

Matthew 1.1-17 | Royal Misfits

*Advent Part 1 – December 4, 2016
Spence Shelton*

Christmas Missions Offering

I want to begin today by introducing to you something we did last year as a church family at Christmas that really was a joy for us and we are doing again this year. Something that sort of grew out of who we are as a church. We joined together to give what we called a Christmas Missions Offering. This is a financial gift that 100% goes outside of the walls of Mercy Church to the mission of God here in Charlotte and around the world.

Many of you were not here last year so let me share the idea behind it: Everything we do here at Mercy is rooted and grounded in this message we call the gospel. That message is that God has been radically generous with us. Out of his love for us he gave us his son. That's what Christmas celebrates. To make a way for us to come home to him God *gave* his son. What a costly act of generosity towards us. And here's what happens, the more we come to embrace that act of love towards us, the more we start to share God's heart for others. And we become generous people. The generosity we experience changes our hearts to become more and more generous towards others.

At Christmas, we want to put that generosity out in front of who we are as a church. So, our challenge to one another is that as we give gifts this Christmas, let's give our best gift to the mission of God. Parents this is an awesome teaching opportunity for you and I encourage you to involve your kids in this. Courtney and I say to our kids that we are giving our first gift so that other people here and around the world can learn about Jesus. And yes, it means we give them less than we could. I'm not saying we don't give them anything. Like, "Merry Christmas here's a Bible verse go memorize it & be grateful." What I am trying to teach them is that if we have the love of Christ, we can't look at a lost and broken world and still act like it's all about us!

So here's what we are going to do: We are going to set a goal as a church to give towards God's mission this year. We divide this offering into three areas of mission we are involved in as a church (all this is up on our website). The first is local ministry right here in CLT. Last year we were able to bless partner ministries like Pregnancy Resource Center and a refugee ministry called One 7. We were able to help them meet very specific needs with ministries we know and trust who are applying the love of Christ to areas of need in our city. Beyond Charlotte we believe the best way to advance God's mission is to help church planting efforts across our country and around the world.

We helped plant two churches last year. One in L.A. and another in Brooklyn, NYC. Both of those pastors continue to tell me how helpful our support was. This year we are also

introducing you to a church planter in our church-planting network who is heading to Atlanta, GA. You'll meet him next month but we are going to give you a chance to really consider joining their team in the ATL. Lastly we give a big % of our CMO to help church planting efforts going on among unreached people groups around the world. I want to read you a letter from one of our planters in a closed country in the Middle East: [Letter from T]

Bottom line this is why we give. To see the gospel advanced here in charlotte and around the world. Our goal this year is \$40,000. There are roughly 400 people who see Mercy as their church. If each of us gives \$100, we are there. Some of you are going to be challenged to give a lot more than that. You pray about it and think about it. We'll take it up in service on December 18th. One final word on this:

2 Corinthians 9.7 says you are not to give under compulsion because God loves a cheerful giver. Listen, this is a joy for us. 100% goes outside of our walls and we celebrate that. The goal is not to guilt you into giving. We push back hard on that here. The goal is to re-ignite the joy in your own life as you give to see the gospel advanced around the world.

Intro

Ok, new series! We are calling the series "advent" where we celebrate the arrival of Jesus. Advent is the old Latin word for the coming, and it's a word the church has used for generations to mark the Christmas season. In fact some of you church veterans hear "advent" and instantly your brain

is like where are the wreaths & candles!? Listen I hope whether this is your first Christmas in church or maybe in a long time or whether this is your 50th, you will be awakened to the magnitude of the idea of Christmas that God is with us. We are excited about it so Let's jump in. We are going to spend December in the first two chapters of the gospel of Matthew. So, lets go:

[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.

[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 1:1-17 ESV)

Ok, be real honest right now. How many of you mentally checked out during that reading of God's holy word?

