

“JESUS was born into a family of SINNERS“

Matthew 1:1-17 & Psalm 132:11-12

December 30, 2018

First Lutheran Church

Marshall, MN

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Where do **you** come from?

Has anyone in your family done a DNA swab? Are you related to Davy Crocket or Marilyn Monroe? What country did your family orientate from? My grandma always said we were a “Dutch Mix”. I have no idea what that meant. I know I have some German and Belgium in me, but the specifics are unknown.

I do know I come from a long line of sinners, some of which took Native American land, killing their way of life and removing children from their parents to be raised as something they weren’t. I know my ancestors enslaved African Americans, separating families and treating those of color as less than human. I am aware that those that went before me abused and used women, discriminating and suppressing them, controlling them and giving them no voice.

Being a white, college educated woman; I am privileged and just by the fact that I am human, I am a sinner. I try not to be racist, sexist, feminist, or a bigot, but no matter how hard I try, I have inherited the sins of those who have gone before me. I benefit from the system that controls who has power. If I don’t work to dismantle it, I am part of the problem.

Jesus was born into a sinful world. He too came from a long line of sinners. The genealogy of Matthew is giving to show that Jesus was a real person. God was his real father. He was born not of Joseph but the Holy Spirit. He was a man, born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus came to teach us and show us how we need to treat one another. 2000 years later we still haven’t gotten it right, but his example is still there. I listened to the whole book of Matthew on my bible gateway app in preparation for this sermon. I challenge **you** to do that and **not learn** something. From birth to death the whole story of Jesus, according to Matthew the ex-tax collector, takes about two and half hours. The examples and words of advice are so *spot on*, I caught myself saying “yup” and nodding my head and smiling often. Jesus’ example is not one any of his or our ancestors can claim. He was sinless. He was gracious. He was loving. He was real.

God made him-self small; 100% man 100% God. He entered this dirty, evil, awesome and amazing world he created to reconcile our sins through the sacrifice of his sinless son. The genealogy read today, lists 32 generations of sinners into which Jesus was born. Just as your ancestors can be connected, we can see who Mary and Joseph came from and in turn who the decedents of Jesus were. King David’s was promised in Isaiah 9: 6-7 that in his line would produce a great king: “for a child will be born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his

shoulders and he will be named Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” “He will establish and uphold it with righteousness and justice from this time on and forever more.” Jesus’s birth was a prophecy come true.

The book of Luke also lists the genealogy of Jesus. These names are a bit different, as it was from the male perspective, Joseph’s lineage. Although Joseph was not Jesus’ biological father, he was his adopted father and human kin. In those days land inheritance was passed down through male sons. If a family did not have a son, the land and inheritance would pass to the daughter’s husband, the bridegroom that was chosen for her. This suitor had to be from the same tribe, so that the wealth and property would not be divided. It seems, Mary had no brothers, and so her inheritance and family land was passed to Joseph after marriage. Joseph and Mary were both from the same tribe and line of King David. Luke’s version of the genealogy acknowledges Jehoiakim, king of Judah. In Jeremiah 36, we learn that Jehoiakim burned biblical scrolls, renouncing the Lord. Because of this, his ancestors were to have **no seat** on the throne of David. Since Jesus was conceived not of Joseph, but of the Holy Spirit as Matthew states clearly in chapter 1, verse 20. The prophecy is fulfilled.

Jesus is the “Anointed One of Israel”; “The King”; “The Messiah”; “The New Abraham”, “The New Moses”; “Immanuel”. John 1; 3-4 says that “In, by and through the eternal son all things came into being. In him was life and the light of all people.” God invites us to trust in the Triune God, despite our personal faults and sinful history. We are all called to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly; as we learned from the prophet Micah a few weeks ago.

An interesting fact about Matthew’s genealogy is that it lists three women. As we know women were not mentioned much in the bible. These women could have not had brothers, and therefore been mentioned for the inheritance purpose, but all three were infamous characters whose stories have been detailed in scripture, which makes me wonder if there was another point trying to be made.

Tamar’s husbands kept dying and she ended up tricking her father-in-law into sleeping with her to get what she wanted. Bathsheba, “widow of Uriah” was the woman who was taken by King David and whose husband was killed in the line of duty intentionally to cover up the affair and her pregnancy. Ruth the loyal daughter-in-law of Naomi, previously married out of tribe. She turned the head of a rich man with her hard-working spirit, while gleaning from his field. These stories are rich in value and instruction, just like the stories we hear from our grandparents and parents about what happened in the olden days. Their trials, love stories and miracles teach us just like these biblical stories do, about honesty, virtue and greed. There is no greater history book than the bible.

Whether you are related to Michael Jackson or Sister Theresa, there is value in knowing where you come from; not only for the purpose of inheritance, but for the benefit of learning from those that have come before us. We study history to learn how and why people did what they did. This gives us the opportunity to benefit from their example, not by power but by

knowledge. There is no limit of God's love for us. We cannot make sin more powerful than God's ability to reconcile it. It is through faith that a righteous person has life. (Galatians 3:11-12). Our salvation is not based on our relationship with God, but on his relationship with us.

What is your story? What legacy are you leaving? Not one of us is not a sinner. We might have committed an appalling crime or failed to meet a societal or family obligation. Just because we lust and covet and judge others unfairly doesn't mean we can't do or be better. Jesus was born to teach us and lead us to a better way. At any time, after any choice, in any family, no matter our prejudice, we can choose to follow Jesus' example and love unconditionally, being gracious to our true father, whose hope for us is to trust him.