

Series: **Christmas 2017**

CDOBC – beginning on 12/3/17

Today's Title: **"God Uses Normal People"**

December 3, 2017 - Matthew 1:1-17

OBJECTIVE: To help people know that because God is always looking to give grace, He uses normal people, not just the spiritual 'superstars'.

Back in the 80's & 90's, former professional tennis player Andre Agassi, known for his big hair and unconventional tennis attire, made popular through his sponsors the phrase: ***"Image is everything"***.

Funny thing is...his hair was a wig!

In his book "Open" (2009), he reveals the truth about his hair.

"Every morning I would get up and find another piece of my identity on the pillow, in the wash basin, down the plughole."

"I asked myself: you want to wear a toupee?

On the tennis court?

I answered myself; what else could I do?"

He wore the wig for the French Open in 1990, the first time he had reached a Grand Slam final.

It was Brooke Shields, who he married, who suggested he cut all his hair off.

"She said I should shave my head,"

"It was like suggesting I should have all my teeth out."

After an 11-minute haircut,

his appearance had changed dramatically.

He said, "A stranger stood before me in the mirror and

smiled." (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/6471369/Andre-Agassi-admits-long-hairstyle-was-a-wig.html>)

Advertising is all about image. Madison Ave is well aware of our desire to look good and be admired by others, so they make sure to market products which cater to this desire in all of us.

Our home - our cars - clothes - your social media presence - so much of our life helps us appear a certain way to the culture.

Our culture loves appearances.

Our culture places a huge emphasis on 'looks' - on first impressions.

For many in the culture, first impressions are more important than lasting impressions!

Plastic surgery - carrying huge amounts of debt for cars, clothes and castles - all to look a certain way and make a good, first impression.

But in Jesus's day - in the 1st century Jewish world, appearances weren't the most important. Don't get me wrong...they were important, but the most important thing was family lineage - family history - blood lines.

Those born into royal or historically significant family lines were at the front of the line - culturally speaking.

The elite of that day were determined by what family they were born into.

This is a bit foreign to our American mindset because we rejected the family-line value system when we rejected the English monarchy.

Any citizen in the United States can rise to the highest office in the land - not just those who have a certain genetic chain.

But in Jesus' day - family lineage was very important.

One of the reasons it was so important was because the Jewish people were always looking for the Messiah, and the O.T. prophets were clear - the Messiah would come from the line and lineage of King David.

Beyond the idea of monarchy and messiah, the priesthood was also dependent on family lineage. Only those who were decedents of the tribe of Levi could be priests.

Genealogies were crucial in many areas of life in ancient Israel:

Numbers 26 & 35 - you had to know which of the 12 tribes your family belonged, so you could be properly identified in the land.

Ruth 3 & 4 - under certain circumstances, transfer of property required knowledge of your family tree.

Ezra 2:62 - after Babylonian captivity, when people were returning to Israel, many were claiming to be priests. But, in order to be a priest, they had to prove their link to the family line of Levi - through their genealogy.

Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:1-4) had to travel to Bethlehem in order to register in the census, because Joseph was “...of the house and lineage of David.”

Romans 11:1 - Paul’s Jewish ‘pedigree’ - “I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.”

I share all this not for a history lesson alone, but to make a point: ***The Messiah’s lineage was very important.***

Without the proper lineage, the Messiah would have no claim to the throne of Israel - to rule and reign as the promised Davidic King (2 Samuel 7).

This is why Matthew and Luke both give the family lineage - the genealogy of Jesus in their Gospels. Luke gives Jesus’ family history through Mary’s side - and Matthew gives Joseph’s side of the family history.

Turn or tap to **Matthew 1:1-17**

In fact, throughout the Gospels we see the issue of Jesus’ genetic history - his DNA past - was a source of great contention and ridicule.

Matthew 13:54b-56 - look up

John 7:27

“But we know where this man (*Jesus*) comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where He comes from.”

John 8:41, 48

(*Jesus speaking*) “You are doing the works your father did.” They said to Him, “We were not born of sexual immorality...”

vs. 48 - The Jews answered Him, “Are we not right in saying that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

The Jewish religious leaders hated Jesus - for a number of reasons - but one of the reasons was they didn't believe his lineage met the standard for the Messiah.

Prayer - read passage

For our 21st century mind, this is a boring passage.

What could possibly be important and of value in a long list of names I can hardly pronounce?

Know this: Every portion - every paragraph - sentence - word of Scripture is important - it's inspired, authoritative and inerrant - and there's much gold to be mined here in these 17 verses.

Let's begin by walking through some observations of this genealogy, then I'll draw some applications from the observations.

The family line of Jesus...

proved He was in the line of David.

The most basic and obvious thing we can learn from the genealogy of Jesus - both in Matthew and Luke - is that Jesus was a descendant of King David.

He had a rightful claim to be King over Israel - and His claim to be the Messiah (John 4:26) was also legitimate based on His lineage.

The religious leaders didn't believe Jesus was qualified based on His family and where He grew up, but the genealogies prove Jesus was in the line of David. In fact, both Mary and Joseph were in the Davidic line, which gave Jesus full rights to David's throne.

It's as if Matthew, when he begins to write his gospel, he wants to make sure to answer one of the first questions / objections his Jewish readers might have:

“Does this Jesus come from the right lineage to make the claim to be the Messiah?”

The clear answer Matthew gives: Yes!!

But...the genealogy of Jesus tells us a great deal about God - and how God uses normal people to accomplish the most amazing things.

