

PULPIT COMPANION

**WHEN GOD
INTERRUPTS
WHAT YOU
EXPECTED**

MATTHEW 1:1-6

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DECEMBER 21, 2025

09:45 AM

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This powerful message takes us deep into the heart of Advent by unpacking something we often rush past: the genealogy of Jesus.

Matthew chapter 1 isn't just a list of hard-to-pronounce names; it's a divine declaration that God works through imperfect people to bring forth the perfect Son. We encounter Tamar, a woman exploited and overlooked. We meet Rahab, whose past was complicated but whose faith was courageous. We find Ruth, a foreign widow navigating grief, and Bathsheba, identified only as Uriah's wife, reminding us of pain and violation.

This genealogy reveals that our history doesn't disqualify us; it positions us. Before Jesus ever healed a body or preached a sermon, His lineage declared His mission: to step into broken humanity and redeem it. The virgin birth then shifts our focus from human heredity to divine heredity, showing us that Emmanuel, God with us, chooses to enter a world on fire. Not after the flames die down, but right in the middle of the burning.

This Advent season, we're reminded that what we think is a detour is often our destiny, and the same God who interrupted Mary and Joseph's plans wants to interrupt our despair with hope.





SCRIPTURES FROM PULPIT AI

Directly Referenced and Read:

1. **Matthew 1:1-6** - Genealogy of Jesus Christ
2. **Matthew 1:18-25** - The birth of Jesus and Joseph's dream
3. **Isaiah 7:14** - "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son" (alluded to in Matthew 1:23)

Alluded to or Indirectly Referenced:

1. **Genesis 12-22** - Abraham's story (mentioned as "father of faith who lied twice about his wife")
2. **Genesis 25-35** - Jacob's story (mentioned as "deceiver who was later transformed by grace")
3. **Genesis 38** - Tamar and Judah's story
4. **Joshua 2, 6:22-25** - Rahab's story (the prostitute who hung a scarlet cord)
5. **Book of Ruth** - Ruth's story (Moabite woman)
6. **2 Samuel 11-12** - David and Bathsheba/Uriah's story
7. **John 1:14** - "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (alluded to)
8. **Psalm 139:12** - God working in darkness (theme reference)
9. **Genesis 1:2-3** - Creation from darkness (alluded to)
10. **Exodus 12** - Israel's escape from Egypt at night (referenced)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes (Not Explicitly Mentioned):

1. **Romans 8:28** - God working all things together for good
2. **2 Corinthians 12:9** - God's strength in weakness
3. **Psalm 34:18** - "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted"
4. **Isaiah 9:6** - "For unto us a child is born"
5. **Luke 1:26-38** - The Annunciation to Mary
6. **Hebrews 4:15** - Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses
7. **Romans 5:8** - "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"
8. **Philippians 2:5-8** - Christ's humility and incarnation
9. **Revelation 3:20** - "Behold, I stand at the door and knock"





DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: God Works Through Imperfect People

Reading: Matthew 1:1-6

Devotional:

The genealogy of Jesus reveals a stunning truth: God doesn't wait for perfect people to accomplish His perfect purposes. Tamar was exploited. Rahab was a prostitute. Ruth was a foreigner. Bathsheba was violated. Yet God wrote each of their names into the Messiah's lineage. Your history—with all its complications, wounds, and scandals—does not disqualify you from God's plan. It positions you. God specializes in using broken vessels to carry His glory.

Today, stop rehearsing your failures and start recognizing that God is writing your story into His greater narrative. Your past doesn't define your future; God's purpose does.

Reflection Question: What part of your history have you believed disqualifies you from God's use?

Day 2: Divine Interruption Changes Everything

Reading: Matthew 1:18-21

Devotional:

Joseph had plans. Mary had expectations. Then heaven interrupted. An angel appeared in a dream, rerouting their entire lives with one message: "Do not be afraid." Divine interruption rarely feels convenient. It disrupts our timelines, challenges our understanding, and asks us to trust what we cannot see. But what looks like a detour is often your destiny unfolding. God's interruptions are invitations to participate in something greater than yourself. When God breaks into your carefully constructed plans, He's not destroying your life—He's redirecting it toward purpose. The question isn't whether God will interrupt you, but whether you'll have the courage to obey when He does.

Reflection Question: Where is God asking you to surrender your plans for His purpose?





