Family of the King

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Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0:00] Good morning, church. Our sermon text today is Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 through 17. That's page 757 in the Pew Bible.

As we turn there together, let me pray for us. Lord Jesus, as we come before you in your word, Lord, we confess that for many of us, Advent and Christmas is a familiar time.
Lord, having spent many years in your church, celebrating this time of year, God, we ask that you would make the familiar fresh to us this morning and new.
God, we also acknowledge this morning that many of us here are new to you and to the meaning of what we're doing here.
God, we pray that the newness and the unfamiliarness of this would resound with deep meaning and truth. Lord, that you would invite us in this morning to your comfort and your joy as we engage with you in your word.
[1:22] Speak to us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let me read this text for us as we dive into our Advent series. Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 through 17.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.
And Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar. And Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. And Ram the father of Abinadab, and Abinadab the father of Nation, and Nation the father of Salmon.
And Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab. And Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth. And Obed the father of Jesse. And Jesse the father of David, the king.
And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. And Solomon the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam the father of Abijah. Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat.
[2:24] And Jehoshaphat the father of Joram. And Joram the father of Uzziah. And Uzziah the father of Jotham. And Jotham the father of Ahaz. And Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh the father of Amos. And Amos the father of Josiah. And Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.
And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel. And Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. And Zerubbabel the father of Abiod.
And Abiod the father of Eliakim. And Eliakim the father of Azor. And Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok the father of Achim. And Achim the father of Eliad. And Eliad the father of Eleazar.
And Eleazar the father of Mathan. And Mathan the father of Jacob. And Jacob the father of Joseph. The husband of Mary. Of whom Jesus was born. Who is called Christ.
[3:21] So, all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations. And from David to the deportation of Babylon, 14 generations.

And from the deportation of Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations. Well, think about some of the great opening lines of literature.
Call me Ishmael. Herman Melville. Moby Dick. I am an invisible man. Ralph Ellison.
It is a truth universally acknowledged. That a single man in possession of a good fortune. Must be in want of a life. Jane Austen.
Great first lines capture your attention. And set the stage for what's to come. But perhaps as we read these opening lines of the gospel of Matthew. Which are the opening lines of the whole New Testament.
[4:20] Which is one of the most influential works in the entirety of human history. You feel a bit. Let down. Rather than an intention grabbing first line.

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What we get is a list of names. Of all the things to begin with. We begin with a genealogy. But before we jump to conclusions too quickly.
Read that first line again. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The son of David. The son of Abraham. If we can read that line with the ears of Matthew's original audience.
An audience steeped in the Hebrew scriptures. And the stories and hopes and desires of the people of Israel. That we might begin to see. That this opening section of Matthew's gospel.
Isn't some boring obscure list of names. But it is in reality. It is in reality. A page on fire. With hope.
[5:28] With expectation. Even with joy. Could we hear it that way again today?

As another Christmas season begins. This season we call Advent. A season of expectation. And waiting. And longing. And hope. Could we train our ears to catch what Matthew wants us to hear. What the church throughout history has heard. And what this Christmas season just might be the very thing we need to hear. Well if we're willing to hear it.
Matthew's telling us three things here. In these opening lines. It will take his entire gospel to unpack these themes. But here they are. In this genealogy ready to be heard.
Leaping off the page. And what Matthew wants us to hear. Is that the long awaited king has come. The king who brings new creation.
[6:30] The new creation not just for some. But for all people. Here is the king. Who brings the new creation. For all people.

And his name. Is Jesus. So let's hone in. And let's listen a little closer. First Matthew says that the law.
Long awaited king has come. Again what we have in these verses. Is not just a random list of names. Or some obscure family tree. No. This is a kingly genealogy.
This is the lineage of Israel's royal house. Now consider. Why did the media get all excited. A few years ago. When Prince William and Kate Middleton. Had their first son. Well.
Prince George was. Undeniably cute. That was kind of exciting. But that's not the real reason. Right? Everyone got all excited. Because little Prince George. Is probably going to be the king of England one day.
[7:29] Now imagine Prince George. Going to school one day. And having to do a class project. A family tree. And he sits down to write it out.

