

Victory of the Lamb – My Christmas List – Belonging – Matthew 1:1-23
December 4, 2022 – Pastor Ben Sadler

1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac,

Isaac the father of Jacob,

Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar,**

Perez the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,

Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab,**

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth,**

Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose **mother had been Uriah's wife,**

⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,

Rehoboam the father of Abijah,

Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,

Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,

Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,

Jotham the father of Ahaz,

Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,

Manasseh the father of Amon,

Amon the father of Josiah,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:

Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,

Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,

Abihud the father of Eliakim,

Eliakim the father of Azor,

¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,

Zadok the father of Akim,

Akim the father of Elihud,

¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,

Eleazar the father of Matthan,

Matthan the father of Jacob,

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Taylor Swift did it again. She broke another record. Her latest album *Midnights* took all top ten spots on Billboard's Hot 100 list. This has never been done by one artist in its 64 year history. One of the most popular songs on that album is the song *Anti-hero*. According to Swift, this was one of her favorite songs that she has ever written because it is so honest.

In this song she talks about how everyone else seems to be beautiful and have it all together and she feels like a monster on the hill. She doesn't feel like she fits in. She doesn't feel like she belongs.

Now that's pretty remarkable. One of the most famous singers of all time, doesn't feel like she belongs. She has all the talent, money, fame that a person could acquire and she still feels like an outsider.

Why do you think that this song is so popular? In fact, the last time I check this song is still number one on the Billboard charts. And it has been number one for the last 6 weeks. I think the reason it is so popular is because we can all feel like outsiders. No matter how much success we experience, no matter how much money we make, no matter how we look, we still might feel like something is wrong with us, that we don't fit in. That we don't belong.

Today we are continuing our sermon series **Christmas List**. In this sermon series, we are talking about the things that we want this Christmas that money can't buy. All the gifts that we could order on Amazon will one day wind up in a landfill and they don't really satisfy. What we really want are things like hope and peace and love and joy. And one of those things that we so desperately want, something that even the rich and famous like Taylor Swift want, but don't seem to have, is a sense of belonging. We want to feel like we belong on this earth, in a community, with a group of people. We want a sense of home. And so here is the question I want to answer this morning: **How can we experience true belonging?**

And to answer that question we are going to go back to that genealogical record that I read from the opening of Matthew's Gospel. I mentioned to you that four women, besides Mary, that are mentioned in this genealogy. This is unusual. There are quite a few genealogies that are recorded in the Bible. Genesis 5 you have a few genealogies. And in the book of Numbers there are a number of genealogies. And in the book of Chronicles there are a few more genealogies. In the New Testament book of Luke you have a similar genealogy of Jesus, through the family of Mary. In all those genealogies, I can't think of one occurrence where a woman is mentioned by name.

But here in Matthew's Gospel, as he begins with this genealogy he mentions four women, five if you include Mary. Why?

Well, who are the women that are mentioned?

Tamar

Rahab

Ruth

Bathsheba

Now, each of these women have a unique and elaborate story in and of themselves. But I think they all have one thing in common. Because of their stories, they struggled to belong, to be accepted by others, by society. They all had reasons to feel like outsiders.

And so I would like to look at the stories of each of their lives and talk about four different ways that we might feel like we don't belong.

First of all the story of **Tamar**. We find her story in Genesis 38. At this point in the Biblical narrative, Jacob had twelve sons. 11 of his sons became jealous of their brother Joseph and so they sold him into slavery. We read about that event in Genesis 37. Then in Genesis 38, we hear how one of Joseph's brothers, Judah had three sons. His oldest son, Er, married Tamar. But because of his wickedness Er died. Now in that culture it was very important to preserve the family line and family name for many reasons. And so, if a man died, it was the obligation of the brother to marry his widow to provide for her and continue the family line. But instead of doing that, Onan, Er's brother, just used Tamar and was not a faithful husband to her. God brought judgment on Onan, and he died. Now, after Judah lost two sons, he didn't want to keep the tradition and give his third son to Tamar. And so, Tamar was forced to go back to her father's home as a woman that had been rejected by the family.

Tamar- Rejection. Tamar represents all those people who feel like outsiders, who feel like you don't belong because of rejection. Maybe, like Tamar you were rejected by your family or by a loved one. You longed to be included and accepted, but you were rejected. You had hopes and dreams to be part of the family, part of something bigger, but you were rejected. And so you still don't feel like you have a home, like you belong.

The next woman in Matthew's genealogy is **Rahab**. We first hear about Rahab in Joshua chapter 2. Joshua was commissioned by God to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan and conquer the Canaanites. You see for more than 400 years, the Canaanites had been practicing horrible things like child sacrifices and so now the Israelites were called by God to bring divine judgment on the people. Before their conquest, Joshua sent in two spies to check out the land. These spies were welcomed in by a prostitute named Rahab, she lived on out outskirts of town, actually in the wall of the city.

Now, I don't believe that anyone sets out to be a prostitute. In fact, today we no longer call it prostitution but sex trafficking because usually what happens is someone is forced into this kind of situation. Either it is a last resort because of an addiction or someone like a boyfriend becomes their pimp. Either way, this is not the life that any picks for themselves. And yet, no matter how a person becomes a prostitute, it leads to incredible amounts of guilt. The person feels guilty for all the things they have done and the lives they have ruined.

Rahab-Guilt And so Rahab represents anyone who feels like they don't belong because of the guilt from their past. Maybe you did something that you can't take back, a broken relationship, a rash decision. Whatever it is, you feel guilty and so you don't feel like you belong with anyone or anywhere. Your guilt makes you feel like a perpetual outsider.

