

Matthew 1:17

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning.

I'm glad you all are braving our slightly chilly service this morning. It's actually an apt introduction to my message this morning because I want to begin by talking about the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe.

C.S. Lewis' beloved story about children transported into the land of Narnia where it is always winter. And maybe you're feeling like that this morning.

In the land of Narnia, it is always winter, but it is never Christmas. It never used to be this way, but because of the rule of the wicked witch of the north, it has now become normal.

It is always winter, but never Christmas. How awful, replies little Lucy, when she hears this. But soon after, Lucy and her siblings meet the beavers, and they begin to hear a little bit more about this world.

[1 : 14] And they hear about a hope, a hope that the winter will end. A hope that Aslan will come.

And when Aslan comes, they will be saved. When Aslan comes, they hope. All will be made right. The wicked witch will be dethroned.

All who ally with her will be dealt with. Wrongs will be punished. Evil will be undone. The enemies of good will be conquered by redemption or judgment.

And Christmas, and then spring, will come. And all will be as it should be. As it ought to be. As it was meant to be.

Maybe you've read this story, and maybe you haven't. But I think that this story resonates with us because we too live in a world which is not the way it ought to be.

[2 : 17] Not the way it's meant to be. Not the way it should be. And this story taps into our longing. And our sense of, could it ever?

Could it ever be changed? Could it ever be made right? We long, I think, for the wrongs of this world to be right.

We watch the 6 o'clock news. And we hear about war and famine and child trafficking. And we think and we're moved to anger at the injustice.

We read the New Haven Register and weekly hear another murder. Unprecedented in recent history in our own city.

And we think it ought not be this way. We consider our own lives in the drudgery of work, eat, sleep, wash, rinse, repeat.

[3 : 23] And we think, is this what it's meant to be? And if we have the courage to look into our own hearts, if we have the courage to look into our own souls, we may face frustration, helplessness, or even disgust.

Because we are not what we ought to be. What we hope to be. What we were meant to be. We are selfish.

We are petty. We are uncontrolled. We have ideas of good things and never follow through with them. From the global level to the very innermost being of our soul, this world is not as it is meant to be.

And we know that, I think. And we long. We long for someone or something somehow to come and deliver us. To make it right. And in Narnia, they longed for Aslan.

But who can do that for us? In our real world, we live in a world where many come to make promises of deliverance and of hope.

[4 : 46] Some are more frivolous and some are not. Go to the movie theater. Watch a romantic comedy. And they will promise you that if only you could find the one.

Or the one who got away. Or the one who's right under your nose but you don't see them because you're always looking for the other one. Whatever that one is, if you only found the one, your life will be made right.

Will fill your life with light and happiness. But it doesn't always work that way, does it? In fact, does it ever work that way?

In reality. That one turns out to be a lot harder to live with than you thought. You watch the TV and you notice that drug companies put advertisements in.

This pill, whatever it is, will take away all your pain. All your discomfort. Alleviate any physical malady that you have.

[5 : 48] That's an overstatement. But that's the message they're promising. They're saying this can make your life better. This can make you well. And yet, we live in the unstoppable, relentless face of sickness and death continues.

And no one has escaped it yet. We live in a marketing world that promises your best life now. If you have the new iPhone 4S with a dual-core A5 chip, all-new 8-megapixel camera featuring iOS 5 and iCloud, you can finally have the productivity that you long for, the relationships that will give you meaning and significance in life, all in this little, small, white piece of electronics.

Available now online or at your local Best Buy. Or on a more serious level, we look at the history of the 20th century.

We think the League of Nations or the United Nations were raised up to promise peace, to overcome the strife among the nations of our world, to deal with the global problems.

And they have overseen the bloodiest century in human history. All these promises made.

[7 : 19] All these promises broken. It's easy to become disillusioned. It's easy to think there's no hope. No one's going to save us. No one is going to deliver us.

And yet still we long. Still we long. Who can come and make it right? What can come and deliver us? And this brings us to our text this morning.

We're continuing in our series in Advent. We're looking at the genealogy at the beginning of the book of Matthew to understand what the significance is of the Christmas story.

