

The Lord your God is in your midst, a Mighty One who will save  
*He will rejoice over us with gladness!*  
He will quiet you by His love;  
*He will exult over us with loud singing.*  
Rejoice and praise Him with all your heart!  
*The Lord is in our midst!*

Zeph 3

Today, we're starting a new series— "Just Jesus." Going verse by verse through the Gospel of Matthew, we're going to seek to set our focus on Just *Jesus*. This is important, because we tend to get sidetracked and distracted by all kinds of things in life and even in church—but the Bible tells us that Jesus, Jesus alone is "*the Image of the Invisible God, The Author of our Faith, The Way to God, the Truth of God, the Life of God in human form. He is the Firstborn over all creation, the Faithful Witness, The First and the Last, the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth.*" Jesus, in other words, is the Central Figure, not just of our faith, but of the *Universe*, He is the Central Figure in God's plan for the ages. So, it is good for us to fix our eyes on Jesus, to listen to His teachings with new ears, to watch His miracles and deeds with new eyes, to see Him more clearly, love Him more deeply, worship Him more. That will be our goal as we go through the Gospel of Matthew—just to see and know Jesus better.

This book we'll be looking at—the Gospel of Matthew was written by *Matthew*—he's also sometimes called by his Hebrew name Levi—he was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Before Matthew met Jesus, he was a tax collector—his job was to keep meticulous records about who paid taxes and how much they paid, but when Jesus walked by Matthew's office one day and said, "why don't you come follow me." Matthew left everything behind to follow Jesus—everything except his pen and notebook. As he followed Jesus, Matthew continued to do what he had been trained to do with his job—he continued to keep meticulous notes about everything that he saw Jesus do, all the things that Jesus taught, and Matthew compiled these notes into this book, the Gospel of Matthew. So when we read the book of Matthew, we are reading a reliable first-hand *eyewitness* account of the things that Jesus actually did and actually said.

And Matthew's account of Jesus kicks off with a bang—it begins in the most exciting action-packed way imaginable—with a *long list of names*—because nothing pulls an audience in like a detailed genealogy. Its weird, but that's how Matthew starts Jesus story—by recording Jesus' genealogy—His lineage, His family tree. I have to confess, a lot of times, when I'm reading the Bible and I come to a long list of names like this—I *skip it*—I move onto the more exciting stuff. *I considered* skipping over this genealogy this morning, but then I heard a story. A pastor named R.C. Sproul was telling about one of his friends who served as a missionary to a remote tribe in Papua New Guinea. This friend had spent *years* learning the unique language of this tribe, and once she learned the language, she worked with the tribe to create a unique written alphabet for their language, because they had no written alphabet and once she had helped them create an alphabet, she taught them to read and write in their own language, and once she did that, she began translating the Bible into the language of this tribe so that they could read God's Word for themselves—she started with the gospel of Matthew and she figured she would keep it simple—not worry about including this genealogy, with all its Hebrew

names—she just translated some of the major highlights of Jesus’ life. And when she finished, she gave her abbreviated translation of Matthew to the tribe, they flipped through it and said—Jesus, huh? That’s cool. They weren’t really that interested. The missionary was discouraged by this reaction, but she kept up her work with the tribe and eventually completed a full translation of all of Matthew, including the genealogy, and when she gave the full translation to the tribal leaders, they read the genealogy and said, “wait a minute—do mean that Jesus is a *real* person with a family and a bloodline that can be traced.” And she said, “yes.” And they said—we thought you were just telling us about a mythical figure—a legend from *your* culture! If Jesus is a *real* flesh and blood person with a family and a genealogy—we want to know more about him!” And many people in that tribe ended up putting their faith in Jesus—because of this genealogy which showed that he was a real human being.

