

Genealogy

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1 ESV)

Mary and her Son

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Matthew 1:16 / Luke 1:26-38

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Introduction:

Good morning, and Merry Christmas!

I thought it might be nice after you've heard me read through that genealogy week after week to experience it in song. Wasn't that beautiful? In the climax of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, we are introduced to:

Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of **Mary**, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. (Matthew 1:16 ESV)

Over the last few weeks, we've considered the women in Jesus' genealogy, and we've asked the question: "Why did Matthew include these curious footnotes?" Well, we don't need to ask that question this morning, do we? Mary is included in this genealogy because she was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus, who is called "Christ." There is nothing "curious" about this footnote.

This morning, as we conclude our genealogy series, we are going to turn our attention to Mary and her son. We're going to see in her a commendable example – worthy of celebration and imitation – but that won't be our primary focus. That CAN'T be our primary focus today. In fact, I think I can say with great confidence that Mary would SCOLD us if we made her the primary focus this morning. As we consider her role in this story, our attention is going to be turned to the glory of her son. To that end, would you look with me to Luke chapter 1.

Perhaps it feels odd to end our series through Matthew's genealogy in the book of Luke. But we're landing here this morning because Luke – more than any other gospel writer – captures this story

from Mary's perspective. In fact, scholars believe that Luke interviewed Mary as he prepared his gospel account.

As we read this text, try to imagine Mary sitting down with Luke in her later years, still marvelling at the mystery that she had been chosen for such a glorious responsibility. Imagine her closing her eyes and smiling as she revisits the scene in her mind and recounts the details for Luke as he diligently makes his notes. This is the account that we read in Luke 1:26-38. Look there with me. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

As I mentioned off the top, Mary is not the star of the show – and she would tell us as much. This text compels us to marvel at Mary's child, but before we do that, I think we would be well served to stop here and to learn from Mary's example.

Learning from Mary's Example

Mary would have been young – likely in her early teens – when she received this visitation. We don't know exactly what the angel Gabriel would have looked like, but every time in the Bible

that we read of angels revealing themselves, people collapse in fear. I think we can fairly say that the appearance of Gabriel would have been overwhelming for the 14-year-old Mary. She likely fell face down in terror before this glorious heavenly being! Yet, Gabriel speaks to her, and encourages her not to be afraid. He assures her that she has found favour with God, and that He has chosen her to bear His own Son.

We'll spend the bulk of our time this morning unpacking that incredible announcement, but first I want to make sure that we learn from the example of Mary. First, in this incredible scene, she sets for us an example of humility.

1. **An example of humility**

Upon hearing that she is favored by the Lord – upon hearing that she will BEAR THE SON OF GOD – she replies:

Behold, **I am the servant of the Lord;** (Luke 1:38a ESV)

Forgive me if I cause offence here, but this is one area where our Catholic brothers and sisters have certainly missed the mark. They pray to “Mary, full of grace” and ask for a dispensation of grace from her, but that is a request that she cannot fulfill! Mary was a RECIPIENT of grace! She understood herself to be a servant!

Not a co-redemptrix – she is not involved in our redemption.

Not a mediatrix – she is not the mediator between God and man.

She understood herself to be a SERVANT. After receiving this news, she wrote a song and proclaimed:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked on **the humble estate of his servant.**
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for **he who is mighty has done great things for me,**
and holy is his name. (Luke 1:46b-49 ESV)

She understood herself to be the blessed recipient of a wonderful gift, and she marveled at the fact that God would bestow that gift on her – a humble servant.

While I want to make sure that we don't elevate Mary to the place where our Catholic brothers and sisters have elevated her, I also want to make sure that we stop to appreciate and learn from her humility. If anyone had reason for pride, it was Mary, wasn't it? I wrestle with my pride after delivering a nice sermon – but Mary delivered the Son of GOD! She nursed and swaddled the infinite, holy, God of the universe!

And yet, she did not see it as a reason to boast. She saw it as a reason to marvel. She saw herself not as the hero, but as the servant. What an example of humility!

