

CHRISTMAS DAY - The Christmas Family Tree

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Date: 25 December 2004

Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 25th of December 2004.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled The Christmas Family Tree and is based on Matthew chapter 1 verses 1 to 17.

Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us throughout history, that you spoke through many prophets, but in these last days you have spoken to us by our Son, one whom you appointed heir of all things, whom you created all the worlds. Father, we thank you that Jesus came and revealed your will, that we might know more of you and might enjoy our relationship with you.

We pray now, Father, that you help us to understand more of your Son, Jesus, and that we may live in accordance with His will. We pray this in your Son's name. Amen. Well, I wonder how your preparations have gone up to this point in Christmas Day.

Preparing for Christmas Day is a very long task. Let me just give you one little snippet of preparation that you may have already forgotten, perhaps, or perhaps you have done.

[1 : 28] The roast pork. How have you gone with preparing for the roast pork for those who have roast pork today? Now, I have it on good authority because I've never cooked roast pork myself, but this is how you are to do a good roast pork.

First, you should get some butter and rub it into the skin. Now, I'll be told from this morning's service, a good olive oil will do the same thing. Rub it into the surface of your pork and then get some salt, good handfuls of salt, and put it on the top.

Massage it in. It's meant to be the way to do it. Then, once you've done those two things, the trick is if you put it into a high oven to start with.

They'll give it so it starts to get the crackling going early. Then after about an hour, turn it down and then let it keep on going for some time. Now, I have it on good authority, but don't let this secret out too far.

If you don't get the good crackling by the time the meat is cooked, cut it off and put it under the grill. See, that'll bring it so it's nice and crispy. You didn't think of that, did you?

[2 : 34] Well, now there you go, you see. There's a good way of doing that. Now, for those who need to prepare for this, I imagine that some of you have already got your roast pork going right now. Or it might be the roast turkey, because I know that roast turkey takes much longer.

Well, you've got the stuffing, you've got so many other things. They're in the oven. As I was talking about this morning, one of the parishioners told me that he forgot to set his timer this morning.

So I'm not sure what time they're going to have lunch, but anyhow, we need to prepare for Christmas. Lots of preparation. That's just the roast pork. Let me just mention a few other things.

What about the presents? It's always a difficult thing, preparation time with the presents. Who are you going to buy for this year? Are you going to go to the Kris Kringle where you draw the names out of the hat, or are you going to actually buy for every single person, or how much money you're going to spend on each person?

And once you've worked out your list of all the people you've got to buy for, when do you start buying? So if you go too early, then you're going to miss out on the Christmas sales. So you've got to work these things out. Lots of preparation time.

[3 : 38] Now, if you're like Michelle, Michelle can do most of our Christmas shopping in two hours in one afternoon. She's extraordinary, the way that she's able to do this. But for me, I like to at least, for every present, go around and have a look at three different shops.

Compare quality, price. I like to have a little look around. Three presents could take me two weeks to buy. But, you know, each to their own. For me, much longer preparation time there with the presents.

Well, then there's the Christmas tree. Then there's the other food that you need to buy. There's the sending of cards, the relou runs, the wrapping of the presents. Now, the Christmas table, that's a very difficult preparation time.

What colour scheme are you going to go this year? Green and red? Are you going to have the matching crackers on the table? All this preparation that needs to be sorted out. Now, for those who haven't done their Christmas pudding or their Christmas cake yet, don't even bother.

It should have been done in August. No wonder we feel exhausted at Christmas time with all the preparation that we do for this day. It's a great day, but there's lots of preparation that goes into this day.

[4 : 42] We're going to consider a moment. God's preparation for the first Christmas. A preparation that took a long time.

One with great care and great purpose. You see, we see there in verse 1. If you have your Bibles open, it might be helpful for you. Verse 1 of Matthew, page 783.

We see there that we have a genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah. This is a planning that has gone back through the son of David, back through, right through to Abraham.

You see, this is a great long plan. A plan that God has had in preparation for some time. And at the centre of God's plan is Jesus, the Messiah.

Now, here's the one that it all looks forward to. One that goes right back, as I said, through David through to Abraham. Well, what we have next in verses 2 through to verse 16 is a genealogy.

[5 : 51] Now, I wasn't much for history. It was one of the subjects I found very difficult when I was at school. And looking at long family trees wasn't something that greatly interested me. But I find this family tree that we have before us, this long genealogy that we have before us, a fascinating genealogy.

