineage of his family

Through the story of an African teenager
captured in The Gambia in the 1700s
and sold into slavery in America.

The story follows that teenager's descendants
through generations of bondage, struggle,
and eventual freedom,
ending with Haley himself discovering and telling their story.

Through his exploration Haley comes to see himself
as the latest chapter
in a centuries-long story of endurance, faith, and hope.

Do you know your roots?
How do these roots help you understand yourself?

Today Jane read a linear genealogy from Genesis;
A single line of descendants between Adam and Noah.
I would bet that you have never heard such a reading at church.
It's the sort of thing that most readers skim over or skip.

But we believe that what Jane read
isn't simply the names of strangers.
We are the spiritual heirs and descendants
of those who have been listed.
We believe this list is Holy Scripture
Just like the narratives before it and after it,
And that it has been preserved to teach us important lessons
about ourselves and our God.

So even if you, like me, have previously
Skipped over such sections in your own devotional reading.
I invite you to pay attention today with the expectation
Listening for what the Holy Spirit wants to teach you today.

PAUSE

Today's genealogy isn't the only one found in Scripture.
And it isn't the first one either.
After last week's story of Cain
The Bible provided a list of the seven generations that followed him.

Today's genealogy lists the descendent of Adam & Eve's third son, Seth,
Noting ten generations up to the Flood.
Later in Genesis Chapter 11 we will encounter a list of ten generations
between the Flood and the Abraham.

Two things make today's genealogy particularly unique.

First of all, especially in comparison to the genealogy of Cain,
Today's genealogy has a repetitive, formulaic, almost liturgical style:
There are "ten identically crafted paragraphs,
one for each generation in Adam's line from Adam to Seth to Noah.
Each paragraph is patterned accordingly:
(1) name;
(2) age;
(3) additional years after birth of son;
(4) acknowledgement of other children;

(5) total life span; and
 (6) the refrain "then he died"
 (Bruce K. Waltke Genesis 110)

Genesis chapter 11 also follow a formula,
 But without the weighty repetition "then he died."

This formula makes today's reading unique.
 But what likely stands out to you even more,
 Is the length of years,
 the ages of those ancestors
 that are noted in today's chapter.
 Methuselah... we are told he lived almost a millennia, 969 years.

We hear nothing about the number of birthday candles
 For Cain's descendants.
 And those listed after the Flood
 have a lifespan diminished by comparison to today's list.

So what are we to make of these long lives?

Those who take a very literal approach to Scripture,
 Argue that perhaps the world was different before the Flood,
 Permitting people to live much longer.
 Anything is possible.

Others suggest that the ancients employed a different way of counting.
 But if you divide the lifespans by months, or even ten
 This sort of 'translation' leaves those ancestors fathering children
 when they were under 10.

Others argue that long lifespans are literary devices.
 Records from comparative cultures record kings reigning thousands of years.
 (see Cultural Background Study Bible "Genealogies" 16)
 From this angle Biblical account is equally symbolic but much more modest.

Taking this approach, you might also notice
 the symmetry between the generations before and after the flood
 With longer lives beforehand
 Offering this earlier account a certain antiquity.

Taking this approach, you might also notice
 the symbolism inherent some of the ages:
 Enoch's lifespan at 365, maps onto the solar year
 The lifespan of Lamech (father of Noah) at 777
 expresses the repetition of a highly favored number.

Remember that today's reading isn't from the Globe and Mail.
 We read from a translation of ancient Hebrew Scripture,
 That itself implies, that it is a written account
 of a previously oral tradition.

Having noted all this,
 The ancient nature of the text,
 And the formulaic and (possibly) stylized presentation...

What does it this passage tell us about ourselves?
 What does it tell us about the character of our God?

The prologue to today's account offers a callback
 To the first creation story:
 "When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God.
 He created them male and female and blessed them.
 And he named them "Mankind" when they were created."

In what follows we see God's blessing at work
 In the extension of Adam and Eve's family.
 They are very fruitful; they increase in the number.
 (See Genesis 1:28).

While this genealogy is linear
 It notes that each ancestor had "other sons and daughters".
 A segmented genealogy with all the names of all the other children
 Would make this book too long to recount.

This genealogy teaches us that God's blessing in creation
 Has been preserved and that humanity
 Is fulfilling its creative mandate.

At the same time, we also see evidence
 Of the impact of humanity's choice
 To ignore God and pursue their own direction.

Adam and Eve's had been warned
 To stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 They were warned that if they ate of it, they would die.
 (Genesis 2:17).

This promise of God comes to fruition,
 In each and every generation.
 The repetitive phrase "and then he died"
 Hits like a drumbeat
 To emphasize the impact of this fateful decision.
 These ancestors may live incredibly long lives,
 But each one of them dies.

In this genealogy from Adam to Noah
 We see the enduring impact of God's blessing
 And humanity's decision to ignore God.

But if we look closely,
 we can also see the outworking of God's grace.
 Note that this linear genealogy is not quite what
 Would have been expected.
 This genealogy follows the line of the thirdborn Seth,
 not the firstborn Cain.

This different route takes us to exemplars like Enoch
 And heroes like Noah.
 If you follow it further you'll encounter other Biblical stars
 like Abraham, and Jacob, and King David...
 and eventually come to Jesus Christ.

When we read these names, we aren't just reading ancient history.
 We're tracing the line that leads all the way to Jesus.
 Already in Genesis 5, God is quietly weaving salvation
 into the fabric of human history.

God is choosing people and nations,
 To fulfill that cryptic promise of hope
 Made in the curse of the serpent
 "I will put enmity between you and the woman,
 And between your offspring and hers;
 He will crush your head,
 And you will strike his heel."
 (Genesis 3:15)

In the midst of a world of blessing and curse
 God is plotting a great work of salvation,
 So that the self-inflicted brokenness of humanity,
 Might one day be repaired.

Jesus, the new Adam,
 will mend the division between God and humanity.
 Jesus the song of God, will chart a new pathway
 to the paradise for which we were created.

In this short genealogy in Genesis
 We are given insight into ourselves
 And our world of blessing and curses.
 We see the beginnings of a great plan of salvation
 That a good God is working on our behalf.

This salvation has already come in Jesus.
 But it is yet to be revealed in its fulness.
 If you have received Jesus into your life
 How are you to live in the meantime until
 All of God's good promises are fulfilled?

Again today's genealogy might be helpful...
 We find the character Enoch in the 7th generation from Adam.
 For the people of Israel seven is the number of perfection.
 Enoch embodies this.
 His life gives us insight into the perfect life
 God has for each one of us.

We are told that he walked with God,
 And that unlike the others, he did not die,
 but God took him away.
 (Genesis 5:24).

This is broadly the shape of the life that God intends for each one of us.
 God intends that we walk with him each day,
 And promises that our life with him will extend into eternity.

This contrasts with the 7th generation of Cain,
 That ended the previous chapter.
 The man Lamech (not Noah's father, but a different Lamech)
 Is full of pride and boasting and violence.

This Lamech doesn't walk with God or depend on God,
 But boasts to his wives that he will avenge himself,
 More perfectly than God protected his great-great-grandfather.
 "If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times."
 (Genesis 4:24)

How do we live in a world marked by blessing and curse,
 Where salvation has been offered but awaits to be fully seen?

Like Enoch, we are invited to walk with God each day,
 If not perfectly, at least faithfully.
 And like Enoch, we are promised that this walk
 will not end in death, but in life with God forever.

As we wait for God's promises to be fulfilled,
 let's walk with God together,
 in hope and faith, even joy.
 God has good plans for us all.

Amen.