Our human tendency is to accept certain people - the tendency to think my life is too messed up for God to use me - the tendency to think I'm not good enough for God to love me...when you read this list, it blows all of those thoughts and excuses out of the water!

If it were up to us, and we lived in a culture where family lineage was a high value, I would include my good ancestors on the list. I wouldn't be eager to list the family rejects - the family failures.

The unfortunate thing for me and you is we don't get to choose our ancestors - there's nothing we can do to change the past we've come from. You and I come from the lot we come from.

But God could have created an A+ list of people in the Messianic line. God could have made sure everyone in the line of David, leading up to Jesus, was a spiritual superstar - a class-act, wonderful person - a hero of the faith.

But He didn't. In fact, you almost get the sense that He went out of His way to make sure that wasn't the case!

The family line of Jesus...included moral outcasts.

There are some real losers in this list - some people who either never went to church...or never listened when they were there!

vs. 2-3: Judah - (Genesis 38) He slept with what he thought was a prostitute...but it was in actuality his daughter-in-law **Tamar** (long story). The result of this unholy union was twins - **Perez** being one of the twins - and not only is **Judah** in the Messianic line, but Tamar is given prominence by being mentioned, and God chose their son **Perez** to be in the Messianic line.

vs. 5: Rahab was a prostitute (Joshua 2) - she was the mother of Boaz - very godly man!

vs. 6: **King David** - He committed rape / adultery with **Bathsheba** (2 Samuel 11). Bathsheba is unnamed, but Matthew refers to her by writing: “And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...”

Uriah was one of David’s loyal soldiers, and he was Bathsheba’s husband. Attempting to cover up Bathsheba’s pregnancy and his sin, David murdered Uriah by having him sent to the front line of the battle.

Matthew states it this way: “by the wife of Uriah”, to emphasize the historical reality that **King David** murdered Uriah and stole **Bathsheba**, his wife. Their first child died, and their second son was **Solomon**, whom God chose to be in the Messianic line.

The family line of Jesus...was ethnically diverse.

Jesus...the Messiah...the King of the Jews...had Gentile ancestors in the mix. God does not favor one ethnic group over another.

All are created in the image of God and therefore have immeasurable value and dignity.

All are loved by God equally.

All are sinful, in need of God’s grace and forgiveness.

I just mentioned **Rahab** in the previous point because she was a prostitute - but she was also a Gentile - a Canaanite (Joshua 2).

Uriah the Hittite - He was a Hittite, although he seems to have become a follower of God, since his name means '*Yahweh is my light*'.

Ruth - was a Moabite (foreigner - a Gentile - Gen. 19:30 / Deuteronomy 23:3 - God's cursing of the Moabites)

The family line of Jesus...included *fools* and *wicked* men.

Rehoboam was one of the most foolish Kings in Israel's history, which put the nation in danger of a civil war. As a result of his rash decision to deal harshly with the people, the nation split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (Israel and Judah - 1 Kings 12).

Bad Kings: ***Rehoboam, Ahaz, Manasseh***

The family line of Jesus...included some *honorable* & *good* men & women.

I don't want to send the wrong message - many of those listed in the genealogy of Jesus were honorable, good men. Not all of them were moral outcasts, foolish or wicked - or had some other cultural mark against them.

Good Kings in the list: ***Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah***

Abraham - despite his failings, was a man of faith. ***Isaac*** and ***Jacob, Boaz, Jesse, King Uzziah*** for most of his life, ***Zerubbabel***, and of course, ***Joseph***.

There are many on this list we don't know anything about. They're names are in the Messianic line, they may have done some great things - but we don't have a record of them.

Apply it...

Those the world excludes, God wants to include.

You don't live up to the culture's standards of appearances?

Family history not so good?

Academic achievement?

Athletic difficulty?

Financial struggles?

Parenting is painful?

Career never takes off?

Never feel like you fit in with *'the crowd'*?

The world may reject you - or you may feel marginalized by the world - but God created you, He loves you, He took on flesh - was born - so He could die for you. He wants to forgive you of your sins, He wants you to be counted as one of His!
He wants to include you in His family - as one of His children!

Jesus came for actual people, not for ideal people.

If Jesus had such a list of characters and reprobates as His ancestors, we should be surprised that He has such individuals as His followers!

The grace of God is all over this genealogy.

Every name received God's grace.

Men, women, Jew or Gentile - good or bad - wise or foolish - God's grace is there for all of them - and His grace is there for you also!

God used all the messy stuff of life to accomplish His purpose.

No matter what messed up stuff is in your life, God can still use you! Your past does not disqualify you from His grace, forgiveness, or to be used by Him! From Abraham forward - every life on this list was messed up...some more than others...but all of them had pretty big messes.

Judah and Tamar

Rahab

King David and the wife of Uriah - Bathsheba

Rehoboam...etc.

It doesn't matter how big the mess is in your life, God loves you - and He wants to include you in His family.

You need to put your faith in Jesus...

Admit your sins...

Believe in Jesus as your Savior...

Commit each day to Him!

Don't try and clean up the mess first - just come to Him as you are - right now.

Christian...if you've gotten yourself into a mess - just come to Him - quit avoiding Him and quit running away from the Lord - come to Him right now - and let Him start to clean up the mess!

That's what Jesus came to do - to clean up our mess of sin - and redeem us - so we can defeat sin and death - and have His life - and His peace - forever.

Close in prayer