These are the first words of the New Testament! Aren't they supposed to draw you in? Aren't they supposed to hook you? To make you want to read the rest of it? I'm reading a novel right now that begins "*My big brother reaches home in the dark hours before dawn, when even ghosts take their rest. He smells of steel and coal and forge.*

He smells of the enemy." In 2 sentences we've got family, the five senses, and an enemy. I was hooked right there b/c that's how you start a story right?

Instead we get Perez was the father of Hezron who was the father of Ram. Ooooo. spicey!

Look out front this seems kind of boring and outdated and its another reason people don't really engage with the bible. Because it seems ancient. But listen, as odd as this might seem, I want to try and show you today that everything you need to know about Christianity is actually right here in this genealogy. And this is the thing about Advent I hope really comes to life here at Mercy. I want you to see what you might have been missing in Christmas even though it's been sitting right in front of you. This year I hope will be a fresh discovery of the God behind Christmas. Where you look at something you know is familiar but you see it in such a new way it's like you are seeing it for the first time.

You ever had that happen?

- Last scene of Friends: Joey & the apartment: Has it always been purple?

So if you are a Christian you've seen the gospel of Matthew before. But I want to challenge you to see Christmas anew in 2016. And that starts right here in these verses that maybe you've never really sat down in before. The author is in fact packing a mountain of theology and history and life

implications into these opening credits. I can't show you everything. I am going to limit this to four truths the author wants you to see about Christianity from this genealogy.

The first one I'm borrowing from Tim Keller:

1. The gospel is not primarily good advice, its good news¹

If you read a fairy tale it starts out with "once upon a time" or "twas the night before Christmas." But like we said Matthew doesn't start that way. It's a list of names. And the REASON is that Matthew wants you to know he is about to tell you about a historical event that really took place. And the whole purpose of his gospel is not primarily to relay what Jesus taught us, but what Jesus did for us. While we cannot divorce his teachings from his actions for sure, the POINT of Matthew, and the point of all four gospels is to announce the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus as a victory for the human race.

The way Keller explained it was think about living in ancient times. Imagine you were a king out in battle to defend your country. If you lost the battle, and the enemy army was invading, you'd send a message back to your people explaining how to defend themselves. But, if you won the battle, you'd send good news back that they don't have to defend themselves because the battle has been won

¹ Borrowed from Tim Keller's sermon "The History of Grace" preached on this same passage.

for them. And that news would be called a "gospel." The greek word is eu – angelion. Good – news. And the messenger would be called an angelos....where we get our word angel from.

That's the way you need to think about the gospel. When Jesus is born a whole bunch of heavenly "ANGELOS", or angels arrive with good news. And what is that news? It's not announcing Jesus the teacher is born. Silent Night doesn't go "Christ the TEACHER is bo-orn." No they say in this town is born a "SAVIOR" Christ the lord. That's the news.² And the genealogy is saying this is news about an event that happened in this time and in this space. We know the guy, we know his family tree.

And the fact that it is news about a historical event, and not just advice, is critical for two reasons.

First: It means as you read the rest of the gospel you are reading first about a savior and secondarily about a teacher. Which means...you aren't supposed to come to Jesus to PRIMARILY to get your dos and don'ts of how to live. That's not what this is. This is FIRST news about a savior. Jesus isn't claiming to be your ethics teacher; he's claiming to be your Savior and your God.

He didn't come because we needed more morality lessons that we wouldn't follow anyway. He came because we

² Adapted from J.D. Greear's message in 2012 called "Jesus' Resume" on this same passage.

needed a savior. We couldn't find our way to God on our own so Jesus entered into human history and made a way to God for us. That's the gospel. An announcement not just about a teacher, but about a savior. And you are to read Matthew *first* through that lens.

Second: I know plenty of people subconsciously function like the nativity is kind of a spiritual companion to Jolly ole Saint Nick. To many, the birth of Jesus is like a nice spiritual sentiment to sprinkle across the holidays. And most non-Christians dismiss it at that right there. Because if they are honest, thinking of it as an actual historical event that really took place is as far-fetched as the Santa Story.

