



JESUS WELCOMES YOU INTO HIS FAMILY

Part 1 of He Made Us Family: God's Work, Our Witness 2012

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Matthew 1:1–17 | December 02, 2012

The biggest opportunity in the world is to be a part of God's people, God's family, his church and what he is doing.

There are some amazingly faithful people that have made this into a vibrant growing family.

I just couldn't look at anything without actually seeing that God was telling me that he loved me.

If Jesus is ultimately important, then the people who love Jesus are critically important to us as well.

MARS HILL IS A FAMILY

Well, Mars Hill, God is our Father and we are a church family. And if you're new, welcome to the Mars Hill Church family, and like all families, we gather together, and we gather together during this holiday season for our weekend services and also our Community Groups through the week.

It's really interesting to me that of all the images and metaphors that God could have chosen by which to reveal himself, he does so as Father. Strong, emotionally compelling, inviting language that God's a Father and that the church is a family, and what that means is that, in Christ, we have brothers and sisters, and the Bible uses that language. We have brothers and sisters spiritually, which is different than our family biologically. It also means that leaders are to be like moms and dads. They love, they give, they care, they serve, they try their best, invariably, we don't always get it right, and the hope is to give a little grace as you would to your own folks if they were doing their best.

This language of family is incredibly important. It starts in the Old Testament, it continues through the New Testament, and it is the focus of the introduction of Jesus Christ. And so, as we spend the next few weeks together during the holiday season, looking at the fact that he made us family, we're going to be in Matthew, the first few chapters, and this is the first book of the New Testament. And we're going to look at how Jesus is introduced to us, and he is introduced to us in the form of a family.

So as you find your place in Matthew 1:1–17 for the fact that Jesus welcomes you into his family, let me tell you why I think this is so practically important. You're all new to Mars Hill. How do I know that? Well, it started with Grace and me, and the rest of you are new. Sixteen years ago, Grace and I prayed and fasted and felt that Jesus was telling us to start a church in Seattle. And so I went out and recruited the first church member, Grace, and had an explosive growth where we went by 100 percent growth, from one to two people in this very fast-growing church, meeting on a loveseat at my house. And that little church invariably started to invite some other people to come to our home.

Mars Hill Church started as an extension of our family. We didn't even have children yet at that time. We had children spiritually through those who met Jesus, but no children yet biologically. Mars Hill Church started as an extension of our family, meeting in our home, in our living room. And we were praying and gathering people and they would come sit on our couch and we were a little church family, an extension of our family.

Well, of course, over the years the Mars Hill Church family has really grown. Quite frankly, exceeding my expectations by a number of zeroes, okay? There's a lot more people in this family than I was anticipating or expecting. The Father's love has extended beyond one state to four states, and beyond just one family to fourteen families, as now, we're a big, extended family, and it feels like we're always pregnant, right?

We're always talking about the next church plant. You're like, "Why do you keep starting churches?" Because we want the family to grow, we want more kids to be adopted by the Father, we want to meet more brothers and sisters, and new life and new birth is always something that we are excited about, amen?

So at the end of the year, we always talk about God's work, our witness, and what has God done this year in our church family? What does God have us poised for next year in our church family? How can we welcome you who are not yet connected to the family of God to be connected with us, to give generously, to pray fervently, to serve sacrificially, because that's what a family does?

Here's my heart: I fear as the church gets larger that it becomes easier to lose the Father's heart for the family. All of a sudden, Mars Hill could be seen like a business, where you're trying to get as much as you can by giving as little as you can to get a good deal. Or Mars Hill could be seen more like a governmental agency or organization: Well, good luck, find the rich people, take their money because we all are entitled to certain services and provisions.

Mars Hill's a family. You're a family, and in a family, we all give, we all care, we all pray, we all serve. We're not just concerned about ourselves, but our brothers and sisters, and we're also excited when the family grows. And I love this theme of family, and ultimately, you need to know: even though Mars Hill's a big, complicated, extended family, it's still a family.

God is our Father, and he's adopted us into his family, and this is the time of year where we celebrate our Father together as our family. And all of that is made possible through Jesus,

our big Brother. He's the big Brother who comes into history to seek, and to serve, and to save.

THE BOOK OF THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

So today, you're going to get to know Jesus' family. Jesus' family. And some of you may not be familiar with Jesus' family, but it starts in Matthew 1:1. Let me read it to you. "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ." So, as it introduces Jesus, it does so by introducing his family, his genealogy.