So I figured that if this genealogy has led people to Christ before, maybe we shouldn’t ignore it or skip over it—maybe there is something important that God wants to communicate to us through this genealogy. So I’m going to read through these verses. There are a lot of names, but bear with me—listen for names you recognize, pay attention to little details that seem to matter, and remember that each one of these names is a *real* person, with real hope, real pain, real faith or doubt, actual human beings who, whether they knew it or not, were an important part of God’s plan to bring His Son into the world: **Read Matthew 1:1-17**. Have any of you guys ever done the ancestry.com DNA test? For about \$50 you get to spit into a little plastic tube and mail your saliva to ancestry.com and they tell you about where your ancestors came from and what are all the roots of your family tree. It’s pretty cool, I did it, and I was able to see the names and records of all these people that I’m related to—family I didn’t know about, distant relations and forgotten ancestors. But as I was looking over this list of names in my genealogy, I had to recognize—I didn’t choose to be a part of this family—I was just born into it. If I had had the opportunity to *choose* a family I was born into, I might have chosen to be born into the royal family of England—that seems like a pretty good gig, or I would have chosen a family with a noble history of producing brave and wise warriors, or a family with good health and strength, and long life encoded in their genes. But we don’t get to pick the family we’re born into or adopted into—we can pick our friends, we can pick our spouses, we can pick our noses as the old joke goes, but we don’t get to pick our family. But Jesus *did* get to pick His family. As the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus could have chosen any family on earth to be his family—but He chose to take on and carry the lineage of *this* specific list of people. Jesus *chose this* family tree. *Why?*

Scripture indicates that there are a few reasons Jesus chose this family tree. Number One, and this our first point this morning: **Jesus chose this genealogy to identify Himself in LOVE with SINFUL HUMANITY**. These names are not the names of perfect people. There are dozens of messy knots in this family tree. Take for instance Tamar, named in **verse 3**. You can read the story of Tamar in Genesis 38. Without getting into all the gory details, Tamar was a vulnerable widow who was oppressed and neglected and generally mistreated by all the men around her, who just behaved like pigs toward her. In order to survive, Tamar went to extreme measures—she disguised herself as a prostitute, seduced her ex-father-in-law Judah, who didn’t even recognize her, because he had never seen her as an actual person. She got pregnant

with his baby and said, “Ha—now you *have* to respect me and provide for me—you have to marry me because I’m the mother of your children—*that’s* some Jerry Springer style drama there. But Jesus *chose* Tamar to identify himself with vulnerable women and victims of oppression and abuse. He *chose* Judah, Tamar’s selfish chauvinistic father in law to show that He is not afraid to be associated with sinners, but that He is willing to befriend and transform even the worst.

For those with a *painful shameful past*, Jesus chose Rahab to be a part of his lineage, in **verse 5**. Rahab didn’t just pretend to be a prostitute like Tamar, but she actually *was* a prostitute before turning in faith to the Lord. For the *outsiders, and those born into unbelieving families*, Jesus chose Ruth in **verse 5**. Ruth was an idol-worshiping Moabite prior to coming to the Lord. I think it is wonderful that Jesus purposefully chose to be born into a lineage of mixed race and nationality—this list is made up not just of Israelites, Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth was a Moabite, David’s wife Bathsheba was perhaps a—but there is no sense of racial or nationalistic superiority in Jesus lineage, because, in His humanity, Jesus wanted to identify with *all* races, *all* nationalities, *all* backgrounds. For those who have *made terrible mistakes and committed great sins*, Jesus chose King David, a murderer and adulterer—who repented and received forgiveness from God, and King Manasseh, who burned his own children alive as offerings to his idols—before repenting and receiving forgiveness and mercy from God.

Jesus willingly and purposefully chose sinful, broken, diverse people to make up his human family, and Jesus is *still* choosing sinful, broken, diverse people to be a part of His family. When Jesus’ critics asked him in **Luke 5:30-32**, “***why do you eat and drink [why do you associate/identify with] tax collectors and sinners? Jesus answered them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.’***” Jesus loves and calls the broken, sick, and sinful of the world to Himself So if *you* have been hurt by those in power like Tamar, if you have a shameful past and a broken sexual history like Rahab, if you’re an outsider like Ruth, a sinner like David or Manasseh, Jesus calls you—He invites you to come join his family and be healed and transformed by his grace. **Hebrews 2:11** says that, when a sinner comes to Jesus in faith, He is not ashamed to call them brother or sister—He willingly adopts us into His family of faith and saves and begins to heal and transform us.