After Rahab comes **Ruth**. Ruth lived during the times of the Judges. After Joshua had conquered the land of Canaan, the Israelites were led by tribal leaders called Judges. For the most part, these Judges were corrupt, horrible leaders. And during the time of the Judges God allowed there to be a famine in the land. And so a woman named Naomi left the territory of the Israelites and went to the land of the

Moabites, where she found wives for her sons. One of those wives was a Moabite woman named Ruth. Unfortunately, as time passed, all the men in Naomi's life died. Her husband and her two sons died. And so that meant that her daughter-in-law Ruth was now a widow. And because Naomi had no husband she had no way to provide for Ruth. Ruth was an outsider because she was a foreign woman with no husband.

Ruth-Grief Ruth represents all those people who feel like outsiders because of grief. In the recent past, you might have lost someone close to you, a husband, wife, and close relative or friend and so you feel like an outsider. You don't know where you belong because the person you belong to and with is no longer here.

Finally, there is one more woman in this genealogy **Bathsheba**. Matthew actually doesn't say her name. He calls her Uriah's wife. You see, Bathsheba had been married to Uriah. But King David took her and took advantage of her. King David had all the success and power in the world, but in his pride, boredom, and isolation, he looked at Bathsheba and wanted her. She had no power or ability to refuse. And so he used her.

Bathsheba-Shame Bathsheba represents all those people who feel like outsiders because of shame. Although it wasn't their fault, victims of abuse often feel a sense of shame. Guilt is the feeling that I did something wrong. Shame is the feeling that I am something wrong. A victim was treated like a non-person to be controlled and abused and so they don't feel like they matter. The trauma can cut so deep tainting their very identity. And so they feel like outsiders.

And so these four women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy all have their own story

- **Tamar-Rejection**
- **Rahab- Guilt**
- **Ruth- Grief**
- **Bathsheba – Shame**

They are all different, but they share this in common, their stories represent ways that they can feel like outsiders, like we don't belong. We don't feel truly connected with the people around us. We don't even feel connected to ourselves.

Which one of these women connect with your story? What has led you to feel like you don't belong in this world? Maybe, you were rejected by a family or friend and so you feel like you don't belong like Tamar because of rejection. Maybe you are carrying guilt like Rahab and so you don't feel like you belong. Maybe you are filled with grief like Ruth and so you don't feel like you belong. Or maybe you are a survivor of abuse. And as much as you have tried to shake it, you still feel like an outsiders.

That's why it is so remarkable that they are the women who are mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. And who is the genealogy about? Jesus. It is Jesus' family. Jesus' ancestors. All these woman might have felt like outsiders in their lives, but their lives were about of the story of God, the line of the Savior. Although they went through many difficult circumstances, God used their story to further his mission to save the world through Jesus. And because of the work of the Savior, his life, death, and resurrection, they were welcomed into the family of God. They were Jesus' ancestors, but they were also Jesus' sisters, children of God.

Well, because of the work of Jesus, you belong in God's family. At your baptism God said, this is my son, this is my daughter with whom I'm well pleased. You belong in my family. Every time we take communion you are reminded that you belong with the body of Christ. Not just the body of Christ that is on your lips, but the body of Christ, the church fellow believers. These women were Jesus' ancestors. Through faith, you are one of Jesus' spiritual descendants. You belong in the family of God.

Matthew shows us that the story of our Savior, Jesus Christ is a story about bringing us back into the family where we belong. Bringing us back to God so that we experience a deep sense of belonging. If you feel rejection, see that Jesus came into this world for all people to accept all people and live and die for all people. If you feel guilt, see Jesus who came into this world to pay for the sins of your past. You are declared innocent in Jesus. If you feel grief and loss, know that Jesus is coming back again and will resurrect our bodies and give us new life with those loved ones that we have lost. And if you feel ashamed because of something that was done to you, Jesus is coming again as the final and perfect judge who will bring all those who have wronged others to justice.

This answers our opening question: **How can we experience true belonging?**

Through faith, you are one of Jesus' spiritual descendants. You belong in the family of God.

But, this is not just a message that we need to preach with our mouths. This is a message that we need to embody and experience as believers in Jesus. You see, in the case of these four women, not only did they hear a message about a work of God, his love, justice and forgiveness, they also experienced it.

Tamar was declared a righteous woman and invited into Judah's family. Rahab was considered a fellow Israelite, even though she was a Canaanite and lived among the Israelite people. Boaz, a Hebrew, married Ruth and welcomed her into his family. And Bathsheba was treated as David's wife and her son Solomon became the next king of Israel.

This is what we need to do for each other. We can't just preach a message about the gift of belonging to God's family, we need to be the family of God for each other. That starts by being welcoming to each other and listening to each other. Come to worship in-person if you are within driving distance. Get to know your fellow believers in Jesus. Sing with each other. Take communion with each other. It also means that we use things like our Life Groups to build real community. Are you in a Life Group? Why or why not? Why not start one? Gather with other believers to meditate on God's Word and pray for and with one another. Here is the main take home point: **Let's become the family of God.**

We can all feel like we don't belong sometimes. Even Taylor Swift feels like she doesn't belong. Sin has ruined God's good world and ruined our relationship with him and with each other. And so because of all the affects of sin inside of us and outside of us, we can feel like we just don't belong in this world. But at every point where sin has made us feel isolated and ostracized, Jesus came and is coming to give us a deep sense of belonging with him. But we don't need to wait for that last day. Let's begin to express and embody what it means to belong to the family of God. Let's love each not just with words and ideas, but with action and truth. Let's become the family a God, a family where everyone can belong. Amen.