How many of you have ever really looked at your family history? Have you ever tried to sketch it out, maybe for a school project, go back as far as you can? How many of you, there's certain things you can't find out about your family because nobody will talk about it? There's a lot of bad news back there.

How come they lived here and they lived here? How come they split up? How come there was a divorce? Why do we not know them? Why do we not send them a Christmas card? What's happened to the family? And sometimes the holidays can be difficult and painful because it involves our family: disappointment, grief, loss, longing. Jesus' family is a very sinful family, it's a very complicated family, it's a very difficult family, and we're going to look at the genealogy of Jesus' family.

So, here's what we're going to do: we'll just read it all, chapter 1, verses 1–17, and I'm going to pick out three men and five women who are prominent in the story. Some of the people we don't know a lot about. I'll pull the people out that we know the most about. And I know some of you were thinking, "Man, I hope we go through a phone book today." You're welcome, here we go. Here we go. An ancient, Jewish phone book.

Matthew 1:1. "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David," so we're going to talk about David, "the son of Abraham," so we're going to talk about Abraham. And now there's a long list of names. These are the parts of the Bible, truthfully, you just skip, right? You just skip. First page, first book of the New Testament starts with a list of names. It's there for a reason, it's very important. So, as I always say, when you don't know how to pronounce a name in the Bible, read fast and confident, and so, I will illustrate that now. Okay.

"Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar." We'll talk about her. We'll talk about her. "And Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab." We'll talk about her.

"And Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth." We'll talk about her. "And Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king." We'll talk about David. He keeps coming up, he's real important. "And David was the father of Solomon," this is a complicated phrase we will revisit, "by the wife of Uriah." How many of you caught that? You're like, "David had a kid with another guy's wife. Huh, okay. Moving right along." Just so you know, that's wrong. We'll come back to that.

"And Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph, Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat," the critically acclaimed jumper, "Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram—" I just made that up. "The father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah, Josiah the father of Jehoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon," because I know you wanted to know that.

"And after the deportation to Babylon: Jehoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel," which is just plain fun to say. So, we'll say it again: "And Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor," cool name, "the father of Zadok," even cooler name, "and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud." Sounds like the *Star Wars* trilogy. "And Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph," we'll talk about him, "the husband of Mary," we'll talk about her, "of whom," who is born? "Jesus."

If you're at Mars Hill, the answer's always Jesus. What day is it? Jesus! Just say it. It's always the right answer. What's your favorite color? Jesus! What's your favorite dessert? What? Jesus with sprinkles! I don't know, just say, "Jesus."

"Of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ," the anointed, chosen one of God. "So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations." He breaks it down into groupings of fourteen.

Now, let me say a few things about genealogies in general, and then we'll get into Matthew's genealogy of Jesus in particular. Number one: children should know their father and fathers should know their children. I know it seems obvious, but most people don't know that. Here, these people know who their dad is.

For the first time in the nation's history, the majority of children born to women under the age of thirty are born out of wedlock, they don't know their dad, they don't have a dad active in their life. Many don't even have the father listed on the birth certificate. They don't know who their dad is. For those who are God's people, it's very important that the fathers know and love their children and that the children know and love their fathers.

Number two, God loves people and he knows us by name. That's amazing. How many of you can go out and sometimes it's days of your life at a time, and you don't see anyone who knows your name. God knows your name. God knows you by name, God loves you by name, God calls you by name. Just like a father knows every single one of his kids, God's a Father who knows us all by name.

Number three, God works through families. Here we're seeing God working through a family line, one generation to the next, to bring into human history Jesus Christ. And number four: every family tree has some knots. Every family—some of you are those knots, okay? Every family tree has those knots. You're like, "Oh, really? Oh, gosh, I wish we could rewrite history and take them out of it." No, don't, leave it there. Tell the truth, be honest, and that's what's happening here.

So, who's this being written to? It's being written primarily to a Jewish audience. There are four gospels. These are biographical sketches of Jesus. Matthew's primary audience are those who are Jewish in orientation; Mark, Romans; Luke, Gentiles; and John is primarily Greeks. So, 60 percent of the first three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are similar in material. They call them the Synoptic Gospels. Ninety percent of John is unique and particular to John. And it all tells us about Jesus, but they're emphasizing different aspects of his life, and his ministry, and his ancestry.

