

A Family Full of Mess

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[0 : 00] Well, great to see you this morning, folks. Why don't we just pray as we come to God's word this morning. Heavenly Father, we've been singing. What gift of grace is Jesus, our Redeemer?

And Lord, it's our prayer that you would help us to gaze upon him today. And just to take in something more, I guess as we gear up to the 25th, to take in something more this Sunday and over the next few Sundays, Father, that's going to help us savor something more of the greatness of that gift in him.

So Lord, we ask for your spirit that he would come and he would help us as we turn to your word now. And we know that you hear us because we pray confidently in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Well, if you have your Bibles there, why don't you turn to Matthew chapter 1. And this is where we are going to kick off our Christmas series this morning. We're going to look at the first couple of chapters of Matthew's gospel over the next few weeks.

And today we're kicking off with the genealogy. And you're all raring to go with this one, I can tell. So why don't you turn to Matthew chapter 1. And as we come to Matthew chapter 1, let me just tell you about a text conversation I was having with my dad the other night.

[1 : 17] My dad's into text. He's quite up on that. So I was texting my dad and I said, Dad, I've got one question for you. Have we got any famous people in our family? And he replied.

I could see the little dot, dot, dot coming up in the thing and it was going on for ages. And I thought, boy, this is going to be a good one. Dot, dot, dot. And he said, yes, actually. And he wasn't 100% certain on this. So there's the caveat he's asked me to give it.

OK. He sent me a picture back of this man called Jimmy McMullen. OK. Born in the west coast of Scotland. Jimmy was a footballer in the 1920s.

He went on to play for Manchester City. And he was capped 16 times for Scotland and was part of the famous Wembley Wizards team, which beat England 5-1 at Wembley in 1928.

Not going to lie, I was absolutely delighted with that. And some of your faces, I can see, are not all that impressed with that. But here's what I want you to do.

[2 : 14] I want you to turn to your neighbour for 20 seconds. OK. Got any good people stories in your family? Go for it 20 seconds and we'll come back. OK. So I'd imagine, and you can come up and tell me afterwards if you want, that many of us have got some really cool stories about people in our family down the generations.

A lot of cool stories, I'd imagine, are out there. But let me just flip the question around for a minute and ask me if you've got any bad stories. You get any bad stories?

You know those, as we look back on our families, as we know them, you know those times where we look back on things and we actually, that brings back a lot of painful memories. And that brings back periods of our life that actually we'd rather forget about and we'd pretend kind of didn't happen. We've got that saying, don't we, in our culture that you can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family. And that's kind of what we mean by that, isn't it? This group of people that you're kind of born into.

And it's got some good stories, it's got some bad stories. But actually we look back on our families and we all think we're blessed, but we're kind of cursed at the same time.

[3 : 31] And what we're going to spend some time doing today is we're going to be thinking about a really messy family. Really messy family. One full of mistakes. And one full of incidents.

One full of skeletons in the closet. One full of pain. One full of shame. One full of questions. One full of quarreling. One full of mess.

And I hope this greatly encourages us today as we look at Jesus' family. That this is the kind of human family that he comes from.

He was born into. And actually we begin to see that all of us are from families like this. We're all from families like this. And here is Jesus' family given to us today by this man called Matthew. We'll hear about him in a second. And it's given to us warts and all. Warts and all. So here is this guy called Matthew. And I think this is really important to see who wrote this.

[4 : 32] Not just because it's a fact. But actually it begins to help us see something of what Matthew is trying to do here. Here is Matthew. He wrote the gospel. He's a Jewish guy. And I think it's fair to say that life has been a bit of a mess for Matthew.

A bit of a mess for Matthew. Here's what you need to imagine. I was trying to imagine this. Getting into the text. Someone comes around to Matthew's dad's house for dinner. Right? And he says, great to see you again.

I think his name was Alphaeus, wasn't it? Great to see you again, Alphaeus. How's your boy doing? You know your boy? One of your sons? What's his name again? What's his name again? Mama, Mama, Mama, Mama. Matthias.

No, no, no. Matthew. How's he doing? What's he up to these days? And Matthew's dad at this point is trying to instantly change the subject. Let's talk about the weather in the Middle East.

How it's dry and dusty again. Let's talk about the latest news in the Capernaum Gazette. Let's talk about anything which will stop us having to talk about what my son does for a living.

[5 : 34] Right? I just don't want to go there because my boy has turned his back on our people. Right? Matthew in a previous life had turned his back on his own people.

He's a tax collector. This is what he does for a job. Which meant he collected taxes from his fellow Jews. Collected the money and he handed it over to the enemy of the time who are the Romans. And to make it worse, he actually takes a little slice of that for himself. So Matthew is rich and Matthew is hated all because he has sold his soul to the dark side.