Well. Here's dad. Prince William. And here's granddad. Prince Charles. And here's great grandmom. Queen Elizabeth. And then great granddad. King George. And on.
And on. And on. Now I don't think there would be a kid in his class. Who would find that family tree very boring. Do you? Laced through each one of those names.
Is a whole history of a nation. And of a people. And that's what we're reading here in Matthew 1. The whole history of a nation. Of a people. It begins with Abraham.
The father of the Jewish family. And God's promise to Abraham. That kings would come from his offspring. And so we follow the line down to David. Who verse 6 tells us is the king.
[8:29] With David. The Israelite monarchy is solidified. David. A man after God's own heart. Who would represent the people as their head. Who would fight for them. Who would shepherd them.

Who would provide and protect them. The one to whom God gave another promise. That a king from his line would rule forever. And then the genealogy continues down from David.
Through the years of the monarchy. Some kings good. Other kings not so good. Until the crisis of the deportation to Babylon.
The exile. When because of their sin. The people were defeated. And taken away from their land. To live as strangers. In a strange land. Among strange gods.
But the royal line continues. From Jeconiah. Come the generations. Down through the exile. And the succession of world powers.
[9:24] The line continues through the years. Under the oppressive regimes of Babylon. And then Persia. And then Greece. And then Rome. Generation after generation.

In the middle of the world. In the middle of the world. In the middle of the world. In the middle of the world. In the middle of the world. In the middle of the world. Until we come to Joseph and Mary. And from Mary comes Jesus.
Who is called, Matthew says, Christ. That is, the anointed one. In Hebrew, the Messiah. The king we've been waiting for.
The one who will set us free. And Matthew has crafted his genealogy. With a particular symmetry.

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It's hard to miss at the end, right? 14 generations from Abraham to David. 14 from David to exile. 14 from exile to Christ. Is there some kind of deeper significance.
[10:22] To this number 14? Well, there's a long tradition. Of seeing the number 14. As a reference to the name David. In the Hebrew alphabet. The three consonants that spell the name David.

Are Dalet, Vav, and Dalet. Dalet is the fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Vav is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So if you add up the number value. Of each of the letters. In David's name. Four plus six plus four.
You get. 14. So perhaps Matthew wants us to see. That even time itself. Is telling us.
That Jesus is the true son of David. The long awaited king. But more importantly. The symmetry. Of Matthew's genealogy.
Is telling us. That God. Has been in control. This whole time. Through the seemingly chaotic events. Of history. Through the apparent failures.
[11:16] Of Israel's kings. In the dark years of exile. God. Has still been working out. His redemptive plan. In strength. In wisdom. And in care.

God has not forgotten. His promise. Or his people. And that holds true. For us. Too. Though we do not know.
What time. Will hold. We know the God. Who holds time. And God. That God. Matthew tells us. Is faithful. No matter how.
Dark. Dark. The road. The promise. To Abraham. The promise. To David. Has been. Fulfilled. At the right. Time. God's king.
Has come. And his name. Is Jesus. Do you need a king? That question.
[12:13] Almost sounds ridiculous today. I know. But for the people of Israel. Living under the oppression of Rome. The need for a king. For a liberator. One who would bring God's justice.

At last. Was not a ridiculous question. They knew. They needed. A king. There's an old children's catechism.
That asks a very profound question. It goes like this. Question. Why do you need Christ. As a king? Answer.
Because I. Am weak. And helpless. And yet that is the hardest thing. For us to admit. Is it not?
To admit our weakness. More than that. To admit even our helplessness. Yet there is one area.
[13:10] Where we can all admit. Our weakness. And our helplessness. We often ignore it. We sometimes deny it. But the truth is. We will all.

One day. Die. Death. Is the reality. The power. That none will escape. And none will cheat. In the face of death.
We are all. We are all. We are all. We are all. And helpless. We all need to be rescued. We all. Need a king. But what sort of king.
Could ever rescue us. From death. And that is the second thing. Matthew wants us to see. In this genealogy. Here is the long awaited king.
Who brings the new creation. This king has come to do something. No other king could do. When all of creation. Is captive to death.
[14:10] And decay. Here is the king. Who will make things new. Now where do we see the echoes. Of new creation. In Matthew's genealogy. Well first.

In the very opening words. This is the book. Of the genealogy of. We may not catch it at first. But these words are a deliberate echo. Of the book of Genesis. Now this past fall.
We spent three months. Walking through Genesis 1 through 11. And we saw how the phrase. These are the generations of. Occurred again. And again. Beginning all the way back.
In chapter 2 verse 4. Which reads. In Genesis. This is the book. Of the generations. Of the heavens and the earth. Now in the Greek translation. Of the Old Testament.
Those words. In Genesis 2. 4. Are nearly identical. To Matthew's opening line. It's as if Matthew is saying. Genesis told you. How God's creation began.
[15:04] Now I'm going to tell you. The good news. Of how God's rescue. Of creation is fulfilled. You've read the book. Of the generations. Of heaven and earth. Now let me.

