

Back in November at a prayer meeting Becky Cassini, who was leading, read a section from Psalm 89 including v3-4, "You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations'". She then commented that this line runs right through Jesus to us and added with her customary enthusiasm a big "yeah".

In an era where so many people spend so much time researching their family history to see where they have come from, here in Matt 1:1-17 we have our spiritual lineage spelt out for us. Not only is it spelt out for us it is spelt out in salvation history terms as we see God's plan for the salvation of the world revealed right from Abraham, who received God's promise, through David the great King, whose line of Kings would not end, to Jesus, in whom all God's promises are fulfilled and who is the true King.

In this little sermon series, entitled 'Behold the King', we are looking at Jesus in this advent context. We have been thinking about him returning as the King, then as a king who will come in judgement and now we look to his first coming and ask how is he king? The answer that Matthew gives us is that he is king because he comes from the line of David.

Matthew, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thought this was relevant to our understanding of who Jesus, the child born in the stable is, and surely if we are followers of Jesus we wish to know who he is. As we look at the family tree, and from what Matthew highlights for us, we get a better understanding of who Jesus is and of his relationship with us.

1. He is Son of Abraham and heir of the promise

The point here is that Jesus was heir to Abraham that is he was heir to the promise made to Abraham. The promise made to Abraham by God was that God would give him a people, place and presence. Jesus, as his descendant, was the true heir to those promises.

As God promised to be with Abraham so we know Jesus promised to be with his followers. We always have his presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. But as we think of the promise to Abraham it is that promise of a people which is supremely fulfilled in Jesus.

In Gen 15:5 God took Abraham out under the vast sky showing him the array of stars and said to him "so shall your offspring be". Indeed the very name Abraham given to him by God meant Father of many. However, the promise was not just that he would be the father of many nations but that through him "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3).

Jesus as Abraham's son is the one in whom uniquely that promise is fulfilled.

We see today the spread of the Christian church around the world as Jesus, son of Abraham is proclaimed as Saviour and Lord. We pray for the spread of the gospel in our land and in our day so that many might come to know Jesus and be adopted into the family of God.

It is in and through Jesus, the son of Abraham, that men and women are born again in the Holy Spirit and brought into the family of God which is as numerous as the stars in the sky. This is Jesus son of Abraham, heir of the promise and saviour of the world – our saviour.

As we look at these early verses we see that Abraham was the father of Isaac and immediately ask but what about Ishmael, Abraham's other son? Then Isaac was the father of Jacob but what about Esau? What we see here in this list leading to Jesus are the sons of the promise and as we have seen Jesus was the supreme heir of the promise but then we draw that line further on from Jesus and who are the true sons of Abraham, the heir to the promise?

The answer is there in Romans 9:6-8, "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.'" In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

So we are the children of Abraham not because we physically born in relation to Abraham but because we share his faith a faith now focused in Jesus.

Or do we? As we approach Christmas and hear the message of the angels, "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you" (Luke 2:10) does that resonate with you? Do you recognise that child born in Bethlehem as your saviour?

Jesus son of Abraham born to be our saviour.

2. He is Son of David and heir of the Kingdom

I have to say that I have never mastered the line of succession of Kings and Queens in this country. With such little knowledge of history, it has always amazed my children that I was a history teacher! However the Jews would have been much better at remembering the lineage of Kings from David onwards and here the lineage is traced down to Jesus.

This Jesus was referred to during his life as Son of David. His lineage is spelt out here and referred to often in Scripture, to show that he is the true King, he is God's King, a king after the line and nature of David.

God had promised to David that, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (2 Sam 7:12&13) Initially that promise was fulfilled by Solomon but God's people knew that there was a greater King to come.

Isaiah said of this King to come that, "He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” (Is 9:7) As we read these lists of Kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah and Jotham, as each one took the throne the people would have wondered is this the promised King who will establish the throne for ever and with each one, most of whom failed, the answer was a resounding no. That failure as we know led eventually to God’s judgement being enacted upon his people in the exile to Assyria and to Babylon but even then, as we follow the list in vs12 and following as the people returned from Babylon, we still see failure. We know little or nothing of these figures Abiud, Azor and so on but they were not the one promised. There was no return of the glory of God to his people. However, then came Jesus born of the line of David in the city of David according to the word of God and testified to by the angels as “Christ the Lord”. He is the true King the true heir to David and to the kingdom. The true King according to his human line but more the true King under God. He came as saviour but he came as King to establish the Kingdom of God and his own throne for ever.

Those of us who did Lifeshapes back in the autumn as familiar with Mark 1:14-15 “Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, “The time has come” he said, “the Kingdom of God is near.”” That is God’s kingdom had come in a new and a real way in Jesus and we can be part of that kingdom as we accept Jesus as our king.