Second, we find in Mary's response:

2. An example of faith

Mary was betrothed. A betrothal was different from our engagement because it was legally binding. An engaged couple today could call off their marriage at any point without needing to jump through any legal hoops, but a betrothed couple was already considered to be married in Jewish law. At the end of the betrothal, the wedding would take place, the marriage would be consummated and the bride would move in with her husband.

All that being said, when the angel told Mary that she would bear a child, there were very real consequences for her. A pregnancy would serve as undeniable evidence that Mary had been unfaithful. Her story about the Holy Spirit forming a child in her womb would not stand up in the court of law. Technically, adultery was punishable by death. In practice, those executions were never carried out, but Mary was likely to be disgraced, humiliated and ostracized. And that's not even to mention the relational cost. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and this pregnancy would almost certainly destroy any hope she had of a future with him.

In weeks past, we've considered how difficult it was for widows to survive in those days. It would have been even more difficult for an ostracized and humiliated new single mother to survive with her son. And yet, in a tremendous display of faith, this young, teenage woman declared:

let it be to me according to your word. (Luke 1:38b ESV)

Isn't that remarkable?!

Mary didn't know that an angel would visit Joseph to confirm the story. She didn't know that her marriage would still go through and that she would enjoy a family life with Joseph and their children. She didn't know how this would all play out.

But she knew that God had willed it. And she knew that He was good. And so, she was in. She counted the cost, and she responded with faith.

She carried the Son of God in her womb. She gave birth to him in conditions that no mother would ever choose. She laid him to rest for his first night on earth in a manger. Martin Luther invites us into the scene:

Think, women, there was no one there to bathe the baby. No warm water, nor even cold. No fire, no light. The mother was herself midwife and the maid. The cold manger was the bed and the bathtub. Who showed the poor girl what to do? She had never had a baby before. I am amazed that the little one did not freeze. Do not make of Mary a stone. For the higher people are in the favour of God, the more tender.¹

Do not make of Mary a stone. Neither should we make stones of Tamar, or Rahab, or Ruth, or Bathsheba. These were real women! Real lives! Real stories! God entered a REAL family THIS family!

We've considered their stories. We've learned from their examples. And now, our focus must shift from the footnotes in this genealogy to the star of the show! With the time that we have left, I want to listen in to the angel's announcement and to consider this child of promise – the child at the end of this genealogy.

Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, **of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.** (Matthew 1:16 ESV)

¹ Martin Luther as quoted by Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand – A Life of Martin Luther*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1950), 366.

Who is this Jesus who is called the Christ? What will he be?

What Will He Be?

First, the angel tells Mary that:

1. He will be born of a virgin

Upon hearing the announcement that she will bear a son, Mary asks:

“How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34b ESV)

That’s a very good question! It continues to be a stumbling block for many even to this day. How many of your neighbours think that you are absolutely insane for believing in the virgin birth? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the answer is probably *all of them!* As one Bible scholar notes:

The virgin birth is posted on guard at the door of the mystery of Christmas; and none of us must think of hurrying past it. It stands on the threshold of the New Testament, blatantly supernatural, defying our rationalism, informing us that all that follows belongs to the same order as itself and that if we find it offensive there is no point in proceeding further.²

If you are too proud to believe that God can do things that exceed your understanding, then you can go ahead and close your Bible now. But for those who have eyes to see, behold! The God who created the universe *out of NOTHING* is not bound by the natural laws! He is the AUTHOR of those laws, and He can do as He pleases.

It pleased God to send His Son into the world, into the womb of a virgin. In doing so, God was fulfilling promises that He had made long ago to prophets of old. Matthew notes that:

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:22-23 ESV)

² Donald Macleod as quoted by R. Albert Mohler Jr. *The Apostle's Creed - Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2019), 44-45.

