

The Promised King (Matthew 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2020

Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] Thank you so much, Fran, for that reading. Why don't we pray? Father God, thank you so much for your word kept for us.

Thank you that it is full of promises that you have made to your people and that you have kept every single one of them. Be with us as we journey through this opening chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

And teach us what you want to teach us today. We pray all these things in the names of Jesus. Amen. If New Zealand was a village of a hundred people, what would it look like?

This was the question that our Auckland-based photographer, Bex Charteris, tried to answer when she embarked on her project called 100 Portraits.

Over the course of a couple of months, she describes how she convinced random library goers to stop and pause for a professional photo.

[1 : 07] She compiled hundreds of these photos and then whittled them down to a hundred to try and visually show New Zealand's population by age, gender, and ethnicity.

And the results are stunning, aren't they? Now, Bex used data from the 2018 New Zealand Census to pull her portraits together.

And now, 2018 is a pretty important year for us, I think, as Kiwis. It's not just the year that some of you here proposed the English language service here at PCBC.

It's not just the year that Golden State won their last NBA finals. Or when Crazy Rich Asians came out at the movies. No. You see, 2018 was also the first time in New Zealand that we officially became a majority secular country.

What I mean is this, that year, 48.2% of Kiwis described themselves as not religious. More than the number who identified as Christian or Anglican or Catholic or Presbyterian or other world faiths like Hinduism or Islam.

[2 : 25] And certainly more than Baptists. And so, since 2018, here in New Zealand, we've actually been living in a new normal. A world where half of our friends and work colleagues have no room for religion in their lives.

Where one in three people know little to nothing about Jesus' life. And even this, over half of Kiwis don't know their local church at all. And so, friends, how do we, as God's people, live faithfully in a country that's become more and more secular?

Or if you're not a Christian, who is Jesus? How will I get to know who this person is? How will I find out what His good news for me is?

And then share it with my friends, classmates, neighbours and co-workers? And so, Matthew's Gospel, I think, is so vital for us. In this book, we have an eyewitness account.

First-hand reports of people who lived and walked and breathed alongside Jesus of Nazareth. You see, Matthew himself was a Jewish tax collector.

[3 : 35] A businessman whose life was all about heaping up as much wealth as possible in his bank account. But then a Galilean teacher comes along and he comes up to his table and says, Follow me.

And from then, his life changed. And Matthew's recollection of Jesus' life had certainly been popular through the ages. And did you know of the four Gospel accounts, there's four of them in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, of the four, early Christian writers loved to quote Matthew the most.

Matthew's Gospel is so influential in history and culture that even if you're not a Christian, you have probably heard of terms and phrases from this book. Of phrases like, Love your neighbour.

You are the light of the world, salt of the earth. You might have done something at the 11th hour or talked about people as if they were the blind leading the blind. All these phrases from Matthew's Gospel account.

And not only that, Matthew is a Gospel account filled with references to ancient prophecies and predictions.

[4 : 44] Recorded in the Old Testament, God's first words to his people about the return of a king. And Matthew wants us to see throughout his Gospel that these promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

This was good news for all of the Jewish-speaking believers at the time, reading this. For broken and disillusioned people who knew their Bibles but lived as an oppressed group, waiting for God to keep His promises, to send a king.

And most importantly, Matthew's Gospel, I think, offers hope to everyone. You and me included. That in Jesus' birth, His life, death, and His resurrection, here is proof that there is a God who can be trusted, who keeps all His promises, and who will lead us into the good life in this strange new world.

And so, friends, my hope is that in the next couple of weeks, as we start journeying through Matthew's Gospel, we're going to see the lengths that our Heavenly Father went to keep His promises to His people through a king who was born to save us.

Now, I wonder if you were wondering in that reading that Fran did so well, how many names there were? There were a lot of names in that reading, weren't there? We'll get into that soon. But for now, I want us to notice the one person that all these names points towards, right?

[6 : 15] It comes to the inner genealogy, and it says, Joseph and Mary's son. And in chapter 1 of Matthew's Gospel, He deliberately chooses to present three different names to refer to our Lord.

Firstly, He's named the Christ. We see that in verse 1, the Messiah. He's named Yeshua, Savior, later on in verses 21 and 25.

And then finally, He's also named Emmanuel, God with us, in verse 23. Matthew highlights these three names because each of them is so important.

Each one reveals a key promise that God has made in His Son. And so, friends, for the next couple of minutes, I want us to look at each of them in turn and see what we can learn and think about and apply to our lives from these names.