Begin for you. The book. Of the generations. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. The second echo. To new creation. Is in the reference.

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To Jesus being. Not just the son of David. This king. But also the son of Abraham. Remember. In the beginning. Of Genesis 12. God promised Abraham. That in him. And in his offspring.
The curse of sin. And death. Would be overturned. And God's blessing. His righteousness. And life. Would come. Abraham then. Stood at the turning point. Of God's redemptive plan.
To heal. And rescue creation. And here. Matthew says. The promise. Is being fulfilled. Here is the true son. Of Abraham. The third echo.
[16:00] To the new creation. Is found. In the symmetry. Of Matthew's genealogy. As we saw earlier. This could have been. A potential reference. To the name David. And as we saw.

In the ancient world. Literary. Artistry. Was often expressed. Through a symbolic. Use of numbers. In a beautiful. And in a sophisticated way.
Even numbers. In the hands. Of these ancient artists. Could become a way. Of telling a story. We often see numbers. As just sort of cold.
Calculated things. These days. But the ancient people. Were willing to sweep them up. Into their works of art. And here. Matthew gives us. The number 14.
Three times. That is. He gives us. Three pairs. Of the number seven. Now. If you were an ancient Jewish reader. And you see the number seven.
[16:55] In some kind of form. You immediately think of what? You think of the seven days. Of creation. And then your mind. Goes to the seventh day. Of creation.

The Sabbath. When God rested. And enjoyed his creation. And invited. Human beings. As image bearers. Into that rest. And enjoyment. And then perhaps. You think about.
How every seven years. There would be a sabbatical year. A whole year. When God told the Israelites. To give their land rest. From plowing. And farming. And instead.
To enjoy the surplus. Of previous years. And what grew naturally. Of itself. And then perhaps. You would think about. The year of Jubilee. A sort of. Once in a lifetime.
Sabbath. Of sabbaths. That happened. Every 49 years. That is. Every seven times. Seven years. When slaves. Would be freed. When property. Returned to original owners.
[17:48] When every debt. Would be canceled. In the entire nation. It was a new beginning. Every seven times. Seven years.

For the entire people. And then you may just think. Of the prophet Daniel. Who said that Israel's exile.
Would come to an end. Not merely in the 70 years. That Jeremiah predicted. But in seven times. 70 years. That's when sin and death. Would be at long last.
Defeated. By the creator. God of life. And so could it be. That here. As we read Matthew's genealogy. And we hear of 14.
Then 14. Then 14. That is. We hear of six. Sevens. We suddenly realize. That with Jesus. The seventh. Seven.
[18:42] Has arrived. The ultimate sabbath day. The ultimate jubilee. The start. Of the new creation. And the end of our exile. Because what is death.

But the ultimate exile. The ultimate separation. From our true home. But how would this king. Accomplish such a feat. The rest of Matthew's gospel. Tells us how. He would be born of a virgin. The ultimate sign.
Of new creation. And at the same time. Take on our humanity. Fully. And without reserve. And this king would live.
His life. In utter solidarity. With his people. The king. Would become. A subject. His people lived in obscurity.
[19:41] So would he. The first 30 years of his life. He would live in a forgotten corner. Of the Roman Empire. Called Nazareth. And we all know. Nothing good comes out of Nazareth. Right?

The people were oppressed. So was he. The people lived faithfully. Under the Mosaic law. So would he. The people faced. Accusation and threat. So would he. And in the most stunning.
Act of solidarity. His people. Under the curse of sin. Enthralled. To the most intractable. Enemy of all. Death itself. In solidarity. With his people. This king too.
Would die. Becoming a curse. Becoming sin. For his sinful people. His people. Destined for the grave. He too.
Put in a grave. Among the dead. But how could his defeat. Help the defeated.

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[20:38] How could his weakness. Help the weak. How could his helplessness. Help the helpless. How could his death. Help the dying. Imagine you fail.