After all, it's the announcement that a little baby is God. That millions of angels appeared & sang to some shepherds but nobody else heard them. And that a woman with no husband claimed that God made her pregnant. To many people a fat guy getting down your chimney and everyone else's in a single night fits in nicely with that kind of a fairy tale.

I know that Christianity appears to non-Christians as unbelievable. And one of the things this genealogy does is root the message of Christianity into a historical event. Matthew is not written like a fairy tale. It's written like a historical record. Starting by saying here's the long-form birth certificate of Jesus. And what I want to challenge you if you are a skeptic is to just take this December and consider what it would mean if it were true. We are going

to be here each of the next three Sundays and then Christmas eve. Just consider it. You made it here so you are already 25% of the way anyways.

And what you are about to see...Is as crazy as Christmas sounds, all of history was pointing to it. The reason in fact that Matthew starts with the genealogy is he's showing you evidence upon evidence that God has been preparing the whole world for the arrival of Jesus. That's the second thing the genealogy tells us:

2. God built all of history around the arrival of Jesus

This genealogy is like a family tree and we'll get to why that is important in a second, but it is also way more than a family tree. Because there are people mentioned in here who God gave specific promises to. And these promises were related to who the savior was going to be. That's what verse 1 is about. It's like a summary of the rest: "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

- Abraham – Genesis 22.18 – “[18] and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” – Someone from Abraham's line will bring a singular blessing that will be a blessing to everyone in the world.
- David – 2 Samuel 7 - [12] When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will

establish the throne of his kingdom forever. – God is promising a king that will reign forever. A forever king from David's bloodline. Isaiah 9.6-7 reinforces this prophecy: "*6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, ...and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.*"

- You see Judah in verse 2. Oh we are coming back to him in a bit. But Genesis 49.10 says the promised king would come from the tribe of Judah.

Basically everyone knew the savior has to come from the Abrahamic / Davidic line. And as Matthews audience is reading this they are checking off prophecies in their head. And you say well wouldn't the pool of potential descendants who could still be the messiah be pretty large? After all anyone in David's line could be king right? Oh here's where it gets fascinating. Notice the name Jechoniah in verse 11? **[11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.**

- Now this name raises huge eyebrows. My old pastor J.D. showed me this a while back. watch: God had told David in 2 Sam 7 that a descendant of his would be the ultimate King of Israel. The kingly line was passed from father to son, and the right to the throne was given to

Solomon and then to Rehoboam and on down the line. But one of Solomon's descendants, Jeconiah, sinned so badly that God said (in Jer 22:30) that none of his descendants would ever sit on the throne again. Which was a problem, because the legal right to the throne was passed on through Jeconiah, but the curse was that none of his blood descendants could sit on the throne (btw, right after this Israel went to exile which means that the kingship ceased). Well, Joseph was a descendant of Jeconiah, which means he had the legal right to the throne, but a blood descendant of his could not sit on the throne. Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph (look at the last verse), which means he got the legal right to the throne, but if Jesus had been a *physical* descendant of Jeconiah, he would have been under the curse and unable to occupy David's throne.³

- Enter Luke's genealogy. Luke makes it clear that Mary was a physical descendant of David through another son of David named Nathan (Luke 3:31) who was the great, great great grandfather of Mary. Thus Jesus was a blood descendant, through Mary, of David.
- He had the legal right to the throne through Joseph; but he avoided the curse given to Jeconiah because he was adopted by Joseph and virgin-born and thus not a biological descendant of Jeconiah's line.

