

October 19

Matthew 1:1-17

Luke 3:23-38

Hi I'm Margie Alford/Connections and Bellevue worship leader.

Ok, I have to admit that I'm one to skim over the "begats" in the Bible. I know that they are important, but I can't help myself. So, I truly read every line of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 before I decided what I was going to share with you today. So here goes.....

Because Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience, he is especially concerned that they recognize that Jesus is the Promised Messiah for whom all of Israel was waiting.

Matthew, along with the early Christians really believed that the whole of the Old Testament -- all of the history and all of the prophecy and even the Psalms could legitimately be said to be pointing toward the coming of Christ.

It is true. Everything that happened in the Old Testament really does point forward toward Christ. We, as a church have been taught that truth many times as we've studied the Old Testament this year.

Matthew wanted the Jews to realize that Jesus was the one toward which everything had been pointing and toward which all of history had been moving.

I am pretty sure that if you or I were to write a book today about the life of anyone, that we would try very hard to begin it with something other than a genealogy. But Matthew did that and he did so because the lineage of Jesus would have been of tremendous importance and interest to any Jew who was trying to make up his mind whether or not Jesus really was the Messiah.

Genealogies were so important that they were carefully kept. Ezra 6:2 tells us that some of the Jews who returned from the exile were excluded from the priesthood because the records of their genealogies could not be established.

Herod the Great was half Edomite and therefore his name could not be found in the official genealogies. He was so embarrassed by that that he actually ordered the destruction of the official records so that no one would be able to claim a purer bloodline than his!

The most important thing of all, of course, would be to establish that Jesus was a true descendent of David. That was a prerequisite for the Messiah.

Luke's genealogy is different from the one found in Matthew. The common theory is that Luke is tracing Mary's bloodline while Matthew follows Joseph's. But both of them mention King David.

The inclusion of the women's names here would have been pretty startling to the first century reader but they suit Matthew's purposes well.

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba not only underscore the idea that with Christianity the barriers between men and women with regard to importance and access to God have been broken down, but signal two other pretty important facts as well.

Both Rahab and Ruth were Gentiles and God saw fit to place them in the line of the Messiah. That speaks volumes all by itself. Then there is the fact that Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba all had moral question marks next to their names in the Biblical accounts. They were sinners. Putting their names at the head of a list that ends with the name of Mary says a lot to me about the fact that God has broken down some barriers between the righteous and the unrighteous.

I've heard testimony of a dear friend recently about how undeserving she feels she is to lead anything in church because of past sins. The song "How deep the Father's love for us" has a beautiful line in it which goes:
"To make a wretch His treasure".

We are all wretched, aren't we? But God chose to send to His only Son to earth to make a wretch His treasure. Thank you Father God for such a gift as this.....

See you tomorrow everybody.