DEVOTIONAL

Day 3: Emmanuel—God With Us in the Fire

Reading: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

Devotional:

Jesus was born into a world on fire—Roman oppression, political corruption, economic anxiety, and spiritual fatigue. Sound familiar? Our world burns with wars, division, mental health crises, and cultural chaos. Yet Advent declares this profound truth: God doesn't wait for the flames to die before He comes. He steps directly into the burning. Emmanuel means "God with us"—not after the crisis, not once things improve, but right now, in the middle of your midnight. God creates His best images in darkness. If you're walking through fire today, you're not alone. The same God who entered Bethlehem's darkness is present in yours, working, moving, and preparing to break through.

Reflection Question: In what area of darkness do you need to recognize God's presence today?

Day 4: Wake Up and Obey

Reading: Matthew 1:24-25

Devotional:

"When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him." Obedience begins with awakening. Joseph could have stayed in confusion, wrestling with doubt and social shame. Instead, he woke up and aligned himself with heaven's plan. How many of us are spiritually sleepwalking through divine appointments? God is speaking, but we're too distracted, too comfortable in our routines, or too afraid of what obedience might cost. Advent calls us to wake up—to open our eyes to God's movement, our ears to His voice, and our hearts to His leading. When you wake up spiritually, you stop fighting what God is doing and start flowing with His purpose.

Reflection Question: What is God commanding you to do that requires you to "wake up" and obey?





DEVOTIONAL

Day 5: Come, Lord Jesus—You're Welcome Here

Reading: Revelation 22:20; John 1:12-14

Devotional:

The final invitation of Scripture echoes the heart of Advent: "Come, Lord Jesus." But invitation requires welcome. Many of us say we want Jesus, yet we've built walls around our hearts. We let in negativity, fear, addiction, and bitterness, but we keep Jesus at a distance. He stands at the door and knocks, but the lock is on the inside. This Advent, don't just acknowledge Jesus—welcome Him. Open the gates of your guarded heart. Let Him into your pain, your shame, your depression, your secret struggles. He came for you, not just to be with you, but to dwell in you. The King of Glory is asking permission to enter. Will you let Him in?

Reflection Question: What gates or walls do you need to remove to fully welcome Jesus into your life?

Closing Prayer for the Week:

Lord Jesus, You stepped into human history through imperfect people to accomplish Your perfect plan. You interrupted expectations, entered a world on fire, and made Your dwelling among us. This Advent, awaken my heart to Your presence. Break through my walls, interrupt my plans, and make Your home in me. I welcome You—not just as a visitor, but as Lord. Come, Lord Jesus. You are welcome here. Amen.





SMALL GROUP GUIDE:

"When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Opening Prayer:

Begin by inviting God's presence into your gathering. Ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to receive what He wants to teach through this discussion.

Key Scripture:

Matthew 1:1-6, 18-25

Icebreaker Question

Question: Share about a time when your plans were completely interrupted—either by circumstances or by someone else. How did you initially respond?

Sermon Recap

This sermon explored how God works through imperfect people and unexpected circumstances to bring about His perfect purposes. Through Jesus' genealogy and the story of His birth, we see that God interrupts our expectations to fulfill His divine plan. Advent reminds us that God comes into our brokenness, our chaos, and our "world on fire" to be Emmanuel—God with us.

Key Takeaways

1. God works through imperfect people to bring forth the perfect Son
2. Your history does not disqualify you—it positions you
3. What we think is a detour is often our destiny
4. God creates His best images in the darkness
5. Advent is divine disruption, not denial





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: "When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Discussion Questions:

Section 1: The Genealogy - God's Interruption in Human History (15-20 minutes)

1. The sermon highlighted several "messy" people in Jesus' genealogy—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Why do you think Matthew intentionally included these stories rather than presenting a "perfect" lineage?
2. Which person in Jesus' genealogy resonates most with your own story? Why?
 - Abraham (the liar)
 - Jacob (the deceiver)
 - Tamar (the exploited and overlooked)
 - Rahab (the woman with a complicated past)
 - Ruth (the foreigner navigating grief)
 - Bathsheba (the survivor of abuse of power)
3. The pastor said, "You're not defined by what happened to you. You're defined by what God brings you through." How does this truth challenge or encourage you today?
4. What family "history" or personal past have you been allowing to disqualify you from God's purpose? How might God actually be positioning you through that very experience?