³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

- You see, the virgin birth was the only way the prophecies of the messiah could be fulfilled. Who but God could have come up with that? He is so in control.⁴

I'm not even getting into the 319 other prophecies from the OT about the messiah that were ALL fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

Now that's pretty cool but How does this help you? Well it shows you that the point of history is Jesus. Jesus & Bethlehem are pretty obscure in history textbooks right. Something like Roman Empire you can major in. But what Matthew is pointing out is that Rome was actually a part of God's plan for Jesus. Why did God allow Rome to grow big? So they would create a census to send Joseph to Bethlehem so Jesus would fulfill the prophecy in Micah 5.2 that the savior had to come from Bethlehem (Micah 5.2). Ya'll he moves nations and peoples to accomplish his purposes.

The Genealogy is Matthew's way of telling you there is a story behind the story. Where even in those times where Israel's history seemed bleakest...God was moving. God was working. Israel was never forgotten. God never abandoned them. And some of you really need to hear that. You need to hear that God has not and will not abandon you. He holds to his promises. And maybe you are carrying pain with you right now. God doesn't like your pain but man history has

⁴ First preached by J.D. during a sermon on this passage in December 2012 titled Jesus' Resume.

shown he works to bring himself glory through even the darkest of days. And maybe that is why he has you here today. To show you that he has not forgotten you. That he is still writing your story. And the plot of your story is God coming after you, rescuing you from your self-destruction and reconciling you to himself. It's a rescue mission. And once you have him, you never have to feel insecure ever again.

Somehow he wove the events of your life to bring you here today. The person who invited you, your parents, your friends, they all played a part in the story of your life that got you to right here. And what you have to see is God's hand in all of that bringing you to himself.

Verse 2 mentions Judah & his brothers. The youngest of which was Joseph. A guy who experienced really painful stuff. Slavery, near death beatings, imprisonment. Yet at the end of Genesis he says to his own brothers who had been so horrible to him "What you meant for evil, God meant for good. To bring about the salvation of his people." I don't know what has happened in your life, but God may be using today to ring a bell that you need to finally see him as the one you've been looking for.

3. Christianity is for Outsiders, Misfits, and Rejects.

This list is supposed to be a resume of how awesome Jesus is. That's what genealogies are supposed to do. Think about your resume. You put the best stuff on there.

Weaknesses: cares too much, too loyal.

You don't put your biggest failures on there right.

- I worked at a golf course for one day. Literally one shift. I cleaned golf carts for 5 hours then left. I get home and they tell me they don't need me anymore. Not that impressive on resume. That date space for the job: June 3 1998 to June 3 1998.
- that time you got fired from TCBY for eating straight from the dispenser. You don't put that boss on your references list.

But this list is filled with people that would be big stains on Jesus' record. It's like the roster from the island of misfit toys.

First off, there are 5 women in the genealogy. In this day women would never be on a king's genealogy. It was a men only society yet here is the king of kings with women in his genealogy? And look at the women in this. They are by the definition of the times: misfits and outsiders. Rahab – prostitute. Ruth, while celebrated in the book of Ruth... is still a gentile. An outsider. The wife of Uriah. That would be Bathsheba...the woman at the center of the David's scandal. Oh and Tamar – the first woman up in verse 3. Remember her?

If you were here a few months ago we talked about her and Judah.

She was Judah's daughter in law. She was married to one of Judah's sons but he died before she had a son. OT law was that the dead man's brother would go into the woman to

ensure she would carry on his brother's line. Well Onan sleeps with her but then, the bible says, he didn't finish the job (I'm being PC) when he slept with her. And then, God kills him for that. So now Judah has 2 dead sons who had been with Tamar so he withholds his next son. So Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute, seduces Judah her sketchy father in law, and he gets her pregnant. When Judah finds out Tamar is pregnant he wants to have her killed and she says well the guy who owns this shirt he left at my house is the one who is the dad. It's Judah's shirt. And that's how we get Perez in the genealogy.

Some of you aren't looking forward to Christmas because your family is messed up. Be encouraged—at least you aren't that messed up! Jesus is like...yep those are my people.