At the time of the first Christmas, there was a longing for those people as well. In the first century in Israel, there was a longing.

Because the people at that time lived under oppressive Roman rule. That they had lived under for centuries. There was a so-called king.

[8 : 23] Who was only in power because he had collaborated with the enemy. The temple that they worshipped God at was a mere shadow of what they had known before.

Its glory was small. And in fact, over the years, Messianic figures had risen up saying, I will be the one.

I will be the one to save. And all of them died along with their followers. And they too had a longing. They too had a desire. Won't someone come and deliver us? Won't someone come and make it right? And it's in this context that Matthew writes a genealogy.

So let's look at it together and then pray. Matthew chapter 1. We are on page 681 in your pew Bible. It won't have a number on there, but it's the beginning of the New Testament.

[9 : 24] So, 681. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron was the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nashon, Nashon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Ammon, Ammon the father of Josiah and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Sherotiel Sherotiel was the father of Zerubbabel Zerubbabel was the father of Abed Abed the father of Eliakim Eliakim, the father of Azor

Azor, the father of Zadok Zadok, the father of Achim Achim, the father of Eliud Eliud, the father of Eleazar Eleazar, the father of Mathan Mathan, the father of Jacob and Jacob, the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is the Christ.

Thus there were 14 generations in all from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile in Babylon, and 14 from the exile to the Christ.

[11:42] Now, as Nick mentioned last week, if you were here, this doesn't sound like gripping literature, does it? But if you were one of those first century Jews longing for a deliverer, you would have read this and your heart would have leapt for joy.

Look at this with me and let me show you how Matthew is putting together a picture of how good news this is. Matthew himself shows us in verse 17 that this genealogy is structured.

It is not a complete genealogy of every line from father to son, but he structures it with 14s, three groups of 14. And David is at the center of this.

You see it in verse 1 where he says, Jesus Christ is the son of David primarily and Abraham. We could have a fun discussion about Jewish numerology, the fact that the three consonants in David's letter, if you add them up, come to 14.

But the other thing that I want to point at in the genealogy itself is that when you're reading a genealogy, you always want to look for the odd adjective, the strange comment that's added on to the end of a line.

[13:10] And so when you look in verse 6, you see Jesse, the father of David. But David has an adjective, doesn't he?

A title. Jesse is the father of King David. And this is Matthew's point. And you see him developing it through the rest of his story.

You see in verses 18 through the end of chapter 1, as Matthew's recounting the story of an angel coming to Joseph, Joseph is explicitly called the son of David.

He's reminding us Jesus is in the line of David. And then when we get to chapter 2, the story is about three men who traveled an unimaginable distance to come and find this one because they had seen a star in the sky and that told them that a king had been born and they came to find the king of the Jews.

Matthew crafts this genealogy and the rest of the birth narrative to say, Jesus is the king you've hoped for.

[14:33] Jesus is the one you have longed for. He is here. And a Jewish reader would have rejoiced. And a Jewish reader would have rejoiced.

What I want to do now is to take a step back and build into you some of the understanding that a first century reader would have had. I want to tell a little bit of the story of why a king would have been the object of their hope.

So review the history of the whole Bible with me for a minute. I promise we'll do this quickly. But going all the way back, I'll start at this point.

In Egypt, God's people went from a small family to a great number of people. And God raised up prophets. God raised up Moses and Joshua to lead them out of slavery and out of Egypt and into the promised land, the land that God had promised to settle them.

A place that would be their own. And it was clear throughout this whole narrative that God was their king and God was their deliverer. And so you see that they dwell then in this land for a while through the period of Joshua and Judges as they established themselves in this land and then are ruled by Judges that God is the king of Israel.

[16:01] And then you come to the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and in Samuel, you see the people reject God as their king. They request a king of their own.

And it's not an unreasonable request. In fact, Moses in Deuteronomy 17 had predicted that there would be a human king one day. But the writer of 1 Samuel says they rejected God as king. And the king that they got, well, it was exactly the king that God had warned them about. He was a king who would take all their sons off to war, take their best land for themselves, who would live in great prosperity but also at great cost.

King of Saul exemplified some of this at least. And in his disobedience and his unfaithfulness to the Lord, God rejected him. And in 1 Samuel 16, you see God raising up his anointed king.

