

Matthew 1:1-6
Exhibit B: Grace Changes Everything
Rev. Jonathan P. Cornell
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A man named Phillip and a woman named Katherine were dating, they were courting and preparing to marry one another. The problem was that Phillip didn't come from the right side of the tracks, he didn't have a pedigree to speak of. Katherine, however, came from the right side of the tracks, her family was of prominent placement, she was someone with a resume. Katherine's parents were not happy, Phillip didn't have the right background, his genealogy wasn't right. This Phillip we don't even know where he's from. Katherine responded, it doesn't matter where he's from, all that matters and all I hear about is where he's going.

Phillip and Katherine were the parents of Matthew Henry the great 19th Century English Bible Commentator who wrote a masterful interpretation of the New Testament.

It doesn't matter where you've come from, what matters is knowing where you're going.

Last week we began a new series of messages entitled 23andMe in which we are looking at the genealogy of Jesus. Particularly the people listed who by their very presence reveal something of the expansiveness and radical nature of God's grace. Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God had a family tree. So, what does it mean that Jesus Christ the Son of God was born a human being?

Even though these lists of names are at first glance dry and uninteresting, there is rich meaning and gospel hope that shows up even here. Last week we learned that the two men who are listed among the primary fathers of Jesus—David and Abraham were great pillars and exemplars of faith—but also deeply flawed men who had great failings in their stories. But what mattered for both of them was that God made a promise, still used them. David and Abraham were both given a promise: Abraham that through his descendants all people would be blessed, and David that one would sit on his throne and rule forever. And for both David and Abraham, that promise came true at Christmas.

Today we are going to look at the second aspect of these lists of names that has transformative meaning for our lives. What we will see today in these first 6 verses is that grace changes all the categories.

I would invite you now, out of reverence and respect for God's Word, stand with me as we read together Matthew 1 verses 1-6.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ^[a] ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

Grace changes all the categories, it doesn't operate from the same positions of value as we think, and so grace is always subverting our expectations.

Just look at some of these names who are listed in these 6 verses we've read now two weeks in a row.

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar

Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab

Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth

David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah

Think about your own life for a moment, and recognize how much truth there is for you in this, if you want to have a place in society you have to have certain credentials. In our modern society how you get to places of influence is by demonstrating that you have the right education, you've worked for the right company, you come from the right family or community, then PERHAPS you can make it as a person of importance.

But in ancient times it was your genealogy that got you to a place in society, that's how you proved who you were, it was your resume. And if there were unfortunate figures that were disadvantageous, you left them off. But in Jesus genealogy there are 5 women who are named. And in a patriarchal society if you wanted to be seen as important you would connect your lineage through the powerful and influential—and most of the time that was through men.

And yet not only does Jesus include women in his lineage, but very unique women. Ruth, who married Boaz and was the mother of a man named Obed, who was the grandfather of King David, Ruth was a Moabite woman. And Rahab was the Canaanite Prostitute who helped the Israelite spies as they approached the city of Jericho, in the book of Joshua. In Jewish society you would never include foreigners in your genealogy, let alone women.

Tamar was the mother of two boys with Judah, her father-in-law. By Jewish law she was committing incest and would have been considered unclean and outcast. Tamar and Rahab would have been considered moral outsiders, and would therefore have been scrubbed from most family trees, Ruth and Rahab were ethnic outsiders, and so for an upright and observant Jew would have never been included either.

All of these women would have been excluded from Temple worship, by the law of Moses these women were excluded from religious and civic life in Israel. In Old Testament Levitical law, the book of Deuteronomy stated unequivocally that in order to come before a righteous and holy God—one who could have nothing at all to do with sin and unrighteousness—you had to be purified, clean. So, women like these would have been permanently excluded from Temple worship, but Jesus brings them in. Jesus is not only recognizing them, but by including them owning them and their past as a part of his resume, his family tree. You could even say that Jesus is proud of these women.

Why would Jesus include in his family those who the Old Testament would exclude? This is an important question that we should be asking ourselves.

The answer to this question is: the rest of the New Testament. The rest of the New Testament will spend all of its time and effort to explain the answer to this question, “why would Jesus include those the Old Testament excluded?”

But then Matthew goes out of his way to allude to but not name another woman: **David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah**. Now she had a name, Bathsheba, and Matthew wasn't slamming Bathsheba, it's actually a slam of David himself. David is like the ultimate insider, David is the ultimate resume builder. You want David in your family tree he was the Hebrew of Hebrews, religiously devout, powerful, the greatest king, a man after God's own heart. If there's anyone you want on your genealogy it's David, and yet do you see what Matthew is doing here? By saying Uriah's wife, he's forcing us to remember the whole story. In order for David to have her, he had Uriah killed, so he could marry her.

By including this really horrible event from the life of David—the man after God's own heart—what Matthew is saying to us is that even David is no better, more righteous, more deserving than the prostitute. Immoral, irreligious people don't deserve to be in the presence of a Holy God, but neither does David, neither do religious moral people.

If we are going to relate to God it will only be through sheer grace, because we are all equally lost. But because Jesus includes the prostitute and the king what he is saying to you is that you are all equally loved. Because no matter how high and mighty, no matter how accomplished and regarded, no matter how devout and spiritual you are you need God's grace. And no matter how low, how cast out, how overlooked, how marginalized you are, you've got God's grace.

What is so amazing about God's grace is that even the begats, even something as boring and overlookable as the genealogy is absolutely saturated with his grace.

Two implications I want to draw from this:

1. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, if you are in Jesus' family you've got a name. You don't get your name by where you went to school, or what you've accomplished in the world, or what family you were born into. But through the grace of Jesus you are invited into the family of God, through the washing of baptism, and through the grace of Jesus you become a part of God's royal lineage. In an age when everyone is so desperate to make a name for themselves, whether it is through their career or their family, or celebrity, all of these names we make for ourselves fall desperately short of and shallow in comparison to the name that is given to us by the savior Jesus who created you in his own image. You are royal image bearers, and you are also redeemed and purchased from the grave of sin and death by the shed blood of the crucified Jesus—who was literally dying to love you and dying to give you a name.
2. It is an honor to be called into this family because these names last forever. Think about this, we've been reading and rereading these verses from this book for thousands of years, and the names of the people who are listed in Jesus' lineage, some of them were wealthy and well thought of, some of them did great things that we would be proud to hold up as part of our family tree. Others were complete scumbags, others were reprehensible, unthinkably terrible people, but because they are connected to Jesus, because they are in his family tree, they will last forever. They will last forever, not because they deserve it or have earned it, not because they were good people, who treated others fairly, not because their good deeds

outweighed their evil ones. They are there because of sheer grace, because Jesus brings them into his family. And because of that they and we, will live forever.

Because grace changes everything.