Section 2: The Virgin Birth - Divine Heredity (15-20 minutes)

5. Joseph planned to "divorce Mary quietly" when he discovered her pregnancy. What does his response tell us about how we should handle situations that don't make sense to us?
6. The angel told Joseph, "Do not be afraid." What fears might Joseph have been facing? What fears are you facing as God interrupts your expectations?
7. Read verse 24 again: "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him." What does it mean to "wake up" spiritually? What is God asking you to wake up to?
8. Jesus was given the name that means "He will save His people from their sins." How have you experienced Jesus as Savior—not just from eternal punishment, but from the daily grip of sin, shame, or condemnation?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: "When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Discussion Questions:

Section 3: A World on Fire - Then and Now (15-20 minutes)

9. The sermon listed many ways our world today mirrors the chaos of Jesus' time. Which current crisis or struggle affects you most personally?

- Political polarization
- Economic anxiety
- Mental health crisis
- Loneliness epidemic
- Racial wounds
- Family fractures
- Spiritual fatigue
- Other: _____

10. The pastor declared, "Advent is not denial. Advent is divine disruption." How does this reframe the Christmas season for you? How is it different from simply trying to stay positive or ignore problems?

11. "God can only create good images in the dark." Reflect on a dark season in your life. Looking back, how did God develop something in you during that time that couldn't have happened any other way?

12. The sermon emphasized that Jesus comes "not after the flames die, but right in the middle of the burning." Where do you need to invite Jesus into your current "fire" rather than waiting until things calm down?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: "When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Discussion Questions:

Section 4: Personal Application (15-20 minutes)

13. The pastor challenged us to say, "Come Lord Jesus. You're welcome here." But then he pointed out how we let many other things in—negativity, fear, substances, unhealthy relationships—but keep Jesus locked out. What have you been letting "in" that needs to be replaced with more of Jesus?

14. Which of these three truths about Emmanuel do you most need to embrace right now?

- God WITH you (present in your situation)
- God FOR you (advocating on your behalf)
- God IN you (Holy Spirit empowering you from within)

15. The sermon ended with a powerful invitation to those struggling with heavy thoughts, exhaustion, or feelings of giving up. If that's you (or someone you know), what specific step will you take this week?

- Reach out to a trusted friend or counselor
- Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Schedule time with a pastor or spiritual mentor
- Join a support group
- Other: _____

16. Complete this sentence: "This Advent season, I'm inviting God to interrupt my _____ so that He can _____."





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: "When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Genealogy Reflection Write out your own spiritual genealogy—the people (perfect and imperfect) who have shaped your faith journey. Thank God for how He worked through their brokenness and yours.

Option 2: Wake Up Prayer Each morning this week, before checking your phone, pray: "Lord, wake me up to what You're doing today. Help me see where You're interrupting my plans for Your purposes."

Option 3: Emmanuel Journal Keep a daily journal noting where you experienced God WITH you, FOR you, and IN you. Share your observations with the group next time.

Option 4: Reach Out The sermon emphasized not walking alone. Reach out to someone you know who might be struggling and simply say, "I'm here. You're not alone. How can I walk with you?"

Option 5: Advent Disruption Identify one Christmas tradition or expectation you're holding onto that might be preventing you from experiencing the true meaning of Advent. Consider what it would look like to let God interrupt it.

Memory Verse

Matthew 1:23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')."

Closing Reflection

Silent Reflection: Take 2-3 minutes of silence. Ask God: "What are You interrupting in my life right now? What are You trying to birth through this disruption?"

Sharing: Invite anyone who feels comfortable to share one word or phrase that captures what God spoke to them during this discussion.





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: "When God Interrupts What You Expect"

Group Prayer:

- Pray for specific needs shared during discussion
- Pray for those struggling with heavy thoughts or despair
- Thank God for being Emmanuel—with us, for us, and in us
- Ask God to help each person embrace His divine interruptions this week

Looking Ahead

Next Meeting:

- Share testimonies of how God interrupted your week
- Discuss how Christmas Day went—did you experience Jesus differently this year?
- Begin planning for how your group will live out the Emmanuel reality in the new year

Recommended Follow-up:

- Read the entire genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 and research the stories behind the names
- Watch or listen to the sermon again, taking notes on what you missed the first time
- Consider memorizing Matthew 1:18-25

Leader Notes

Sensitive Topics:

This sermon deals with heavy themes including:

- Sexual abuse and exploitation (Tamar, Bathsheba)
- Prostitution (Rahab)
- Suicide and mental health struggles
- Family dysfunction and trauma

Be prepared to:

- Hold space for emotional responses
- Have resources available (counseling referrals, crisis hotlines)
- Follow up privately with anyone who shares vulnerably
- Maintain confidentiality

Facilitation Tips:

- Don't rush through the genealogy section—it's foundational to understanding God's heart
- Allow silence after