So, Matthew is written primarily to a Jewish audience, and they were, let's say, a little proud. They were a little more religious and they would look back and say, "Well, all the guys in the Old Testament, that's our family. All the people that God spoke through, and worked through, and wrote Scripture through, that's our family. And ultimately comes Jesus and he is a descendant of our family." And they would tend to overlook or omit the sins of their family, and they would tend to forget that their family, too, needed a Savior. Their family needed to be adopted into the family of God.

And so Matthew starts by telling them their history. And a curious fact is that Matthew, himself, is an unlikely person to tell us about Jesus. He was Jewish in orientation, but he worked for the Roman government, which was a godless, pagan government. And he was a tax collector, meaning he would go to the people of God and he would take from them as much money as he possibly could. He would pay taxes to the government from the money that he received from them, and anything that was above and beyond their taxation was his personal income.

So, he's an extortionist, he's a thief, he's a crook. In our day, this would be like someone who works for the IRS and is also a terrorist. Okay, that's how emotionally they felt about this guy. They double disliked him. They did not like him at all, but he met Jesus, he had a change of heart and mind, he was born again into the family of God and adopted by God the Father, and he demonstrated his life change by financially walking away from a very lucrative business to live generously and to serve others compassionately. And so you have an unlikely man, writing to a religious people about their unlikely family history through which Jesus Christ came.

ABRAHAM

So, that being said, we'll deal first with the three men. The first man is Abraham, and he mentions Abraham in Matthew 1:1-2. This is not the only place you'll find Abraham. If you want to study more, read Genesis 11-25. You'll see a lot of Abraham there. He's mentioned more than three hundred times in your Bible, hugely important. Eleven of the New Testament books mention him. Every one of the New Testament gospels mentions him.

He is a towering figure. God loves all people equally, but he doesn't work through all people equally. He works through Abraham uniquely, to the degree that he is called the father of faith, that all who are in Christ are ultimately adopted spiritually into the family of Father Abraham. And his name literally means "father of a multitude," so he is a father. He is a towering father of faith. So much so that three religions today would say that they are founded on his teaching: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. I mean, even outside of the Christian faith, he looms large in the history of the world.

Now, what is interesting is that when God came to him, he was not a Jew, but he was a Gentile. God had judged a group of people for creating something called the Tower of Babel, and these were people who were in rebellion against God, the Babylonians. And God comes to Abraham, who himself was probably a Babylonian. It says that he came from Ur of the Chaldees, which is in Babylon. Here's a pagan guy with a pagan father from a rebellious people. He wasn't seeking God, but God was seeking him. He wasn't calling out for God, but God came calling out to him. It's a demonstration of God's affection through election.

God comes looking for him and God calls out to him and says that he will do a miraculous thing through his seventy-five-year-old barren wife, and that is give them a son. And that through that son would come the seed of Abraham, a descendant who would be the Savior of the world and a blessing to many nations.

And the Bible says that Abraham believed the Lord, he trusted the Lord, he had faith in the Lord. As a demonstration of his conversion, he circumcised himself and his entire household, and the Jewish people, as we know them, were born. The people of God in the Old Covenant, as we know them, were born as he was converted and adopted by God the Father, and he was the beginning of a new family.

But I want you to see here that though Abraham is a magnificent man, he's still a sinful man who needs a Savior. He himself was a lost, pagan Babylonian when God came to him, and even through the course of his life, the Bible is honest to show that he continually needs the grace of God.

I'll give you two examples in which he actually tried to give away his own wife to avoid conflict with others. Ladies, that's twice too many, right? I'm sure after the first one, they had a conversation. "You know, honey, they were going to hurt me, so I was going to give you away." "Hey, please don't do that." And then he did it again. It shows that Abraham wasn't always a man of faith, sometimes he was a man of cowardice. And even though he was a man who was magnificently used of God, he's a man who continually needed God.

DAVID

Then it moves on to David. Now, David is a towering figure in the Bible and human history, and he was a king. And so when we think of David, we are to think of kings and kingdoms. And ultimately, it is promised in Micah 5:2 that through the city of David, Bethlehem, would come Jesus, the King of kings.

Now, King David and his kingdom, it was based upon three things: the presence of God among his people, which came ultimately through the temple which David had constructed through his son, Solomon; peace with God through the forgiveness of sin; and prosperity from God. Those three things: the presence of God, the peace of God, and the prosperity of God.

And David had a mighty kingdom, but he died and his kingdom came to an end, and the prophecy is given that through his line would come a greater King, the King of kings, with a kingdom that would never end, and we inherit all of those blessings spiritually, in this life, and upon seeing the Lord Jesus, the descendant of King David, the descendant of the family line of Abraham, we receive all of these promises physically in our resurrected body and practically for the remainder of eternity.

