

The True Gift of Christmas

1 - Surprising Grace

Matthew 1:1-17

Grace Fellowship Church, Sunday, Pastor Brad Bigney

Ruth 4:18-22

Three Surprises of God's grace that stand out in the Christmas genealogy in Matthew 1.

I. You Ought to Be Surprised by the Diversity of God's Grace in Those Who Were Chosen

Whenever the Jews did a genealogy it was never complete. The purpose of a genealogy was never to be exhaustive - it was always selective. So there are a lot of people that get left out. It's important to note who gets listed and why.

The Holy Spirit put five women in this list in Matthew 1.

- v. 3 Tamar
- v. 5 Rahab and Ruth
- v. 6 Her who had been the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba)
- v. 16 Mary

The grace of God SUPERCEDES cultural norms. Both women and men were an important part of Jesus' mission on this earth from the very beginning.

Christianity brings dignity and worth to women as well as men – who are both created in the image of God – and are designed to be 'image bearers' for His glory!

II. You Ought to be Surprised by the Unsavory Character of Those Who Were Chosen

- Why did God include Rahab, Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba in this list?
 - All 4 of these women were outcasts
 - 3 of them were **widows** ~ Mary, Tamar, Ruth
 - Rahab was a **prostitute**
 - Tamar **pretended to be a prostitute** in order to have sex with her father-in-law
 - 2 of these women were **confirmed liars**
 - 3 of them were **Gentiles**
 - Ruth was a Moabite (ie. she came from a country that had been cursed by God so severely that no descendent from this tribe was supposed to ever enter the temple for ten generations.)

There's a lot of DRAMA packed into these four little verses, but each of these women all listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ because God wants us to be swallowed up in the WIDENESS of His mercy and grace.

Nobody here today is beyond the reach of God's grace – no matter what you've DONE. No matter where you've BEEN. No matter what you ARE. And no matter what's been done TO YOU. God's grace is greater. God can still SAVE you and USE for His own glory. There's a seat for you at His banquet table of grace.

That's some of the best news you could hear today!

Our God is a God of Tamar, Ruth, Rahab and Bathsheba. He is in the business of shining His glory through broken vessels this world would toss out onto the trash heap as useless. He delights in picking up the broken shards and remaking us into 'Trophies of Grace' for the display of His own glory.

Ephesians 1:3-6 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

The grace of God makes us accepted in the Beloved! Not our efforts. Not some kind of merit-system.

God's in the business of doing UNCOMMON things through very COMMON vessels.

2 Corinthians 4:5-7 "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

It's not about us! We're not the treasure – but we carry around a great treasure – the Gospel and the very life and glory of the living Christ! We're just clay pots.

1 Corinthians 1:20-31

This doesn't mean, the more wretched the better; but God is a God of amazing grace. Our God sits on a throne of grace and is ready to embrace every single one who will come to Him through Christ.

III. You Should Be Surprised and Delighted when you Understand that this Same Grace has been Extended to You and Me!

2 Corinthians 9:15 "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

- Have you received the greatest gift of all?

The first step towards receiving this gift is to recognize your spiritual bankruptcy, and to come with empty hands. Too many people come with a spiritual hammer and shovel and tape measure, thinking they're going to work their way to heaven.

You cannot be reconciled to God by your own efforts. You need grace... God's riches at Christ's expense. And the good news is God has made that available in and through His Son – Jesus Christ.

Thank God for His surprising grace tucked right into the Christmas story from the very beginning.

Grace:
God's riches at Christ's expense