But Matthew's a guy who in his life had an encounter with Jesus. And life as Matthew knew it was instantly flipped on its head.

And he decided, this man Jesus, I'm going to follow him with my life. And he's written a book so that his generation of Jews and every generation ever since could pick this up and read about Jesus for ourselves.

[6 : 44] And it's as almost as if Matthew's giving us this gospel saying, you can come to know him too. If Jesus is interested in a rebel like me, then boy, you need to see that he will love a person like you.

Let me tell you about him. And so he kicks it off with this account of Jesus' life. He tells us about the family that Jesus was born into. And so here we have Matthew chapter 1 verse 1.

And you're probably thinking to yourself, here is 20 minutes of my life I'm not going to get back. Right? As you see this long list of names. But if it maybe just whets your appetite to tune in for the next 15 minutes, and we won't go for a huge amount of times this morning, 15, 20 minutes.

This passage provided me with the richest devotional time which I've had this year with the Lord. Okay? Read this, was praying, was sensing God's spirit, helping me understand what's going on here.

And I left this passage, verses 1 to 17, thinking, Lord, you are brilliant. You are brilliant. And my prayer for us today is that we would come to that place as well.

[7 : 48] As we see ourselves, and as we see the glory of the Lord Jesus, that we would come to understand something more about how awesome he is. So come with me to verse 1.

And let's see why this is great news for whoever you are here today, as we gaze at Jesus' family. Because Matthew, there's two points today. Okay? Matthew's screaming at us two things as we read this genealogy.

Here is the first one. This is us. Really simply, this is us. And to help us see this, come with me to verse 6.

And to one of the most celebrated men in the Old Testament story, whose name is King David. The man who God said of him, and what incredible words, that David is a man after my own heart.

David's an incredible man of faith. Incredible man of faith, as you read them in the scripture. But here's how, verse 6, if you got it there. Here's kind of how I would have written it. Okay?

[8 : 53] The Graham Shanks, definitely uninspired version. Here's what I would have written. Here's what Matthew could have written. Jesse, the father of King David. Track with me. Jesse, the father of King David.

David, the father of Solomon. Solomon, the father of Rehoboam. That would have made a great genealogy, wouldn't it? We'd have seen the connections. We would have got it. But that's not what Matthew does.

He writes, Jesse, the father of King David. At which point, if you're a Jewish reader of this, you are whooping and cheering. Right? Yeah. There's our boy.

There's David. There's our boy. Go on, my son. Come on, Matthew. Tell us more about David. Tell us more. Okay, so Matthew goes on.

David, the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. So Matthew makes a beeline for David's lowest and most shameful moment in his life.

[9 : 55] Where God's chosen king desires a woman called Bathsheba. He sleeps with her. He gets her pregnant. He tries to cover her up by encouraging Uriah to come back from the battlefield to sleep with his wife so that David could pretend that the baby was Uriah's.

And then he arranges to have Uriah killed. Okay, this is something straight off the Jeremy Kyle show, right here in Scripture. David thinks he's played a blinder because his plan is gone according to purpose.

But God outs him. And David pens Psalm 51. You can look up this later where he says, God, against you alone have I sinned. And this prayer we get of David who feels the weight of his own sin.

Who says, pleads with God, would you create in me a new heart? Fails the weight of his sin, what he's done. Please, God, would you give me a new heart? And Matthew says, why don't we remember that little episode in David's life, will we?

Let's remember that little episode in his life. And the thing is, he could have easily not have mentioned that. Easily not have mentioned that. And I'm sure that would have probably sold a lot more copies in the time. Gone down a lot better with his Jewish readers if he hadn't have mentioned that.

[11 : 05] But he did. As if to say, hey, even our best guy. Even our pin-up boy. For all his strengths was a murderer and a cheat.

And then when you start to read this list of names through that lens, all of a sudden you come to see the mess of a family that Jesus was born into. Now let's just skim them.

Just picking out a few, okay? You've got in Jesus' family, you've got liars like Isaac. You've got family feuders like Judah and his brothers were.

Right? Like envy, strife. What do they say? Get Joseph killed. Get him in that well. Get him sold for money. Of deceivers and of doubters like Tamar.

Of questionable women of the night like Rahab. Of womanizers, idolaters like Solomon. Of arrogant pride like kings Rehoboam and Ahaz and Manasseh.

[12 : 04] That they demonstrated. Demonstrated and the horrendous choices that they made as they led the nation away from worshipping God. Straight into worshipping idols. And of a nation who has been sent into exile for their rebellion against a holy God.

And on and on and on and on and on you could go. And Matthew's screaming at us, screaming at his fellow Jews. Do you see how badly wrong we have got this?