But even David was not always a godly man. He needed a Savior as well. It just goes to show, even the best among us are still sinners in need of the grace of God. And ultimately, Matthew hints at this. Here's how he says it: "But David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." Did you catch that?

There was a guy named Uriah the Hittite. He was a soldier, he was part of David's army, and he was off at war defending the king and the kingdom. David oversaw this man's wife bathing, I don't know how that worked, and then he lusted after her, and he pursued her, and he seduced her, and he slept with her, and he impregnated her. Now, I know in *VeggieTales* they said he really wanted her ducky. That's not what he wanted, okay? I'm just telling you, he did not want her ducky.

And what happened was then he impregnated this woman, Bathsheba, but the husband was off at war, and he would know if she was pregnant that she committed adultery. And so

what he did was devise a plan of murder. And he gave orders saying all of the soldiers need to go to the front of the battle line, and then they should all retreat, but don't tell Uriah the Hittite, leave him there to be slaughtered. This is an execution.

So, the great King David, the man after God's own heart, the shepherd boy who fell the giant, the author of many of the worship songs in Psalms, the one who architected the plan with God's provision to create the temple where God would be present with his people: adulterer, murderer.

Some of you don't rightly interpret your family history. Some of you idealize and romanticize your ancestry. The result is you don't see the sins of your forefathers and those who have come before you, and as a result, you may not understand the need for the grace of God in your own life.

And so here, Matthew begins a very curious place with a genealogy. I mean, we read it, it just sounds, does it not, like a page ripped out of an ancient phone book, but it really is packed with theological meaning and insight. See, they would have said that two of the greatest people in the history of the world were Abraham and David, and he's showing: and they were both saved by the grace of God and they both needed Jesus to come from the family of Abraham to be a greater King than David.

JOSEPH

And then the third man mentioned is Joseph, chapter 1, verse 16. He's a young man, he's a poor carpenter, he lives in a rural town. He's probably a teenager or early twenties. He may or may not have had a formal education. It was not uncommon for men in that day to not have a formal education. He's a man who grows up poor. A home in his day would have been about the size of a parking stall where we place a car. But he is from the family line of David; you'll see that in the coming weeks.

And he is not Jesus' biological father. That's why it articulates it this way: it calls him, in Matthew 1:16, "the husband of Mary." It doesn't say he's the father of Jesus. He's "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ." What it's showing here is that Joseph is not Jesus' biological father. He did not have any intimate relations with her until after Jesus was born.

Early in the story, as you'll see in the coming weeks, they're betrothed to be married, and she becomes pregnant through a miracle of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ, God the Son, comes into human history by the will of God the Father, not by any earthly father's contribution or intention. Yet, here's what Joseph does. To fulfill the promise that is given in Micah 5:2 that through the family line of David would come Jesus, Joseph is a poor, sort of marginal member of the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of David, but to fulfill the promise given hundreds of years prior that Jesus would be born into that family line, he adopts Jesus, and Joseph becomes his adoptive father.

And this is amazing, because this is a picture of salvation, that God's a Father and he adopts us into his family. And God comes, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he's adopted into a family. This is why Christians are big on adoption. Our God was adopted. Our God was adopted.

Joseph is a man who, though he is godly, his reputation is soiled for the rest of his life. They don't believe that Jesus is special, that Mary was a virgin. They believe that he was a fool who was conned by an adulterating woman. So, even through the rest of his life, as we read the gospels, they come to Jesus and they say, "At least we know who our father is." Some of you've experienced that like Joseph, wrongly maligned and accused.

Those are the three men, and then the genealogy includes five women. Now, this is unusual because it's a patriarchal society, not a matriarchal society. The family line is traced through the men, not the women, so women are generally not included in other genealogies in the Bible.

In addition, four of the five women are Gentiles, not Jews. And lastly, at least four of these gals start with some real problems, baggage and carry-ons, right? They've got issues. They got issues, alright?

And some of you, you know, I'm just telling you, not everybody in the Bible is a great example. So, you know, you're like, "Oh, I was reading the Bible and, oh, I love the name Tamar and Rahab, and I think I'm gonna call my daughter one." Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't just grab something out of the concordance, right? Look it up first. So, we'll do that right now.

