

Series: Advent: Experiencing peace THROUGH hard times.

Sermon Text: Matthew 1:1-17

(**App** to get lesson/slides, ask

questions. Color Pg)

LIFE IS NOT A HALLMARK MOVIE

Our theme for Advent this year is “**Experiencing peace through hard times.**”

Advent is a perfect time to re-focus on obtaining and retaining the peace which is so easy to lose when we take our eyes off Jesus. I really appreciate what Cindy said earlier about how we all want the perfect Christmas (however that looks to you), but reality can and often does clash with expectations. In fact, our desire for the perfect situation sometimes only serves to highlight how imperfect our situation might be. I think we can agree that the first Christmas was far from perfect for Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

Real life is not Hallmark movie. Because we live in an imperfect, messed-up world, filled with fallen people and less than ideal situations, there will be hurt, suffering, discomfort, and disappointment. Unfortunately, following Jesus doesn't insulate us from all that. Jesus reminded his followers “*In the world you will have tribulation.*” To be candid, following Jesus could even make things **worse** for you here on earth. II Timothy 3:12 tells us, “*All who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*” Fortunately, as Cindy alluded to earlier, real peace is not based on our circumstances. If we think peace only comes from 1) getting what we want and 2) not getting what we don't want, we are mistaken. Real peace comes from somewhere else, which means, we CAN have peace amid hard times. So, let's talk about how to do that.

IN CHOOSING OUR LIFE'S COMPASS, WE HAVE 2 STORIES TO CHOOSE FROM: GOD'S OR THE WORLD'S

Our **BIG IDEA** for today is this:

Peace is found by anchoring our identity in God's story, not the world's story.

I want you to ponder this...the things you believe about yourself, about others, and about how the world works - Where do those beliefs come from? What is the source of those beliefs? There are really only two sources to base these beliefs on: 1) what God says about these things (**His** story), or 2) what the world says about

these things (the **World's** story). That being the case, let me rephrase the question: **Are your beliefs based on God's story, or on the world's story?** Please realize, those are two very different stories. We learn from Jesus's words and actions that the kingdom He brings is very different from what the world says a kingdom should be. The world says a kingdom is based on empire, power, law, control, might, pride. In contrast, Jesus's kingdom is based on grace, mercy, humility, and peace (shalom).

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S INVITATION TO EVERYONE TO JOIN HIS KINGDOM

We think of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as "the Gospels." But in reality, there is only one Gospel, with four different writers, each writing with a particular purpose in mind. Matthew was a Jew and his purpose in writing his gospel was to present to his fellow countrymen that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King. Messiah means "*the Anointed One...the promised deliverer.*" And as the King He will sit on the throne of David but, unlike David, His kingdom will have no end.

In addition, Matthew is also going to take the opportunity in this genealogy to show us something very special about this kingdom that Jesus was bringing; something of utmost importance to each of us. This "something" is so huge, it's almost like a second **BIG IDEA: God invites everyone to be a part of His story.** In God's story, no one is excluded from the invitation to be a part of His kingdom. There are no outsiders, no outcasts. Nobody is left on the invitation list. That's worth repeating...this new Kingdom is open and available to anybody who wants to participate.

You are invited regardless of your age. What did Jesus say when his disciples tried to keep some children from "*bothering*" Jesus? "***Let the little children come to Me, don't stop them.***" And what did He say after that? "***for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these!***"

You are invited regardless of your past. Even if you say things like "*You don't know me, my life, my past, my failures. I've blown it. God wouldn't want me.*" Your past doesn't exclude you from the invitation. I think it would be a good

idea for all church signs to say, “*Hot messes welcome!*” The bottom line is King Jesus can handle chaos and confusion, and He seeks out those who are on the margins, excluded and despised.

This “*no one excluded*” message for Matthew comes straight out of his own story. Matthew knew what it was like to be an outsider. He was a tax collector, and the Jews hated and despised tax collectors. Israel was under Roman rule, Rome levied heavy taxes on the Jews and employed Jews to collect these taxes. The Israelites chafed under foreign rule. After all, they lived in the Promised Land, a land promised by God to the descendants of Abraham. And they had to pay a pagan nation just for the privilege of existing in their own land. Tax collectors were considered traitors. In fact, if you ranked society from the best of the best to the lowest of the low, from the most admired to the most detested, tax collectors were at the bottom of that scale. They were considered on the same level as harlots, thieves, and murderers.

At some point in his life, we don’t know why, Matthew rejected his national heritage, threw away his “*Jewishness*,” and decided to go to work for the enemy...to profit from the oppressors. With that decision he became an outsider, and he knew he was an outsider...or so he thought. Then one day while he was sitting in his tax collector booth [see Matthew chapter 9], this new Jewish rabbi Jesus, who was shaking up the status quo, healing people, performing miracles, speaking with authority unlike other religious teachers, this Jesus walked by Matthew, stopped, looked at him and said, “*Come with me.*” And Matthew did! And from that point forward he anchored his identity in God’s story.