So Jesus chose this genealogy to show His willingness to identify in love with the most sinful, broken, and hurting members of the human race. But **Jesus also chose this genealogy to identify Himself in POWER with GOD’S PROMISES.** Matthew begins Jesus’ genealogy by pointing out two important individuals within it: Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew draws special attention to Abraham and David, because these two were recipients of special promises from God. To Abraham, God promised in **Genesis 12:2**: “***I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will BE a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***” God promised Abraham that through his descendants, *ALL* the families of the earth would one day be blessed. About a thousand years later, one of Abraham’s descendants named David became king of Israel, and God made this promise to David in **2 Samuel 7:12-13**: “***When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers [after***

***you die, David], I will raise up your OFFSPRING after you, who shall come from your body [be one of your descendants] and I will establish HIS kingdom. HE shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of HIS kingdom FOREVER.***” There seemed to be a partial fulfillment of this promise in David’s son Solomon, who became king after David, and built the temple in Jerusalem as a “house” for God’s name. But Solomon didn’t and couldn’t fulfill this promise entirely, because God says, I’m going to raise up one of your offspring to establish a Kingdom and build a house and sit on His throne *FOREVER*. Solomon didn’t reign forever—Solomon died, and his dynasty eventually collapsed and ended. The world was still waiting for a descendant of Abraham to bless *all* the nations. The world was still waiting for a descendant of David who would build the house of the Lord and rule *forever*. The world was waiting until, Jesus Christ was born, a descendant of Abraham and of David.

Jesus is the *fulfillment* of all the promises God made to Abraham and David. *Jesus* is the descendant of Abraham through whom all nations are blessed, because *Jesus* is the One who bears the curse of sin upon Himself in order to open up to all mankind—to people of every tongue and tribe and nation—the salvation of God and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. *Jesus* is the descendant of David who will build the house of the Lord and rule on His throne forever, because *Jesus* is the founder and builder of the Church which ***1 Peter 2:5*** calls “the spiritual house of God” made up of living stones, which are you and me and all who trust in Jesus Christ, who are being built up together as dwelling place for God’s glory. *Jesus* is the eternal King, rightful heir to the throne of God’s *everlasting* Kingdom, because *Jesus*, ***Philippians 2:9-11*** tells us, after humbling himself to be born as a human being into this broken world and this broken family tree, and after humbling himself to death on a cross, now ***“God has highly exalted him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.”*** *Jesus* is, according to ***Revelation 1:4***, ***“The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth”*** and one day, ***Revelation 11:15*** tells us, the proclamation will ring out across every galaxy in the universe that ***“the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and HE [that is Jesus] shall reign FOREVER and EVER.”*** Amen and Hallelujah.

So this genealogy proclaims that *Jesus* is the One who loves broken mankind enough to become one of us, to identify with us and save us. *Jesus* is the One who fulfills all the promises that God made to Abraham and to David and to the world. And lastly, **Jesus chose this genealogy to identify Himself as THE CHRIST.** Matthew bookends this family tree with two statements. At the beginning, He says “the book of the genealogy of Jesus CHRIST. At the end, he says, *Jesus* was born, who is called CHRIST. Christ is not *Jesus*’ last name—Christ is a title—it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah both of which mean—the Anointed One. *Jesus* is the human man anointed by God the Father to represent mankind, standing in as the Great High Priest of the human race, and *Jesus Christ* is the Divine Son, the Person of the Godhead anointed by God the Father to be King and ruler over the universe. And as the only One who is both fully God and fully man, as the only One who is anointed to be Great High Priest, and Great High King, *Jesus* is the Only One qualified to be Savior. Speaking of *Jesus*, in ***Acts 4:12***, Peter says, ***“there is salvation in NO ONE else, for there is no other name under***

***heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***” Jesus Christ alone is the anointed one who can save all who call on Him.

So, I encourage you this morning, if you have never recognized the Lordship and Christ-hood of Jesus, call on Him, call on Him to save you and make you a part of the family of faith that He is calling from among the nations, part of the living house that He is building for the glory of God, part of the Kingdom over which He will rule forever and ever. And if you have already called on Jesus, and received His salvation, I call you this morning to worship Him, with songs of praise, with your words and your heart and the obedience of your life. He is our King, He is our High Priest, He is our Savior and Lord!