TAMAR

So, the first gal mentioned, Tamar, Matthew 1:3. You'll read more about her in Genesis 38. Here's her story. Okay, there's a guy named Judah. He's a descendant of Abraham. He's got some sons. One of his son's names is Er. Er is a godless man, so God kills him. God just gets so sick of people, sometimes he just ends their life.

Now, it was customary in that day that if the husband died, the closest living male relative, the brother, would marry the widow, would love her, serve her, protect her, provide for her, raise a family with her, care for her. There wasn't social service, welfare safety net, those kinds of things in that day. Your family looked after you when you were in trouble.

So, his brother's name was Onan. Onan is a horrible guy. Onan was very glad to sleep with her, but didn't want to marry her and didn't want to be in any way obligated to her. Some of you men who will hear this are like that. You're looking for a good time, not a good legacy. You're looking to take from a woman, not give to a woman. You're happy to sleep with a woman, but you don't want to, in any way, marry or be committed to a woman. You're happy to have sex, but you don't want to have children. Onan is like that. He's a shameful example of those kinds of people.

And so ultimately, she becomes lonely, and distraught, and frustrated. Tamar decides to take matters into her own hands. So, her plot and plan is to dress up like a prostitute, and to place herself along the side of the road where the prostitutes would gather, sort of veiling her face and concealing her identity.

She waits for her father-in-law to come by, and she initiates with him, and he responds to her. He is no victim. He is a guilty, sinful man in every regard and way. He impregnates her, and he only later finds out that it was actually his daughter-in-law that he slept with and is now having a baby with, and he is grandpa-daddy. Notice the deeply southern themes in the Old Testament.

Alright, how many of you, you're going, this is kind of like your family history. There's stuff they don't talk about. "Tell me about my dad and my grandpa." "Well, he—" "Wait, one guy? I thought—what? Oh boy. Okay, don't tell me about my family history." This is in the family of Jesus. Here's the big idea: even people who do bad things are still welcome in the family of Jesus.

RAHAB

Rahab is mentioned in Matthew 1:5. Her name means pride, insolence, and savagery. Imagine if you had a daughter and that was her first name, her middle name, and her last name. Here is Pride Insolence Savagery. That's what they named their daughter. She's from a race called the Canaanites. These are the enemies of God's people, always at war seeking to put them to death. She's a prostitute. She's a pagan prostitute. What happens is some of God's people come to her town, their lives are in danger, she hides them, sparing their life, and she lies.

So, she's a lying, Canaanite prostitute. But she gets converted because God is a Father who's willing to adopt anyone into his family. God is a Father who's willing to look at even the most troubled, difficult, obstinate, rebellious kids and say, "I will be your Father and my love will change you." Okay, if you're and you say, "I've done some horrible things," you're welcome in Jesus' family. There's room for you, amen? There's room for you.

And she changes. See, it's not just about who you're born by, but whether or not you've been born again. It's not just about your earthly father, but if you have been adopted by your Heavenly Father. It's not just who your relatives are, it's whether or not Jesus is your big Brother. Now, she had faith in the coming of Jesus. She turned from sin and trusted in the God of the Bible. She had a life change, she became converted, and she became the great-great-grandmother to King David. She's part of the family line of the coming of Jesus.

RUTH

The third woman is Ruth, one of my favorites in the whole Bible. I had the great honor of preaching the entirety of Ruth some years ago. But she comes from a line of people called the Moabites. Now, the Moabites can trace their ancestry all the way back to the days of Abraham with a man named Lot. And I believe they named him Lot because you ask, "Well, what did he do wrong?" A lot. Okay, that's Lot.

He was not a great guy, not a bright guy, not a godly guy necessarily. He's not a great father and his daughters think the end of the world has come. He's got them in a precarious situation, holed up in hiding, and the daughters become so concerned that they'll never have children that they devise a plan to get their father drunk, sleep with him, so that they can become pregnant with their dad. And that's what happens, and they become the Moabites.

Well, this obviously leads to a little family riff. Now, the Moabites are considered "that" side of the family. "That" side of the family. We don't want to spend time with them. We don't want to talk about them. In fact, we don't think that they're equal to us. There's something wrong with that side of the family. Well, the Moabites eventually get their own god, they get their own religion, they go their own direction. They're godless.

Is there a part of your family you don't talk about, you don't talk to, you're just done with them because either they think you're the bad one or you think they're the bad one, or whatever has happened, somewhere in the history something went bad. We've got one of those in my family line. Two brothers show up in the United States of America from Ireland, have a fight, separate into different countries, and I think one got the other's wife. I don't know what happened, but it's like that.