MATTHEW GOES OUT OF HIS WAY TO MAKE THIS POINT WITH THE GENEALOGY

As most of you know, the Jews were big on genealogies. If you’ve ever tried to read the Bible through start to finish, and if the detailed minutia of the sacrificial system and the law in Leviticus didn’t take the wind out of your sails, the monotonous genealogies in the book of Numbers probably did. Some genealogies

may be dry and barren of meaningful content, but this one is not! So don't be tempted to bypass it so you can get to the good stuff. This **IS** the good stuff!

Let's look at *verse 1*: **"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham"** (Your translation may say Jesus **the Messiah**, instead of Jesus **Christ**. This is okay because it's the same thing. Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah). Why begin with genealogy? Because if you are going to present someone as a rightful heir to the throne you need to show their lineage, that they are a part of the royal line, that they have the legal right to sit on the throne. We know from the Old Testament that the Messiah will be descended from:

Abraham – God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen 12 & 15) and later promised him, *"And in your seed (one of his descendants) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."*

David – God made a covenant with David that a descendant of David will one day sit on the throne, and his Kingdom will never end (prophesied in Jeremiah 33, Daniel 2 & 7).

The tribe of Judah (prophesied in Genesis 49). We see that in verse 2, *"Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers."* Matthew doesn't need to name the other brothers, because Judah is who we're looking for.

The next verses (through *verse 16*) go on to trace this genealogy from Abraham all the way to Joseph, the husband of Mary. *"...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ."*

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?!

So, we need genealogy here, but Matthew writes what could be the worst Jewish genealogy we have on record. If it had been graded, he would get a D-minus. The only reason he wouldn't have gotten an F is that this record is technically accurate.

So, what's the problem? For one thing, family lines went through the fathers. And while mothers are certainly necessary because they bear the children, you don't mention the mother's name in genealogy unless it's needed to clarify an issue (pun intended, if you caught it). For a second thing, genealogies are your chance to shine. They're like resumes. You're putting your best foot forward and you **do not** mention anything negative if you don't have to. As we read this genealogy, we see Matthew blew it by breaking both these rules! Well...he either blew it, **OR** he knew what exactly he was doing in order to make a point.

Matthew mentions 4 women, none of which need to be mentioned to make the genealogy work, and they all had one thing common. They would have been labeled outsiders or outcasts, not belonging in a respectable family tree, and yet, that's exactly where they are! Let's look at each one.

Verse 3: Tamar “...and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron...” Long story short, Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah. She married Judah's first-born son, who died. She married his second-born son. He died. Judah promised he would give her his young 3rd son when that son got old enough, which kept her from marrying anybody else. Judah did not keep his word, effectively keeping Tamar single indefinitely, and therefore childless. Because of that, in an act of deceit, Tamar goes to meet Judah while he was on his way to shear his sheep, and she disguised herself as a prostitute with a veil to hide her identity. As a result of this “meeting”, Tamar gets pregnant with twin boys, Perez and Zerah. Perez continues the family line of Jesus. (You can read about these events in Genesis 38). That's an ugly story isn't it. You won't see that plot line in a Hallmark movie. Did Matthew **need** to include Tamar? No, this genealogy would've worked just fine without mentioning her.

Verse 5: Rahab – the HARLOT! (Fancy word for prostitute.) “and Salmon the father of Boaz, by Rahab...” Rahab was a Canaanite woman living in Jericho. Canaanites were the pagans living in the promised land, who, after centuries of idolatry and evil, including child sacrifice, were to be destroyed by the Israelites

as divine punishment. Yet Rahab believed in the God of the Israelites, helped the 2 Israelite spies escape, was spared at the fall of Jericho. She married Salmon, a Jew from the tribe of Judah, and wound up in the bloodline of Jesus as David's great-great grandmother. Did Matthew **need** to include Rahab? No, this genealogy would've worked just fine without mentioning her.

Verse 5: Ruth – “**and to Boaz was born Obed by *Ruth*...**” Ruth has a whole book about her in the Old Testament. You probably know about her. And if you do, you might say “*I've read her story, she was wonderful woman. Why would she be an outsider?*” Yes, she was a wonderful woman, but unfortunately, she had the wrong pedigree. She was [a descendant of Moab](#). She was a Moabite. For a number of very good reasons, including their antagonism toward the Jews, Moabites end up being cursed by God (through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah). In fact, [in Deuteronomy 23 it says](#) no Moabite could ever enter into the assembly of the Lord. So, it really hurts the whole purpose of this genealogy to highlight someone that the Law says can't be a part of God's story. Did Matthew **need** to mention Ruth in this genealogy? No, he did not.