To pay your rent. Or your mortgage. Month. After month. After month. After month. After month. After month. Soon the debt. Would be so great. That eventually. Your house.
Would be foreclosed. Or you'd be evicted. From your apartment. You would be driven. Into homelessness. Into exile. As it were. But what if someone. Could come. And in your name.
Pay your debt. For you. Down to the very last dollar. What then? Well then you could return home. The weight lifted. The price paid. The door opened. The debt. The debt. The debt. The debt. The debt. The debt.
[21:40] Of sin. And death. Was paid. Not his death. He was without sin. He didn't have to die. It was your death.

It was your sin. And mine. And that's why three days later. God raised him from the dead. God. In solidarity with his people.
He paid the debt of sin. In full. And so death could have no longer. Any hold on him. So he rose. Conquering death.
Death could no longer hold him. And it will no longer hold those united to him. And it will no longer hold. His creation that he has made. One day creation's bondage to sin and decay will be lifted. And all creation will rejoice in its king. And until that day like our king. We may enter death's gates. But like our king. We will come through the other side.
[22:42] In victory on the day of resurrection. Christmas can be so sentimental can't it? Maybe you thought you were coming to church today to hear a nice little story about gifts and presents and favorite slippers and hot cocoa.

Now we're talking about death and resurrection. Welcome to Christmas friends. There's nothing wrong with traditions. But I hope we see that Christmas is not merely some annual reminder that gratitude and generosity are after all maybe a nice thing to do.
No. Christmas. Christmas. The birth of Christ. Was the beginning of the end of sin and death. And the unleashing of the new creation. God has invaded human history.
And your history need never be the same again. The Sabbath of Sabbaths. The Jubilee of Jubilees. Is being proclaimed. From the first chapter of Matthew's gospel.
Down through the rest of the New Testament. Into church history. Right today. Christ has died. Christ has risen. And Christ will come again. And will you and I live.
[24:00] As if what's true is really true. That our sins can be forgiven in him. That our death will not be our dying in him.

That the evil and injustice of our world does not have the last word. That time is not some chaotic string of events but is held in the hands of our faithful God.
And that the door has been opened. And now everyone is invited to come home. Because the debt's been paid. And that's the last thing Matthew wants us to hear.
In his genealogy. Is that this king. And his new creation. Are for all people. There are names in this genealogy at first that don't seem to fit.
Tamar. Rahab. Ruth. The wife of Uriah. That is Bathsheba. Some of these women weren't Jews.
[25:03] They were Gentiles. What are they doing. In the genealogy. Of the Jewish king. Some were implicated in scandal. And yet the more we meditate on these names.

We start to see. And we start to become reminded. That every name on this list. Every single name. Tells a story. Of imperfection. Of moral failure.
Of weakness. And of helplessness. But each one. Still. A member. Of the family. Of the king.
You see. Jesus' family tree. Isn't for the perfect. Or for the powerful. Or for the righteous. Or for the insiders. Of the world status. The way into this family.
Isn't. By your performance. Or your pedigree. It's by grace. And the invitation. Is for you. To find your name here.
[26:10] No matter what your family background is. Will you. Put your name. Under the name of the king. Yes.

With the weak. And the helpless. But with the loved. And the cherished. With the family of the new creation. Where the weak are made strong.
And where the hopeless find hope. And where the sinners are forgiven. And where the dead come to life. The family of the king.

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Isn't always a pretty place. Hang around the church long enough. And you'll see that's true. The old creation. Still rears its head.
Amidst the new. But the king. Still calls us his own. And in his love. We are moving from death. To life together. The way into this family.
[27:11] Is through faith. That is entrusting yourself. To the risen king Jesus. And his grace. Friends. Are you ready to become a member. Of his family. Today.

And the way forward. In this family. Is also through faith. That is entrusting ourselves. Daily. To Jesus our king. That by his spirit. He would begin to live.
We would begin to live now. He in us. We would begin to live. Now. The new creation life. Of faith. And hope. And love. So brothers and sisters.
Keep trusting in him. Because your story. Is not over yet. This is the book.
Of the genealogy. Of Jesus Christ. You know. Maybe that's not such a bad. First line after all. Let's pray. Lord Jesus.
[28:17] As we pause in this moment. Before coming to your table. We thank you. That you have welcomed. Sinners such as us.

Into your family. God. Thank you for cleansing us. Of sin. Thank you for giving us. Your spirit. Thank you.
In this Christmas season. We can remember. How you. Took on flesh. For us. How you. Became a human being. How you became. A part of the human family.
So that we God. Could become. A part of your family. Jesus. We thank you. And we praise you for this. Amen.

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