Well, what happens then is God's people, through a famine, a handful of these in a family, end up in the region of the Moabites and near this woman, Ruth. And you know what? She gets converted. She's not just born, but she's born again. She doesn't just have her earthly father, she's now adopted by God, her Heavenly Father. And she joins the family of God, literally the family of a woman named Naomi. She becomes one of the godliest women in the whole Bible. Her husband dies and she marries a guy named Boaz. Chapter 4 of the book of Ruth ends with her giving birth to a son, and she becomes King David's great-grandma.

Don't you love that? Wrong family, wrong history, wrong geography, wrong spirituality, you meet God, you're part of the family, there's no second-class citizen in the family of God. She's a magnificent woman, she has a transformed life. And here's the big idea: you may come from a horrible family, but everything could change with you in the grace of God. You could become the first generation in a whole new legacy, and the way that you can put an end to the history of your family is by getting a new Father so you can start a new family. That's the story of Ruth. I find great encouragement in her.

BATHSHEBA

And then there's Bathsheba, Matthew 1:6. Again, she was Uriah the Hittite's wife, and she had an adulterous affair with King David, and her husband was murdered, and would there be any hope for a woman like that? I mean, to this day we would say that a woman who commits adultery, it's a bad thing. While her husband's at war, it's a bad thing. And gets pregnant, it's a bad thing.

But God uses what is evil for good, because he's that good, and from her comes Solomon, a man who writes Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Proverbs, three books of the Bible; the man who constructs the temple that was organized by God's sovereign decree as delivered through his father, David, so that God would be present with his people and that his people could worship him and deal with their sin.

Have you committed adultery? Have you had a child out of wedlock? Have you slept with someone you shouldn't have slept with? Have you done something you shouldn't have done? Is it something that you can't undo? There's hope for you. Bathsheba's loved by God and she's used by God, and even though her sin is great, God's grace is greater still. I want you to see this.

I mean, I know sometimes the holidays can be very hard because you're with your family. Imagine Jesus' family and the history of this family, and of all the families God could enter the world into, he chose this one to show that he loves sinners, he welcomes sinners, he's here to save sinners. He's here to enable us, allow us, to be adopted by the Father into a new family and leave a new legacy.

MARY

And then it culminates with a fifth woman, Mary, and we see her in Matthew 1:16. She's a young girl, maybe a teenager. Isaiah 7:14, about seven hundred years prior, the prophecy was given that the virgin would be with child and from him would come Immanuel, God with us. Friends, this is all the Christmas stuff. This is the songs that we sing and the seasonal celebration that we enjoy. It's all about Jesus.

So, they were waiting for hundreds of years for a young, teenage virgin—that's what the language means in the Hebrew—a young woman, teens or twenties, to give birth to God. God is with us and God chose Mary. She's a devout young woman. She loves the Lord. When the angels come to her, as you'll see in the coming weeks, she receives her calling. She worships God gladly, but she knows she's a sinner who needs a Savior.

The last portrait we have of Jesus' mother, Mary, is after Jesus dies on the cross for our sins so that we might be adopted into the family of God, with God as our Father and the church as our family. Jesus rises from death and he ascends back into heaven, and he sits on a throne as King of kings, fulfilling the prophecy of David. And we, by faith, trust in him, following in the example of Abraham. Included among the family of God, the early church, was Mary. It's the last picture we have of her in the Scriptures. She's with 120 first believers in Jesus, and she's gathered together with the family of God, worshiping her son as her Savior, knowing that she, too, was a sinner.

And Mary's reputation was damaged. She was considered not a godly woman, but an ungodly woman; not a holy woman, but an unholy woman; not a chaste woman, but a defiled woman; yet she knew her identity. She knew that God loved her and had chosen her to do something that was important and significant, though difficult, and that was to birth and raise Jesus Christ. And some of you have had that. You've had a reputation that was destroyed through lies, and false reports, and bad accusations, and there are people in the family of God, including Jesus' own mother, like that as well.

THERE'S ROOM FOR YOU IN JESUS' FAMILY

Why does he start here? How many of you would not start the New Testament here? He starts it here because, ultimately, the Bible is about God and people. And we're not just individuals, we're part of a lineage, and a legacy, and a family, and a history. And even the best among us have a sinful pedigree.