What we are being shown here is that Jesus is God’s King – he is our King.

This is a great theme of Matthew’s gospel showing the Kingly nature of Jesus. We see it in the contrast in 2:2 between Herod and the “one who has been born King of the Jews.” We see it in the appearance of the Magi with their gift of gold. Later it is only Matthew who refers the entry of Jesus on Palm Sunday to the prophecy of Zechariah and that quote “see your King comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey” (21:5) Matthew wants us to be in no doubt that this Jesus is the true King and therefore the one who should be obeyed.

Many of us are familiar with the words “she who must be obeyed” However as we read the Bible we see that it is Jesus who alone should be obeyed. The wise man, Jesus says later on in Matthew’s gospel, is the one who hears his words and puts them into practice (Matt 7:24), that is obeys them.

As you may know years back I had a dog. One day I was taking her for a walk to a local park but to get there we had to go past a parade of shops. The dog was quite a nervy dog and would react to noises. However I knew that the end result if we got to the park would be worth it as far as the dog was concerned. Anyway half way down the parade of shops was a pet shop and this day they had put a parrot outside the shop. Seeing the dog the parrot created a great squawking. So there was me pulling one way and shouting at the dog, the dog whining and pulling the other

way and the parrot flapping its wings and squawking loudly. Had the dog simply obeyed me and stayed with me while the experience may not have been great it would have been short lived and the run in the park made it worthwhile. There is blessing for us in obedience even it sometimes to obey is not easy.

As we think of Jesus as King and as our ruler I simply ask where in your life are you guilty of pulling away from him?

Earlier in the service we read Psalm 1 which speaks of the blessedness of walking God's way. For us to live in obedience is to find God's blessing and joy.

3. He is the Christ

The title shows the nature of this son of the promise, the son of David. He is Jesus and as we see in v16 he was born of Mary. He was a man, born as all other men are and Matthew makes this clear in these verses and through this genealogy. However he also makes it clear that this man is unique. He is the Christ. That is the anointed one of God, the Messiah and as is shown through Matthew that means the Son of God.

Matthew is helping his readers see that this Jesus is a real man but also the Son of God.

As we look at the genealogy we see in a sense just how ordinary he is because, while in his background there are Kings, there are also plenty of skeletons in the cupboard too.

It is interesting to note that Matthew introduces into the list four women. That in itself is unusual because it was the male line that was important.

There in v3 he mentions Tamar, who was not a Jew but a Canaanite woman who enticed her father-in-law into an incestuous relationship and bore him twins. V5 Rahab a Canaanite prostitute who was a big part in the return to the promised land. Ruth the Moabitess in v5 and Bathsheba with whom David committed adultery in v6.

Not necessarily the wholesome background that one might wish for, though Matthew does slightly veil it in v6 with that lovely phrase "who had been Uriah's wife."

It reminds me of the story about the American family who were keen to trace the story of their family tree. So they hired a genealogist to do the research. Unfortunately he uncovered the truth about great uncle Zach. Zach had been convicted of murder, held on Death Row, and in the end executed by electric chair. The family weren't really happy to have that disclosed and so they asked the genealogist to dress it up a bit to conceal the grim truth. This is what he wrote: 'Uncle Zach worked for the department of justice for a number of years, after which he was given a chair in applied electronics at a well-known government institution. He became quite attached to it, held there by very strong ties until eventually he died. His death came as quite a shock.'

Well we do here see quite a few people and not just Bathsheba whom perhaps one might not want to highlight as part of your ancestry but Matthew does. It is hard to see exactly why these women are mentioned and dangerous to draw lessons from it but we do see that there was in Jesus' background a mixed bag of people and not all of them were Jews.

But that in a way is a positive isn't it? Yes Ian it is because as I look round this morning I see, if you will allow me, a mixed bag of people and most of us are not Jews.

However the great thing is that even so we can belong in the family of God along with Jesus our brother.

We have been adopted into the family born of the Spirit and here we belong irrespective of our background and past. What we see in this genealogy is Jesus son of man and son of God but the one who is our brother. It is as we see Jesus as the son of Abraham – our Saviour and know him as Son of David our King that we are brought through him as Son of God into the family of God. None of us belong there by right but we are adopted into the family of God, Abraham is our father too.

Here in the family of God we mix and share with all sorts of people. We too have these unusual people in our family tree but in Christ we are one family living, growing, sharing together in the kingdom of God.

As we celebrate this Christmas season we will do it with family, the human family for many of us, but also the church family here at Christ Church, for some the Christian family in different parts of the country but also we are aware of the Christian family around the world of which we are part and in which we rejoice.

Here is Jesus son of the promise, the true King and the head of his family of which by grace we can be part.