Do you see how we have messed this up? And I'm not writing this looking down from my ivory tower saying if only we could have upped our game. Maybe God's promise would have come to pass.

I'm writing this because this is a family where I feel right at home. Because he came from messes like you and like me and like every name in this genealogy. Let me ask you, do you ever feel the weight of your own sin at night?

As you look back and you sit in your bed and you think about the day that's gone by. And you think about the things that you said. And you think about the things that you did.

[13 : 13] Even to those who you love. And the thoughts that went through your mind. And the full weight of your sin comes crashing down in you. Sitting on you like some kind of sumo wrestler.

And you think to yourself, who am I? That God would love somebody like me. Man alive, what was I doing? And all of a sudden you begin to see that this is a family tree.

Where you and I would feel right at home. Okay, David, you budge that way on the couch. Solomon, you budge that way, boys. Because I'm coming straight in there. Straight in there. And that's why this gives hope to all of us today. No matter who you are. No matter what you think about the God of the Bible. No matter what you think of Jesus. Friends, this is the kind of family that he was born into.

Because these are the kind of people that he has come to rescue from their sin. You know, I was reading yesterday morning, Hebrews chapter 2.

[14:14] And you can check this out in your own time. The second half of Hebrews chapter 2. The writer trying to get his readers to understand that Jesus was human. And why does he say, he talks about Jesus taking on flesh and blood.

Right? Just coming into our sinful humanity. Adopting a human body. Why does that matter? He says three things. Why did he do it? First of all, he did it because he came to destroy the works of the devil.

He came to taste death and destroy the devil who had us in the hold of death. Destroy the works of the devil. Secondly, to atone for sin. To make a way.

Offer himself as a perfect sacrifice. To make a way that we could be reconciled with the God who our sin had separated us from. Came to atone for our sin. And what's the third thing?

That he came to help. He came to help. Those who are Abraham's offspring. He came to rescue us.

[15:13] And he came as a great high priest like we were reading about at the star. Who knows what it is to be human. And whoever you are here today, again, you need to know that Jesus has walked where we walk.

He's taken on our humanity. He's stepped into our warts and all. Messy flesh and blood human existence. And he is a savior who is able to sympathize with us in our every weakness.

Because he's been one who we read earlier who has been tempted in every way like we are. What a savior. Jesus steps into this mess. Why did he do it?

He did it because of the father's great love for us. And giving us his son. Matthew says this is us. Second thing he says is this is him.

This is him. Come with me to verse 1. Who is this Jesus? Matthew calls him the Messiah. There's our term. God's anointed rescuer.

[16:13] The one who God said he would send. And you can trace this promise through the Old Testament story. And it's all in the Christmas devotional.

We want to do this over the next few weeks. The serpent crusher that God said he would send in Genesis 3. To crush the head of the serpent. To destroy him.

That promise. God is going to send him. Now here's what he does. Matthew takes two Old Testament characters. And he helps us see that this is the savior. This is the Messiah that God has promised.

Come with me. Jesus is first of all. Do you see the son of Abraham? Right. He was in the kids talk. I didn't even know it was going to be in the kids talk. I love it when that happens. Does all the work for me. Right. He is the son of Abraham.

You hear that word as an Old Testament Jew. And you think blessing. That was the phrase wasn't it? Blessing. That God had taken Abraham. And he promised him a people. And he promised him a place. And he promised that he would bless Abraham.

[17:10] And that through Abraham the world would be blessed. Through one of his offspring. Singular. And Jesus is the son of David.

Again you follow the Bible story down the line. And through the years. And God makes another promise to King David. That he will establish the kingly rule. Of David's son forever.

And it will be David's son who will build the ultimate temple. The place where God dwells. So you hold these things together. Abraham blessing.

David's mighty king. And both of these Matthew is saying. Find their glorious fulfillment. In the one who was born in a stable in Bethlehem.

Matthew is screaming at his generation. Would you see how badly wrong we have got this? Would you see how badly we have messed this up? But praise God it was never about us being perfect.

[18:09] Here's another little claim to fame I have in my family. Probably should have started with this one. But we'll pitch this one now. My little cousin. If you remember the Commonwealth Games. When it was in Glasgow back in 2014.

My cousin was chosen I think by lot. To be part of the journey that carried the torch. So he jogged in Mogai in Glasgow. He jogged for half a mile.

Along a little stretch. Took the baton. Got it to the next person. And smiled as he did it. And got it all the way. Is it pass, pass, pass. All the way to Celtic Park.

For the opening ceremony. But he was given one job. In three words. Right? He had one job. Do you know what that job was? Don't drop it.

Don't drop it. That was his one job. Now picture this genealogy like a real release. Can you imagine if it was up to these people.

[19 : 08] Over hundreds of years. To get this promise. To the starting line. And not drop it. Friends this would have been dropped within hours.