Verse 6: Bathsheba – “**...and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.**” Uriah's wife was named Bathsheba. She entered the Messianic line through adultery with King David (see II Samuel chapters 11 & 12.) And when she got pregnant, David went so far as arranging the murder of her husband to hide their sin. Honestly, we don't know if Bathsheba was a willing co-conspirator or a reluctant participant. I mean, David was the king, and it would be hard to say “*no*” to your king. Now this is just my opinion, but I think Matthew may have included Bathsheba to point out, “*Hey! You remember that David guy in verse 1 that we all know and love? The greatest king we ever had. Let's not pretend he was perfect. He had huge flaws. He was also a terrible father by all accounts. And yet he's still a huge part of God's story.*” The story David and Bathsheba is also very ugly. You won't see this plot line in a Hallmark movie either. Did Matthew **need** to remind us of this? No, this genealogy would've worked just fine without referring to

Bathsheba. But remember, he's making a point. By the way, David did repent when he was confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet. That's when David penned Psalm 51, which is a wonderful passage on repentance. If you want to see what genuine repentance looks like, read that psalm. It is a model prayer of repentance we can use in our own lives.

Here is how Marty Solomon of the Bema podcast put it: *“Matthew is purposely going throughout the genealogy and pointing out the women in the story that we would typically like to push out or avoid, that have these dark stories. Matthew is going out of his way to say those dark stories are a part of God's story.”* One more thing on this point. These four women and David are no different than us. In fact, some of us might be able to relate to one of them. For example, if I wanted something so badly that I manipulated someone in an unethical or illegal way to get that thing I wanted, I might relate to Tamar. Or if my story is a train wreck and another person helped me wreck my story, I might relate to Bathsheba. The takeaway here is that our failures are never big enough to deter God's purposes.

WORLD EVENTS CANNOT STOP OR ALTER GOD'S STORY

For our last point, this genealogy of Jesus shows us that God accomplishes his story amid a messed world. Look at *verse 17*: *“Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.”* Matthew groups this genealogy timeline into three different eras which cover a total of about 2,000 years.

Abraham to David - This period was that of the patriarchs, and of Moses, Joshua, and the judges. It included wandering, enslavement in Egypt, deliverance, covenant-making, lawgiving, conquest, and victory.

David to the Babylonian exile – During this period there were very few good kings and a whole bunch of bad ones that slowly led Israel away from God and into trouble. It was a period of almost uninterrupted decline, apostasy, defeat, including the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, ending in exile.

The exile to the Messiah - The third period was marked by captivity, frustration, returning to the land, but still under the domination of various empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome). It is a period of obscurity and anonymity, sometimes called Israel's "*Dark Ages*."

What does all this tell us?

This 2,000-year period included an almost unimaginable variety of political, cultural, and economic situations, some good, some bad. What was the effect of these diverse circumstances on God's story? Nothing. **God's story was right on track the whole time.**

Look at the world we live in today. There's a lot of positive things going on, but there's a lot of negative stuff as well, both in our country and in the world, seemingly going from bad to worse in a lot of ways. What effect do these current events have on God's story? **ZERO.** **God's story is right on track this very moment.**

We've been studying Revelation, where we're seeing Satan and the forces of evil doing all they can to thwart God's story especially, it seems, toward the end times. What will be the effect of all that opposition on God's purposes? **NOTHING.** **God's story will remain right on track.**

CONCLUSION – CIRCLE BACK TO THE BIG IDEA

And knowing that is where our **BIG IDEA** comes from today: **Peace is found by anchoring our identity in God's story, not the world's story.** Let's make a point to remember that this Advent season. Anchoring your identity in God's story means you are not alone. No matter where you are on journey, you don't have to do it by yourself. We encourage you to reach out to us (even if it's just to ask questions).

Sunday to Monday Connection: As John told us, God invites everyone to be part of His story. This is proven by Christ's genealogy which is filled with social "outcasts" who might think they're past would keep them out of God's family. However, if we anchor their identity in God's story, not the world's story, we find the peace, love, hope, and joy of a Savior who welcomes everyone by grace through faith in Him.

- **Question:** Where have you been getting your sense of identity, purpose, and peace?

- **Next Step:** Get with your group and discuss why it's important to root our perspectives in Christ, especially to get **THROUGH** hard times.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Matthew 1:1-17 vs Luke 3:23-28:** Joseph, while considered the legal father of Jesus, and therefore must be in the royal line, he was not that natural father of Jesus. In his gospel, Luke presents a slightly different genealogy which biblical scholars believe traces Jesus's ancestry through Mary. So, Jesus is affirmed through both the necessary legal parent (Joseph), and a natural, human parent (Mary).

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)