This quotation is from the Book of Isaiah, written around 700 years before the virgin birth. Isaiah wrote as the northern tribe of Israel was about to be wiped off the map by the Assyrians. He wrote a generation before the Babylonians would take the southern tribe of Judah into exile. He wrote to prepare God's people for a season in which it was going to look for all the world like the promises of God had failed. Isaiah prophesied to his people that, out of the coming darkness, the cry of a newborn baby would break through the night. This baby would be born to a virgin. This baby would be known as "God with us". This baby would be a sign of VICTORY! As Ben Myers writes:

The confession that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin isn't just a bit of theological eccentricity. It's not a random miracle story. It's a reminder that our faith has deep roots in Israel's story and Israel's Scriptures. The coming of the Saviour wasn't just a new thing. It was the culmination of the whole great story of God's loving faithfulness to the people of Israel.³

I hope that our time spent working through Matthew's genealogy has served in part to remind you that the Bible is one connected story. It is a story about a holy God, a sinful people, and a rescue mission that defies comprehension! On every page we find vivid displays of the problem and subtle hints of the coming solution. Every detail of Jesus' life brings to memory the subtle hints and clues that were laid down in the Old Testament. For example, look again at verse 35 where the angel tells Mary:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you
(Luke 1:35a ESV)

The language here directs our minds back to the creation story itself, when the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters. It directs our attention to the dedication of the tabernacle when the glory of the Lord came upon the tabernacle and all of God's people fell and worshiped before His glory! This language is intentional.

His glory overshadowed Mary because this child will be for us the new temple – the new meeting place with God! The Spirit hovered over her as He did over the waters in Genesis because in Jesus, God is ushering in a new beginning.

³ Ben Myers, *The Apostle's Creed - A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 54.

This special child – this MIRACLE child – will be born of a virgin. He will be truly God, and truly man. That’s the first thing that Luke would have us see. Second, we are told that:

2. He will save his people from their sins

Neither Mary nor Joseph chose the child’s name. Rather, the angel declared to Mary:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and **you shall call his name Jesus.** (Luke 1:31 ESV)

You might find it interesting to learn that “Jesus” was actually a relatively common name in those days. In later generations, the name would be set apart as special, but, in the first century, there likely would have been lots of little boys named Jesus running around in the streets of Jerusalem.

The name “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew verb “to save.” This was the name that Mary was told to give to her son and, in Matthew’s gospel, we discover that Joseph received the same instructions. When the angel visited Joseph, he clarified why the name “Jesus” was chosen:

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, **for he will save his people from their sins.** (Matthew 1:21 ESV)

This “Jesus” will be unlike all the rest because he will live a life worthy of the name!

He will save his people, but it won’t be the salvation that they expected.

He will save his people – but not from their political opponents.

He will save his people – but not from their hardships and circumstances.

No, he will save his people **from their sins.**

Last week, as we considered the story of David’s affair with Uriah’s wife, we were confronted by the terribly reality of sin. Matthew intentionally used his genealogy to direct our attention towards that awful, wicked story because he wanted to position us to recognize our greatest problem.

We need all the help we can get because most of us live our lives with a wilful ignorance of our real problem. The puritan John Owen writes:

It is to be feared that very many have little knowledge of the main enemy that they carry about with them in their bosoms.⁴

Isn't that the truth? It is so much easier to point *outwards* when it comes time to ascribe blame for what is wrong with the world. "The problem is OUT THERE!" we declare. "It's political! It's financial! It's external! It's THEM! It's HER!" We convince ourselves that we suffer from an external problem and then we misplace our hope in an external solution.

In the early 1900's, The London Times invited authors to submit essays in response to the question: *What's wrong with the world today?* The Christian author G. K. Chesterton famously submitted this brief essay in response:

Dear sir,
I am.
G. K. Chesterton⁵

I am what's wrong with the world.

You are what's wrong with the world.

Our greatest heroes – the best men and women that we can muster – are ALL plagued with the same problem. Our problem is sin. No external solution can solve it because it runs deep into the heart of us all. Matthew was preparing us to recognize as we approached the manger that we need a saviour who will save us from ourselves – who will save us from our sins.

Matthew was preparing us to see that the Saviour has come! That's who this child is!

And that's why he will be called Jesus. He will save his people from their sins.

⁴ John Owen, Kelly M. Kapic, and Justin Taylor eds., *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 76.