Within hours. But thank goodness. That it wasn't about. Mankind's ability. To keep the baton from dropping. This is about a God.

Who is a covenant God. Who promises. And he delivers. You know it's funny isn't it. Because this is. If ever there was a two week period this year.

Where we're skeptical of promises. It's this one isn't it. We hear some big promises. And we're going to be asked to. Make a decision of some big promises.

In a couple of weeks. But we have to understand. That God makes this promise. Not as a kind of politician. Trying to gain our vote. What God promises. He delivers.

[20 : 06] He is the covenant God. He is the Lord. He is Yahweh. You can bank your life. On the fact that he will deliver. This was never about their ability.

To get it to the starting line. This was about God being God. God being the covenant keeping God. Who at the right time. As we read in that passage. In Galatians. Sent forth his son.

To seek. And to save sinners. The king who would go to the cross. To make a way. For sinful people. To be blessed.

Beyond belief. Because they through faith in Jesus. Can be made right with. And know this unbelievably good. And loving God. As their father.

That God is not like Santa. He shows his goodness. Only if we are good enough. That's what we sing. Isn't it? That he is making a list.

[21 : 03] He is checking it twice. Going to find out. He is naughty and nice. As if when we are good. He will give us things. Friends. God shows us his goodness. And the fact that when we weren't good. He showed his goodness.

Not giving us stuff. It is so much better than that. He gave us himself. What gift of grace. Is Jesus our redeemer. There is no more. For God to give.

He has given us. Himself. In the giving of his son. What a great and good God this is. You know just as we close. One of my favourite Christmas carols is.

Come all ye faithful. Right. We will be singing it probably next week. Or the week after that. It is the one that has got that line. Oh come let us adore him three times. And no one really knows at what point. They are meant to join in. And everybody just kind of goes for it.

And we all look at each other like we do know what is happening. Right. That one. Well I read a great article this week. And it is in the pastor's pen if you want to check it out. By a guy called Sam Albury.

[22 : 00] And Sam Albury is a pastor of a church down south. And then he is kind of reflecting on the. The fact that every year when he sings that song. He feels a bit like a fraud. Because he sings that song and.

He says I don't feel faithful. And I don't feel joyful. And I don't feel triumphant. Because life has battered him down.

And he is right isn't he. Like none of us get to Christmas. And we think boy I am full of energy. Boy I am raring to go here. What is it we get to Christmas. And we collapse. And not just physically.

I imagine we get to the end of a year. And we are aware of how much we have. It's not gone to plan this year. How things that we hope would happen. Haven't happened. And we sit there aware of.

How much we have failed.

And we feel the weight of our sin. And we think about the regrets. And the mistakes. I often think it's why as a culture. We love New Year. And we love thinking of New Year's resolutions.

[23 : 01] Because we'll do anything for a fresh start. Something to reflect on after this. Anyway so Sam Albury is at his church. And he realises that in his church. He's not the only one who feels like

this.

As he's interacting with people. So what he did is he took the opening lyrics of that song. And he slightly tweaked it. To reflect how his own heart was feeling.

And I think I'll show you in a minute. I think he makes a profoundly honest point. And so let me just take his lyrics as we close. And add it to this tune. And you'll see what I mean.

So he writes this. Okay. O come all ye faithless. Joyless and defeated. O come, O come ye to Bethlehem.

Come and behold him. Born the king of angels. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. Christ the Lord.

[24 : 03] Matthew's saying to us today as we read this. He's saying this is us. This is us. But he's also saying this is him. He's here. So friends let me just.

As we close. Why don't you just take a moment in silent reflection to yourself. And I'd encourage you just in this own time to offer your own prayers to the Lord. As we just reflect on what has been a very honest passage today.

And then I'll close us in prayer. Gracious God and Heavenly Father. We thank you for your word. Thank you, Father, for its honesty. But the fact that it portrays reality. And Lord, I want to pray particularly for those of us today who are acutely feeling just how much we would fit into this family of mess.

Lord, we bring to you our situations. We bring to you the people. We bring to you our circumstances. And Lord, thank you that you are God who calls us to cast all our burdens on you.

[25 : 15] Because you care for us. And Lord, I pray that you would help us today to fix our eyes on Jesus. The one who has stepped into this broken world to redeem and to rescue men and women, boys and girls, to himself.

And I pray, Father, that as we journey over the next few weeks, Lord, that your spirit would come and help us once again. Grasp something of his greatness. His incomparable love for us.

And so, Father, thank you that you love us. And we just pray these things, Lord. And as we move into a time of communion now, we ask, Lord, that something of the sacrifice of Jesus and the fact that he is risen and reigning, Lord, would inspire us today.

And so, Father, we pray these things knowing that you hear us. Because we pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.