Let me ask you a few questions in closing. Do you come from a godly family, a godly family line? If so, you are like Joseph and Mary. Now, they're not sinless, but they seem to be godly, devout, humble people. Though young, they seem to have great, sincere faith, and they are part of a family chain. They're a link in a family chain of faithfulness. Some of you are part of a family of faith and faithfulness, God's faithfulness to you and your faithfulness to God. And I want you to find encouragement and hope to not be the broken link in that chain. Mary and Joseph were a faithful link in a line of faith. I want that for my children desperately.

Number two, do you come from an ungodly family or a godless family, a sinful family, a wicked family, a rebellious family, a discouraging family, a shameful family? So did Jesus. It didn't destroy him, and it doesn't have to destroy you. You don't need to be ashamed, you need to be honest. That's what the Scriptures here are doing. It's being honest, not angry, not bitter, not mean-spirited, but honest. And God would welcome you to be honest about your family history. And sometimes families make rules like, "Hey, don't say that. We don't talk about it. We cover one another." Say, "You know what, I love you, I'm not angry, I'm not bitter, but the truth is the truth, and this is the truth."

Does your family include incest? Does it include adultery? Does it include prostitution? Does it include murder? Jesus' family does. It didn't destroy him and it doesn't need to destroy you. The Bible is honest about it and it invites you to be honest as well, so that you can see the sins of your family and know that you all need a Savior, and be born again, adopted into the family of God through the work of Jesus, your big Brother, and then have a new family called the church, where they help you and you help them, and together we grow to be more like him.

Mars Hill, that's what it means to be the family of God. And as the family of God, we're going to hurt one another, we're going to disappoint one another, we're going to fail one another, we're going to forgive one another, we're going to try again, because that's what families do.

Number three: when you hear of some of these stories, do you just see yourself as one of those guilty sinners? How many of you are at the point where you're not going to try to explain it, or justify it, or excuse it, or ignore it? You would say, "You know what, everybody knows I've done stuff like that. Sexual sin, murder, I have said and done things that I simply regret and I can't undo, I can't take back. It's devastating." There's room for you in the family of God. There's room for you in Jesus' family. There's room for you in Jesus' family, and you won't be the first, you probably won't even be the worst, but there's room for you in Jesus' family.

Lastly, how many of you, in reading this, are like the original recipients: moral, religious, self-righteous, proud. You say, "I am so glad I'm not like that. I'm so glad my family's not that messed up. I'm so glad that we haven't done those kinds of things."

Two things I would say: number one, your family's probably way more messed up than you know, they just didn't tell you, okay? Number two, pride is a sin that is at least equal to incest, adultery, murder. Pride is a horrendous sin. Pride says, "I don't need the grace of God because the grace of God is for sinners, and I don't really need the grace of God because I'm not really a sinner," when your sin is pride. And that tends to be the preferred sin of religious, moral, spiritual people, as they judge others, overlooking their own hypocrisy.

And so there is room, as well, for those of you who are religious, and moral, and spiritual, and proud, and self-righteous in the family of God. And that's why Matthew, the tax collector, writes this to a religious audience saying, "I come from the same family, I come from the same pedigree, I come from the same history, and you all know I'm a guilty, vile sinner who ripped you off and stole money from you, and your kids, and your grandkids."

And it's not about your earthly father, it's about your Heavenly Father. It's not about your birth, it's about your new birth. It's not just about your family of origin, it's about the family of God. And he's inviting all who are religious, and moral, and proud, and spiritual to repent, not just of what they do but who they are.

See, we're all born into a sinful family. Through faith, like Abraham, we're born again into the family of God. We receive all of the promises and provisions that come from the Lordship of Jesus as our King, and with God as our Father, we can now love and serve one another as our family. And Mars Hill, I just want to impress upon you, in closing, how important this is as we go forward, that we see ourselves as sinners with a great Father, adopted into a family with an opportunity to leave a new legacy. And if we lose sight of that, we'll find ourselves repeating the sins of our fathers and mothers and not repenting of the sins of our fathers and mothers.