Not the greatest warrior in the land but the least son of a family. David is the youngest son and God comes to him and through the prophet Samuel anoints David the king.

[17 : 23] But even then, he doesn't ascend to his throne quickly. The whole rest of 1 Samuel is about David's life serving the sitting king of Saul.

And it's not until 2 Samuel, after Saul dies, that David finally rises up and takes his rightful place. And you see God blessing him.

He gives him victory over his enemies. He establishes Jerusalem as the capital. He brings the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and establishes the kingdom of God on earth under God's anointed king.

And everyone thinks, this is it! Now we've finally gotten where we want to. And in fact, in chapter 7 of 2 Samuel, there's this great passage where David comes to God and says, God, I want to build you a house to honor you.

And God comes back to David and says, no, David, I'm going to build you a house. And he goes on in this promise, starting in verse 12 of 2 Samuel, if you want to follow along, you can just listen.

[18 : 34] The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you. When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body and I will establish his kingdom.

He is the one who will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father. He will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him.

With the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken from him as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me.

Your throne will be established forever. This sounds wonderful. God is saying, all right, now I have a king in place and he is going to rule forever.

But it does not take long to realize. As you read this, as in so much of the Old Testament, you see that there are promises here that are fulfilled literally by David's son, Solomon.

[19 : 44] Solomon builds a temple in Jerusalem for God. But Solomon also disobeys and forsakes God. And sits under his discipline.

And he cannot be the one who will sit on the throne forever. He cannot be the one who will establish a kingdom forever. And the whole rest of Old Testament history is about the decline of this kingdom from this point.

With maybe some ups and downs, but is never restored to that glory again. And finally, they're taken away. They're taken away to exile and the kingdom is actually wiped off the face of the earth for a while.

God restores it. But the people at that time are longing, God, when will you restore this kingdom? When will you make it right again? When will you raise up a king?

Like this. And the passages that we looked at in Isaiah that we heard, read earlier, capture some of their longings and some of the promises that God has given.

[21 : 01] That it's not just a futile or wishful thinking that God would do this, but God has said, I will do this. Recall again the words in Isaiah 9. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders.

He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. And here, and he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. What a picture. What a glorious hope that God has laid out for his people.

That even though they are unfaithful, God will raise up a king who will reign over a kingdom like this. He is completely righteous and will always do what is right.

He is unrivaled in power and will be able to do whatever he wants. He is eternal and will rule forever. He is able to free us from every oppression, to defeat the greatest empire on earth and he can make it right.

[22 : 24] He will establish his glorious kingdom and will be a part of it. And we will bask in his glory. And this is what they were longing for in the first century.

This is what they were looking for. This is what they were saying. Where is this king that God will raise up? Where is this one who can come and deliver us?

So turn back with me to Matthew again if you've moved away from it. Matthew chapter 1. This is what Matthew is saying. Behold, the king is here.

And you start to see that this king is not just a king who will rule politically, economically, but you see verse 18.

I'm sorry. You see in the section from verse 18 to 24 that when the Holy Spirit comes to Joseph and he says, Mary will have a son, the angel gives him a name.

[23 : 43] This king must have the name Jesus because he will save the people from their sins. So it is not just a political king, but it is a savior king that God is raising up for us.

Jesus is the son of David, a king on the throne of David. And he is the savior. But notice that when this king comes, there's no white horse.

There is no army. He does not come to conquer Rome. He does not wield his authority in that way. Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus is actually very simple. Lots of what we know about it actually come from Luke. When you look at it, chapter 2, verse 1 is the only thing it says.

It says, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. That's all it says about the actual birth. But it raises the question for us, how will a baby be a savior king?

[25 : 00] How will he do it? So I want you to turn with me to one more passage to understand this. Turn with me to Revelation, chapter 5. John has a vision of the throne room of heaven.

John has a vision in the eternal now of God's kingdom. I'm going to read verses 1 through 10. Then I saw at the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

I wept and wept because there was no one who was found worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, do not weep.

See, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.

[26 : 16] And I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne and when he had taken it the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls of incense which are the prayers of the saints and they sang a new song.