We see there a certain pattern. A pattern that goes, if you look there in verse 2, Abraham was the father of Isaac. And Isaac, the father of Jacob.

And Jacob, the father of Judah. Notice the way it just has that pattern. Someone was the father of someone. Was of the father of someone.

And that person was the father of someone. It's this pattern that keeps on going. But as we read through this list, we'll see that there's a few times that the pattern changes a little bit. We'll look at those because it's there that we see the clues about this great man, Jesus.

It gives us some of the depth of information. Some of the deep theological truths that we see there in this passage. Well, let's start with the very first person, Abraham.

[7 : 00] We see there in verse 1 that this Jesus is the son of Abraham. And genealogy starts with Abraham. Because that's where the planning for this great long trip that we're about to go through starts with Abraham.

Well, at Christmas time we do lots of planning, don't we? If you're a list person, you'll start writing out the list of things that you need to do. This year, I think we're going to have it this way.

We're going to have it at this person's place. We might even go here. We might even go there. This year we're not going to have roast pork. We're going to have it cold this year. Ham. That's what we're going to have. And you start planning out the things that you're going to do.

Well, here the planning starts with Abraham. God calls Abraham and gives him some promises, some great promises that he's going to bring about. He talks to Abraham and he says, Abraham, I'm going to make you into a great nation.

I'm going to bring you into a promised land. And through your family, there's going to be great blessing for all the nations. There is the plan.

[8 : 06] God makes a promise and he's going to bring it to fruition. A great plan. And Abraham starts this great plan of salvation, where God works through one family to bring about a salvation, to bring about his Messiah.

Well, as we go through the list, we see at the end of the paragraph, the next person that comes along. You see, as we go through this list, there are high points and low points. Just like any Christmas, there are high points and low points in the preparation.

There are some of the high points, where the Christmas cake comes out and it smells fantastic. But the low points, where you've burnt the roast pork, or where you've bought the wrong coloured socks for mother, or the wrong size shirt for your father.

There are moments where it's a great low point, where things just don't work out, but there are also those moments where it does work out. At the end of that first paragraph in verse 6, we see a high moment in the promises of God.

And Jesse, the father of King David. We see there a word put in. Again, just a little clue that we are to pick up on. The word King is put there.

[9 : 22] King David. You see, it reminds us of David and the promises that were given to him. That his son, there would be a great king who would set up a kingdom, a kingdom that would last forever.

It reminds us of this, as we see this word King David. The importance of a Messiah. One who would come, the anointed, God's anointed, who would bring about great blessing.

But we also see here, when King David's name is mentioned, a high point for Israel. The plans are going well. They're in the promised land.

They're going really well. They're prosperous. There's great blessing there. We even see some clues of the nations coming in. Then why do we need to keep on going past this point?

Why do we need to keep on, if we've reached the high point of what God had planned, why do we need to keep on reading through this list here? Isn't this the high point? No. There's a far greater problem that lurks in the background, a problem that just undermines these plans.

[10 : 29] For we read in the next few verses from 6b through to 11, we see there that Israel goes into exile, into Babylon. It's where God's people don't obey God.

They fall into sin and they disobey God. And because of that, they're cast out of the promised land. All their hopes, all their aspirations, all the promises seem to have just gone, disappeared through their fingers.

through they go to exile. Note there in verse 11, And Josiah, the father of Jehonai, and his brothers, at the time of deportation to Babylon.

Well, there we have the exile, a low moment in Israel's history. Can God bring about some way of bringing about his promises now? They've been kicked out of the promised land.

They've disobeyed God. There's this problem of sin that just won't go away. As we read through, we see some hope there.

[11 : 37] We see that there are 14 generations that go from verse 12 to verse 16, ending in eventually the Messiah. But before we think more about the Messiah and how all things head towards him, consider a moment the extraordinary things that are just hidden there below the surfaces.

As I said before, we need to look at the things where the pattern is broken. Well, look there in verse 3. We see there in verse 3, Judah, the father of Perez and Zerah, by Tamar.

This is an extraordinary thing. A woman has been brought into this list. For this culture, this is an extraordinary thing. For a woman to be a part of genealogy there. Normally, it would just be the male line that they would follow.

But here, we have a woman being brought into this list. An extraordinary woman as well. We also see there, in verse 5, two other women who are brought into the list.