So, Father God, we come to you now, and we just want to say, first of all, thank you. Thank you that we get to call you Father, Dad. Father God, we thank you for sending Jesus, our big Brother. Lord Jesus, thank you for coming into human history. Thank you for coming into a family. Thank you for coming to a family that's filled with sinners and sin. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for sinners and sin. Thank you for rising to conquer sin and to adopt sinners into the family of God. Lord Jesus, thank you for ascending where, right now,

you're seated on a throne, fulfilling all the promises to David, ruling and reigning as the King of kings and Lord of lords. And Lord Jesus, we long for the day of the coming of your kingdom. Until then, may we be about the family business, loving brothers and sisters, serving one another, caring for one another, giving to one another, concerned about one another. Because, Lord God, if you are our Father and we are a family, we know that the family is the place where we get to share the love of the Father, and so help us to increasingly do that more and more through the holiday season when for many, it's a hard time because of the grief that accompanies biological family. May we be that supportive, additional kind of spiritual family. And Lord God, as we finish our year strong, may this lead to a generosity toward the well-being and future of the family, prayer, love, concern, and care. God, I pray for those who have not yet connected to the family of God that they would connect. I pray for those who are disconnected from God, their Father, that they would, like Abraham, turn from sin and trust in you, Lord God. And I pray for us. I thank you, Lord God, that this was the most fruitful year our family has ever had, and I pray that next year would be even greater for your glory and our joy. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE BRUSKAS FAMILY

[music]

Pastor Dave Bruskas: Twenty-five years this year, so this was December 18, 1987. We'll celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this year. Yeah, wow. Look at that carpet. That is some crazy carpet. It looks like a jello dish.

Kara Bruskas: Yeah, it does! It looks like that holiday jello dish, the cranberry. Yeah.

Pastor Dave Bruskas: Holiday jello dish carpet.

Kara Bruskas: This is our living room.

Pastor Dave Bruskas: This is our living room, yeah. We have a family of six, but our two oldest are away to college, and so we miss them terribly. Every time I look at their pictures, it's hard. I really miss them.

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Pastor Dave Bruskas: What do you guys, as you think about our move to Seattle, what's the best thing about moving here and what's been the worst thing?

Jillian Bruskas: Jenn, you can go first.

Jennifer Bruskas: The best thing is probably getting to try something new and getting to kind of experience a different culture and getting that before I go off to college, getting that experience, like I said. And the worst thing would have to be the completely fresh start, and like, not knowing any one.

Pastor Dave Bruskas: What about you, Jill?

Jillian Bruskas: The best thing would probably be making more friends and new friends, and the worst would be having to leave friends and family.

Pastor Dave Bruskas: Yeah. Do you miss your family?

Jillian Bruskas: Uh-huh, I do.

Pastor Dave Bruskas: Well, let me pray for you guys and I'll let you head out, is that okay?

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Pastor Dave Bruskas: This is—this is our son, David Michael, who would have been between the two oldest daughters. So, if he were living today, he would be twenty-one years old. He was born with a congenital heart defect that we didn't know about. When he was born, he was in the newborn nursery. I went back up to be with Kara. She said to me, "Why haven't they brought him to nurse yet? Would you go down and check on what's happening?" As I went down, the nurses had moved him into a neonatal ICU. He had a heart defect that didn't pump oxygenated blood through his body, so his entire life, he lived two months and four days, were spent in a children's hospital, and he constantly had tubes.

And so one of the kindest gifts that we ever had as a family is my father-in-law took a picture of him, and then he commissioned an artist to paint a picture, so this is kind of the one picture we have of our son—I mean, the one portrait we have of our son without the tubes. So, an artist was commissioned to see this is what he would look like without all the tubes. And so, it's an important—he's an important part of our family.

I think I was headed towards a real crisis of faith, where the things you know to be true intellectually somehow don't work themselves out in your experience. So, for me, the church family was just a constant reminder: Jesus loves us, he's caring for us in the most basic way, people are providing food, people are sitting with you when you need to just wait through hours of surgery. It took what could have been just an intellectual understanding of "This is what the Bible says," and they lived it out in such a way that we really understood, I think, on a very deep level that despite all that we're going through, despite how painful, this is our worst nightmare, but Jesus is there with us in it and he's loving us in it.

You know, being a pastor and being a dad are in many ways the same thing, and so you certainly have a different relationship, and love, and closeness with your biological children, but as a pastor, when you look out and you're preaching, or you're walking in and you're the first one in on Sunday morning and you're watching the church arrive, you can't help but feel fatherly. You see people being excited about Jesus, and bringing others in, and telling them about Jesus. Your heart as a father just swells. It is an incredible joy as a pastor, as a spiritual father in the church, to see the church grow. You always want to see it grow. You always want there to be room for more in the family.

I think we're in the midst of a really epic story. You always feel weird saying this, but I'm pretty confident that someday, someone will write a book about what Jesus has done at Mars Hill. I can't wait to see what this next year brings. I know there are going to be more and more people added to the family, and I know that those who are already in the family are going to love Jesus more and more, and I can't wait.

[music]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.