



gracefellowship

Series: ~~un~~Worthy: Calling the Outcasts
Date: August 20, 2023
1:1-17

Title: Mess to Masterpiece
Passage: Matthew

Today we are beginning a new series where we are going to look at 8 snapshots in Matthew's gospel. One of the things we need to understand when we read the gospels is that each author, while being inspired to write by the Holy Spirit, has an agenda, or theme, they are trying to get across. One of the things Matthew is doing throughout his gospel is to show that Jesus is the Messiah and He has come to make the Kingdom of God available to everyone. The Jewish people had largely operated under the idea that the Kingdom of God was for them; they were, after all, God's chosen people. Much of their religious system that had been created between the time Moses received the law of God on Mount Sinai and the time Jesus walked the earth had become about exclusivity. Only certain people really had access to God and anyone outside of Israel was definitely not able to have God's favor.

Then Jesus came along and started challenging those paradigms. Jesus welcomes the outcasts. He eats with sinners and tax collectors. In fact, one of the stories we will look at in this series is the story of Matthew- the man who wrote the book! Matthew was a tax collector- an outcast as far as the religious leaders were concerned, but loved and welcomed by Jesus.

Matthew is a Jewish man writing to a primarily Jewish audience. His agenda, or goal, is to help Jewish people see that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Kingdom He initiated was open to everyone! In the eyes of God there are no outcasts. Jesus make the unworthy in the eyes of the world to be worthy in the eyes of God. So, throughout Matthew's gospel he is going to share story after story of those the religious leaders had determined didn't belong having a key part to play in the story of God's Kingdom.

This is apparent from the very beginning of Matthew's gospel when he opens with a genealogy of the family of Jesus.

:: Matthew 1:1-17

1 This is the genealogy^[a] of Jesus the Messiah^[b] the son of David, the son of Abraham:

**² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,
⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^[c] and his brothers at the time of the
exile to Babylon.
¹² After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the
mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.
¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David,
fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to
the Messiah.**

I'm sure you are riveted by this genealogy! Let's just have a moment of honesty and raise your hand if you typically get to a list like this and say to yourself, "I'm going to start in verse 18!" Probably most of us! But Matthew includes this for a reason and is being strategic in what he is communicating through this list of names.

Let's try to uncover some important things here. First, remember that Matthew is a Jewish man writing to a Jewish audience. If you wanted to prove the lineage of the Messiah and show the Jewish people that their Savior had come there are some important things that you need to include. That's very obvious in verse one.

Matthew clearly says "Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Any Jewish person knew that the Messiah's lineage would need to be connected to these two men. Abraham is the father of the nation. David was promised that he would always have a son sitting on the throne- there would be an eternal kingdom and his descendant would reign.

So it seems like we are off to a good start, but honestly what we are going to find is that throughout the family of tree of Jesus there are bad apples! Some of you may have family members you don't particularly care for and maybe you have some skeletons in your family closet. The same thing is true of Jesus! In fact, if you were trying to prove Jesus is the Messiah there may be some names you would have left out of this genealogy!

The family line of Jesus includes people who worshiped idols, had adulterous affairs, murdered people, engaged in incest, practiced prostitution, sold people into slavery and were wicked rulers.

You would have left all these people out of the story if you were trying to prove Jesus is the Messiah! But Matthew includes them all because he is trying to tell us something:

God knows how to take a mess and weave a masterpiece!

The second thing Matthew did that doesn't stand out that much to us, but would have jumped off the page to 1st century Jewish readers was he included 4 women in the genealogy of Jesus! No one did that at this time in history! And not only that, two of the women had pretty rough backstories including prostitution and an incestuous relationship. And above that, at least one of the four, and maybe two of the women Matthew lists, are Gentiles! For a Jewish audience this would have seemed absolutely absurd! But God takes the things that most people write off as impossible and uses them for His purposes. God's intentional all along was that the entire world, not just the Jews, would be part of His family and Kingdom. The promise to Abraham back in Genesis was that he would bless Abraham and through him the entire world would be blessed. It shouldn't come as a surprise that God includes Gentiles in the lineage of the Messiah.

Here's something we can learn from this genealogy about God:

God isn't afraid of our messes! The things you've done in your past don't eliminate from belonging in His family!

Matthew is setting up his gospel to show us God uses the most unlikely people for His Kingdom purposes. Throughout this gospel Matthew will paint a picture that what the world calls unworthy, God calls worthy and gives worth.

One of my friends once wrote: **"The good news is Jesus came to bring salvation to everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, social status, economic class or anything else that divides or separates us. Not one of us is worthy. Yet through His grace He gifts us the one things we all need and could never obtain on our own: salvation through Jesus."** - Kaydi Shaw

It's really easy the longer you are a Christian to look at other people who aren't as holy as you and think that God is against them. He's for you because you have this pure and holy life. You've separated yourself from sinful ways and sinful people...surely you are righteous and in good standing with God while those "sinners" are too far from God to ever be found. It's easy to develop a mentality that some people are so far from God they are a lost cause. But if we think that way we lose track of the story of why Jesus came in the first place! Jesus came to call the sick! He came to rescue those who were far from God!

Paul had to remind the Corinthians about their status before they met Jesus. And he confirms what they were all thinking: wrongdoers don't get into the Kingdom. But then he pulls them back to reality.

:: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do you not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men

10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul reminds the people that the very ones they think are not going to have any part of the kingdom look a lot like they did before they met Jesus! But Jesus changes lives! Jesus takes messes and turns them into masterpieces!

I want to show you a picture of the back of a tapestry this morning. This was hand sown. **(Image 1 Tapestry Back)**

This is a mess. Honestly, it looks like colorful spaghetti! Looking at this you can't tell what in the world you're looking at. But here's what is amazing...when you flip it over the mess makes a beautiful picture!

(Image 2 Tapestry Front)

That tapestry belonged to Corrie Ten Boom, who survived living in a Nazi concentration camp. Here's what she said about the tapestry:

“Although the threads of my life have often seemed knotted, I know, by faith, that on the other side of the embroidery there is a crown.” – Corrie Ten Boom

Maybe a tapestry doesn't do it for you. You may be a little edgier person! Has anyone ever gotten a bad tattoo? There are people who have horror stories about getting a bad tattoo and having to find someone to fix the mess. Imagine going into a tattoo parlor and asking for a tat of Pikachu then coming out with this:

(Tattoo Image 1)

That probably wasn't exactly what the person envisioned being on his body the rest of his life! Now someone needs to fix it. So this time you go to someone who didn't learn to give tattoos in prison and they give you this:

(Tattoo Image 2)

The mess becomes a masterpiece!

We are going to walk through 8 stories in Matthews gospel that shows how Jesus treated people the religious folks considered outcasts. Jesus calls outcasts to be part of His Kingdom. And that's a good thing, because all of us at one time were on the outside looking in! None of us are worthy of having a place in the family of Jesus, but His grace makes the way for us to move from unworthy to worthy!

Let me end with three things to carry with us this week and as we go throughout this series.

- 1. Don't count anyone out! God knows how to save even those who are far from Him!**
- 2. Help people see what God sees in them.**
Jesus was a master of seeing in people what no one else- themselves included- saw. Jesus sees beyond your past and offers you a future with Him.
- 3. When it comes to the gospel, take the word “unworthy” out of your vocabulary.**

The only people who are unworthy of the Kingdom are those who refuse to repent and who reject Jesus. He looks for a repentant heart who will come to be Him to be changed.

Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost. We are meant to be on that same mission. We call those who seem to be outcasts to find a place of belonging in the Kingdom of God.