⁵ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/dear-sir-i-am>. Accessed Dec. 23, 2021.

But the angel won't let us stop there! Third and finally, Gabriel goes on to explain that:

3. He will reign forever on David's throne as the Son of God

The angel declared to Mary:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:32-33 ESV)

A few verses later, the angel again explains:

therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the **Son of God**. (Luke 1:35b ESV)

Now, on this side of the resurrection, we hear this differently than Mary would have heard it. Knowing what we do about Jesus, our mind immediately understands this term as a statement of Jesus' divinity – and it IS that!

But Mary wouldn't have originally understood it that way.

Instead, this language would have left her envisioning a King. It harkens back to Psalm 2, for example, where we read:

As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”
⁷I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, “**You are my Son;**
today I have begotten you. (Psalm 2:6-7 ESV)

The Davidic Kings were referred to as “sons of God,” so Mary likely would have heard this at first as a marvelous promise that her son would reign on the throne of David.

But, as I mentioned earlier, the Bible is ONE story and there is a reason why the Davidic kings were referred to as sons of God. They were TYPES pointing forward to the ultimate King that would come – the King who would indeed be THE Son of God. They were appointed by God to prepare us to recognize the final solution!

And – according to the angel Gabriel – THAT is exactly who this child is! The King that we have been waiting for has come! The angel told Mary:

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and **he will reign over the house of Jacob forever**, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32b-33 ESV)

This eternal King will reign forever over a kingdom that encompasses all of heaven and earth! Even as I say this, I can hear my kids reciting one of their memory verses from this past year. This is from Psalm 145 – a Psalm that is about God and His reign over the earth. It says:

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your saints shall bless you!
¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
¹² to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
¹³ **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,**
and your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:10-13 ESV)

GOD is the One who reigns over the everlasting kingdom! And yet, Mary is promised that her son – the child in her womb – will reign forever over a kingdom with no end. So, who is going to reign forever? Will it be God? Or will it be a man?

Do you see the pieces coming together?

The prophecies of old – the types and the foreshadowing – were all preparing us to recognize that a DIVINE King was coming. A King who would be in the line of David and yet who would be the true Son of God – a King who would be TRULY God and TRULY man! A King who would overcome our greatest enemy and who would save us from the curse of sin and death. A King who will reign over all creation forever.

Friends, the eternal King has come, and he reigns! At the end of Matthew’s gospel, immediately before he ascended to heaven, Jesus declared:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (Matthew 28:18b ESV)

Jesus – right now – possesses ALL AUTHORITY!

This is his kingdom. Right now. That’s what he announced before he ascended to heaven and came to his Father who, Ephesians 1 tells us:

seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² **And he put all things under his feet** (Ephesians 1:20b-22a ESV)

The King has come.

All things are under his feet.

He has already dealt the death blow to our enemy.

He bore our sin. He nailed it to the cross. He triumphed o’er the grave. He ascended to his throne. And from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Can I leave you with one reminder this Christmas as we conclude? We know how this story ends.

The enemy wants us to despair. He wants us to fixate on how broken the world is – how broken WE are. He wants us to doubt the goodness and the authority of our King.

But God was working when Tamar was neglected by her wicked family.

God was working when Rahab felt trapped in a life of prostitution.

God was working when Ruth’s husband died, and she appeared doomed to a life of poverty.

God was working when Bathsheba was betrayed by David and was robbed of her husband.

God was working. Even in the gruesome details, there was a glimmer of hope that shone through.

God was working when an angel appeared to a young virgin named Mary and turned her world upside down.

God has entered into our tragic story, and He is transforming it into a triumph! God has taken our apparent defeats and He has used them to work a great victory!

God is working! Even when all external appearances look grim, we can declare with the Apostle Paul:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37b-39 ESV)

Why? How can we hold to this confidence? How can we press on when we feel utterly defeated?

Because the King has come. And he reigns! And he is good! And we know how this story ends! And so, by the grace of God, whatever lies in store for us, we can join our voices with Mary and say:

Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. (Luke 1:38b ESV)

Let's pray together.