Why does this matter? Matthew is telling you that the gospel he's about to proclaim...its for everyone. Jesus is for the religious elites who think they are morally superior to everyone else. He is for the person who never really rebelled or anything. Jesus is not embarrassed by the outsiders, misfits, and rejects in his family. and he is not embarrassed to associate himself with you. This is what makes Jesus the God you've been looking for. Because in Jesus you are fully known. He sees how messed up you really are. You can put on your front for other people but he sees you. The real you. The depressed you. The angry you. The cheating you. And he still loves you. No other God will know you fully and still love you completely.

Even in the genealogies God weaves his grace. He loves to redeem sinners. He loves to produce something beautiful out of sordid family backgrounds. He loves to make foreigners his children. He loves to reconcile his enemies.⁵

In Jesus Christ, prostitute and king sit down as equals.⁶

Both need the grace of God, both find it in the blood of Christ.

4. Christmas is an announcement of ultimate rest⁷

Look at **verse 17**. Why the numbers? And, if we want to be historically accurate matthew actually left out some generations. There were more than this. Now, it was completely common not to include every single generation in a genealogy but why bucket them like this? Well, matthew doesn't tell us why so we have to be careful to speak strongly where the scripture itself doesn't. But, there are a couple of theories that both end in the same application for your life. lets nerd out for just a second ok?

Theory 1: The number 14 refers to the number of high priests from Aaron to the establishment of Solomon's temple & from the temple to the last high priest mentioned Jaddua. Scholars who attach the significance here say Matthew is associating Jesus as both a king and a high

priest. The last and final high priest who will stand between man and God and make atonement on behalf of the sins of man.

Theory 2: some scholars say this is actually playing on the number seven which is a very important number in the bible. In the creation account God rested on the seventh day and the number seven throughout the bible points to both completion & to rest. Leviticus 25 talks about a seventh seven, a Jubilee year, in which all debts were forgiven and all slaves were freed. Basically all the people and all the land were given rest.

The way this genealogy is divided up is into 3 groups of 14 or 6 groups of 7. Which would make Christ, if you do all the math, Jesus is the 7th seven. What these scholars say and I really love it is that Matthew is trying to tell you that in this Jesus he's about to tell you about... you can finally find rest in him. He's the year of jubilee.

Either way listen what you are hearing: Whether he's the ultimate high priest or the final, eternal jubilee, he is the one you can finally rest in. There is a rat race we all run in, and it is especially visible this time of year. Whether its at Christmas parties or whether its how much money you are supposed to spend on a gift cause you don't want to seem cheap or you want to impress this person...Whatever it is there is an image we tend to try and create of ourselves that will make us seem worthy in the eyes of others. We want to be worth caring about, worth attention, worth time, worth

⁵ Jon Bloom article from Desiring God "[Christmas Bloodline](#)" – accessed 11.28.2016

⁶ Keller – History of Grace

⁷ Also from Keller's history of grace

a call, worth a gift, worth a conversation. We long to be seen as valuable, approved of, and as cared for. Because on the inside we fear we aren't worthy You can try and hide behind your "I don't need anybody" but you and I know that's a lie.

And what matthew is going to say is THIS ONE...JESUS...he's the one you've been searching for. Christ is not looking for you to impress him. How could you? The God of the universe isn't saying...you know he memorized a whole chapter of the bible...or he gave money this year...I'm going to get behind that horse. No, he says when you were at your absolute worst Ephesians 1 says he lavished his love upon you. Not because you deserved it, but because he loves you.

Here's the beauty of the gospel: You are designed by God for that search for approval. Blaise Pascal an old French philosopher said in the late 1600s

"There is a **God-shaped vacuum** in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."⁸

Will you this Christmas finally see the God you need, the God you've been searching for, has come! He doesn't ask you to impress him. He calls you to give him your whole

⁸ W. Bright, *Jesus and the Intellectual*, Campus Crusade for Christ International, Arrowhead Springs, San Bernardino, CA, 1968.

life. It will cost you everything. And it will be the greatest step you could take. Will you surrender to him?