Three names of Jesus. My first point is this. In the name of Christ, God promises a new beginning for all kinds of people.

[7 : 18] In the name of Christ, God has promised a new beginning for all kinds of people. You'll see that Matthew's first sentence sets the agenda. Look with me again.

Verse 1 reads this. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. I wonder if you've ever looked up your family tree before.

Or maybe you've had to sit at the dinner table while one of your relatives was telling you all about your ancestry. For those of you who aren't that interested, I wonder though if you've encountered genealogies, lists of names in the Bible.

Can you think of the first place in the Bible where there was a long list of names? To find it, we'd have to go back to the very first book, wouldn't we? Genesis, chapter 5.

The descendants from Adam and Eve down to Noah. And I think it's worth noting that Matthew's first four words here in this gospel echoes this list in Genesis 5.

[8 : 26] It likewise describes the book of the generations, right? In Genesis 5, it talks about the generations of Adam. And here it's talking about the generations of Jesus, the new man, the second Adam.

Matthew was alluding to this first genealogy in Genesis. Why? Because Matthew is also interested in showing new beginnings. You see, friends, just as Moses recorded the beginning of creation in the book of Genesis, and the bloodline of humanity in the book of Genesis, Matthew records a new beginning in his gospel.

The bloodline of Christ in this gospel account. I want you to note as well that this is the only chapter where Matthew ever uses the full name Jesus Christ.

This is the only time in the whole gospel that it says Jesus Christ. The word Christ, if you know, isn't a surname. It's not like Wong or Smith. Rather, the word Christ is a title.

It's a Greek word, actually. It means anointed one. God's chosen king. The equivalent word in Hebrew is Messiah, which you may have heard too.

[9 : 36] The promised one who God's people are waiting for. And so Matthew has made a deliberate choice here. To call Jesus the Christ at the start, verse 1, and at the end of the genealogy, verse 16, is to make a remarkable claim, isn't it?

This baby is Israel's promised Messiah, the coming king. Now imagine if I told you that I was related to Barack Obama, the former U.S. president.

You'd look at my skin and you'd be a bit skeptical, wouldn't you? I need to prove that I was related to him somehow. Perhaps I would have to show you how we were connected somewhere up the family tree.

And so likewise, if Matthew presents the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter as the promised Messiah, his readers would have needed proof, would have wanted proof.

Proof that this child is rightfully king of the Jews. And so that's what he does. He backs this up by carefully charting the line of Christ. He includes 42 generations, three sets of 14.

[10 : 45] There's a bit of symmetry and precision there, isn't there? And in this particular genealogy, notice that Matthew pays particular attention to two names, right?

Abraham and David. He starts with Abraham at the beginning and ends with David in verse 17 and gives it a special mention. He names Abraham, he's the founding father of God's people, Israel, because through the Christ, through Jesus, God keeps his promise that he once made to Abraham.

He said once he would bless him with as many descendants as there were stars in the night sky, Genesis 17. And it is in the Messiah, in Jesus, that God can finally keep that promise to bless all the nations of the earth through Jesus.

And I think Matthew names David here too, because he's a pretty important, he gets a pretty important promise too. Remember in 2 Samuel chapter 7, where God makes that promise to David, to raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and he will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

What a beautiful promise. And in the Messiah, in Jesus, God keeps that promise to bringing a kingdom that has no end.

[12 : 09] And look, neither men were perfect, were they? Both sinned. Both brought shame on Israel and made things difficult for their families. Matthew even acknowledges Uriah's wife here in the genealogy, verse 6.

And yet God is pleased to use broken, fallible men, warts and all, in his plan to enact a new beginning in Christ. And now it's not just the men who are remarkable, I think, in Matthew's genealogy.

Check out the names of women who are included as well. Very unusual, but so important. We know there's Mary, of course, right, at the end, engaged with Joseph. She's too poor to offer more than two birds at the altar.

More on that later. But look, who else is included? Verse 3. Tamar. Tamar, the Canaanite daughter who tricked Judah into fathering her children.

What about verse 5? Rahab, the Gentile prostitute who protects the Israelite spies in Jericho. Remember them? And then there was Ruth as well in that same verse, isn't there?

[13 : 13] The Moabite widow with no right to marry into God's family. And yet she does. Women who are not really part of the family, in an unusual sense, or broken in some way.