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain. With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth. Who is the son of David the savior king?

He is and the writer here cascades names upon him he is the lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the root of David and whenever you see that root of David branch of Jesse they're all talking about the line of David and this concept.

[27 : 43] He is the lamb who was slain and he has triumphed over all and that is why he is able to open the scrolls which means he alone has the authority to unseal and activate God's plan in the world which includes much tribulation but ultimate triumph for the king and those around him they fall down and they worship him they worship him because he is worthy and why is he worthy?

Because he was slain because with his blood shed he purchased men for God men and women from every tribe and tongue and nation from every era and age he purchased them with his blood and he is worthy.

Notice how different his triumph and his kingship is from what we might expect humanly. He did not wield great power to overcome his enemies but he surrendered to them.

He did not win victory by a great show of authority but he submitted himself to death. He did not assert his kingship by coercion but he lovingly offered himself up for us.

The king died that we might enter into his kingdom that we might be delivered from sin and death and Satan and judgment and all oppression that we might live with him in his kingdom and we know that one day he will make all things new.

[29 : 48] We read about it in Isaiah 11 where the wolf will lie down with the sheep and the lamb. We see it at the end of the book of Revelation where we see the promise of the day that will come when there will be no more sorrow and no more tears and no more death because this king will come and make all things new.

this is the savior king and he meets us in the longings the deepest longings of our heart for our greatest oppression is not the external things of this world but it is our own sin and the power that it wields in our lives and he comes to reign first and foremost in our hearts this is the greatest deliverance that the world has ever known once we are delivered from our sin we know whose kingdom we belong to and that allows us to endure even the most difficult circumstances to persevere in even the most difficult situations this is our savior king this is the son of David this is the Jesus that we celebrate every

Christmas so how are we to respond to this savior king what do we do when we understand this incredible glorious hope first we are to recognize that he is a king and we are his for those who have placed their faith in him for those who have recognized him for those who are in him he is our sovereign he is our liege and we are to bow our knee before him we are to subject our whole life to him because he has bought us with his blood he calls us to allegiance to loyalty to submission and to love he calls us to submit every aspect of our life to that lordship that when we live lives of loyal service to the king we use our finances for the building and benefit of his kingdom when we live lives of loyal service to our king we take opportunities to bring his kingdom righteousness into our business ethics into the treatment of our patients and the wards into the parenting of our children when lives of when we live lives of loyal service to the king we expend as much of our academic and intellectual energy in understanding and making clear the glory of god as we do a particular subject of our study and seeing how those things are not separate but in fact together when we live lives of loyal service to the king we are bold to speak forth the good news of glad tidings that a savior has been born who is christ the king and this leads us to the second application and that is we are to worship we are to worship because to worship is to see the worthiness of the thing that we respond to and in response to the degree of worthiness of worth of value that we see we respond our savior king has delivered us from the greatest oppression how awesome is he when we watch football if some of you do that on Sunday afternoon you watch your team go to victory and you think and you might stand up and cheer spill your popcorn throw your drink on your neighbor because they scored the touchdown to win the game how much more how much more Trinity ought we to stand up and holler and yell and shout that Jesus is the king who has come to save us from all our fears and hopes are met in him so we bow our knee before him and we exalt and worship him I want to close with the words of a hymn we're going to sing this to close our service this morning but I want you to hear these words again as a maybe as a prayer as an invitation as a response to Jesus the son of David the savior king come thou long expected Jesus born to set thy people free from our fears and sins release us let us find our rest in thee Israel's strength and consolation hope of all the earth thou art dear desire of every nation joy of every loving heart born thy people to deliver born a child and yet a king born to reign in us forever now thy gracious kingdom bring by thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts above alone and by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne let's pray lord lord it is easy during advent during the busyness in our culture and the encrusting of so much culture on top of it to forget and to lose the meaning that jesus came as a baby jesus came as our king as our savior king that he is the fulfillment of our deepest hopes our deepest longings that he is able to deliver us and to make things right that he can do these things oh lord fill our hearts with worship fill our mouths with praise bend our wills to submit to this loving gracious savior king we pray in jesus name amen