Rahab and Ruth. And in verse 6, we see there, the wife of Uriah, Uriah, which is, of course, Bathsheba. We see some women that have been brought into this list.

[12 : 52] Extraordinary. Because when you think about these women, these women come in at critical moments in the events of Israel's history. They come in just when there is a great threat to the promises of God.

And they avert these threats where children are born. But they're not exactly the most clean and squeaky figures that we have.

Two of them are, two of the five are suspected prostitutes, Tamar and Rahab. One of them is an adulteress, Bathsheba. And the first four that I've just read out, they're women who are probably considered to be Gentiles.

But all of them played their part in an extraordinary way. For here we see that God uses the humble and the low in his control of history.

Oh, not that women are low, but the way that he uses extraordinary people. People outside of Israel's history. People who are even prostitutes. God uses as a part of his history.

[13 : 54] It's not the type of thing that if you had a family tree you'd point out, is it? Oh, and this one here, well, she was a prostitute as a part of our family. And it's not one of those moments that you sort of highlight.

But it also indicates the way that God brings in people from the ends of the earth. As I said, four, possible four of the five are Gentiles. We also see there this dislocation as we read through it. It seems almost offensive the way that it's there, the names are put there. But in many ways it prepares us for the last of the women that are named there in verse 16.

Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born, who is called the Messiah. See, in many ways this extraordinary list also prepares us for the virgin birth, that extraordinary event.

in our preparation at Christmas, sometimes there are extraordinary events that just come along that take us by surprise. I remember one year being a poor student going through Bible college and not really having enough money to pay the bills, let alone trying to pay for the Christmas presents.

[15:13] And under our door we woke one morning to find \$500. What an extraordinary gift, just out of the blue. Sometimes in our preparation of Christmas extraordinary things happen.

In God's planning he brought in the extraordinary. Well, Jesus comes at the end of this list, the Messiah, the one in whom all the promises come and point towards, the one in whom the promises are fulfilled, the promises to Abraham of bringing in the nations, the promises to David of a great Messiah, a great king, all coming together in this man Jesus.

He is the one who brings fulfillment. Despite all the tensions, all the problems, all the high points, all the low points, it all comes together in this man Jesus.

There's three things I want us to take away from this. The first is God is in control. God keeps his promises despite all that goes on.

God brings about fulfillment of his promises as we see in this list. It might take time but it is God's timing and he does it about the way he wants to do it in extraordinary ways to bring about his promises of bringing about a great salvation for each one of us.

[16:40] This is also a great reminder for us to think about that God will bring about the fulfillment of his promises yet to come. When Christ will return, when we will enjoy the full blessings that Christ came to bring us of salvation, of enjoyment with full relationship with God yet to come, we can trust in these promises because God has shown that he is trustworthy.

He brought about fulfillment of Jesus. He will bring about the fulfillment of these promises in their fulfillment. The second point is that we belong to a rich heritage.

Michelle and I often commented on the rich traditions that many different cultures have and we often look at our heritage of perhaps coming from the convicts and sort of thinking well, we don't really have a great deal of rich heritage and that type of thing.

But we look at some of the richness in the clothing, in the foods, in the histories of many other peoples and nationalities.

But when we reflect on this list, we are reminded of a rich heritage that we belong to that goes back a long way. It goes back through Jesus who brings us into his family.

[18:00] It brings us salvation. A history that goes back through David, through Abraham. This is a great history. We have great roots and we must take heart from this and be encouraged from this.

The third point is Matthew goes to extraordinary lengths to point out the central focus for us. It is Jesus, the Messiah.

He is the one that is to be our focus, the one to bring salvation for us. He is our great Messiah. Let us not lose sight of that this Christmas. Well, I imagine soon you will be going back to your Christmas preparations.

You will leave from here and you will go back to make sure that the turkey is going okay, make sure the table is set, make sure you have got all your presents and then people will come and you will start handing out the presents and you will see whether it was actually a good preparation this year or whether, oh, I need to make sure I start earlier this year.

I should have put the turkey on a couple of hours earlier. You go out there and you will have all your preparations and you will see how it goes. But take a moment in the midst of that. Take a moment to consider the preparations that God had in mind for each one of us in bringing us into his family that we might enjoy salvation and eternal life with him.

[19:22] Amen. Amen.