This is not quite the family tree that you would share on social media. And yet Matthew doesn't care. He doesn't sweep these names under the carpet because they are crucial. You see, this hall of shame, as it were, is precisely how God brings about his anointed one, his Christ.

Through the highs of Israel's history, the great Davidic kingdom, the lows of being exiled in Babylon, God has still been keeping his promise.

He has graciously preserved this royal line until it has come to Christ himself. So, friends, every name in this list, every man, every woman, every generation listed here, is Matthew saying, look, God keeps his promises.

He does. And so, look, if you're expecting the Messiah, the King, to be a hero with a faultless lineage, Matthew says, hang on, look again.

[14 : 26] God's new beginning is more inclusive than you think, and more diverse than you expect. This is important to remember. The Messiah is not afraid to be counted among the worst of sinners.

Our promise-keeping God includes men and women, kings and prostitutes, rich and poor. All of them are welcomed into the family line of Christ. I wonder if you've ever felt too broken to belong to God's family.

I wonder if you've ever felt scared that if people really knew your family background, your history, they would cut you off. But that doesn't happen here with Jesus.

In Christ, God's chosen King, He is not ashamed to count you as His brother or sister. The wonder and beauty, I think, of the good news of Jesus is that if you accept Christ as your King, you gain a brother.

You join a family. Friends, there is no sin that prevents you from being included in Jesus' family line. Is there? And if that's true, PCBC English, if that's true, if this is what the Messiah's family looks like and is lying, then it means we should welcome anyone, everyone to receive a fresh start in Christ's family.

[15 : 53] Shouldn't we? I wonder if you and I have kind of mentally ruled out certain kinds of people that we could reach, that we could befriend, that we could share the love of Christ with.

God hasn't. Whether it's a new kid in class, or your atheist work colleague, or our new Indian neighbours, Matthew reminds us that by sending his son, God has graciously included people that we'd normally rule out.

And so, friends, don't be afraid to do the same. To welcome everyone. Because in the name of Christ, there is a new beginning for all kinds of people.

Now, from verse 18 onwards, Matthew comes to a new section. He says this, Now, this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. Literally, in the original language, he says, Now of Jesus Christ, the beginning, the Genesis, took place in this way.

Again, echoes of creation, isn't it? But whereas the genealogy starts and ends with Christ, right? From verses 1 to 17, the rest of chapter 1, Matthew draws our attention to two other names of Jesus.

[17 : 10] We've talked about the Christ already. And so, my second point is this, In the name of Jesus, God promised to save us from our sins. In the name of Jesus, God has promised to save us from our sins.

Read with me from verse 18 to 19. This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. This isn't the only time that we hear Jesus' birth described.

Luke's gospel also retells that story too. But what's unique, I think, about Matthew's gospel is that here we get Joseph's point of view. We get the inside scoop on how Joseph felt the day he found out.

She's engaged to me, but she's pregnant. And I'm not the dad. Now, Matthew is careful to tell us that Joseph was a righteous or just man.

[18 : 24] Verse 19. You can almost picture his conflict, can't you? What should I do? I want to follow God's laws. And yet, I don't want to disgrace Mary either.

Maybe I should just call things off quietly. Leave it at that. And while Joseph is pondering this dilemma, he gets a visit, a spectacular visit from an angel, no less.

And now in verse 20. Okay. The angel addresses Mary as Joseph's wife. Interesting fact, right? Let me read that again and I'll bring that up for you. Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.

The word as there has actually been added in the translations. Literally, it says, don't fear to take Mary, your wife. In other words, you're already together.

Stay with her, says the angel. You need to look after your wife. Why? Verse 20 continues. Because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[19 : 28] Joseph, your virgin wife is carrying someone precious, someone given by the Holy Spirit. In her womb, God is knitting together a baby boy that will save his people from their sins.

So take your wife, Joseph. Help her. Help her deliver this child. And we know Joseph believes this because in verse 24, we see that's exactly what he does.

He wakes up. He obeys. He calls the child Jesus. He formally adopts him into his family. Verse 25. Friends, what a faithful example of obedience to God's word, even in puzzling, costly circumstances.

And no doubt Joseph did this because he believed the angel's promise. And what did the angel promise? Have a look at verse 21. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Look, on the one hand, Jesus is a pretty common name. In Hebrew, it's Yeshua, meaning God save. Lots of dads named their kids Joshua back in the days to remind themselves, God saves.

[20 : 47] God saves. And yet the angel here, he draws out the full meaning of this hope that God saves in verse 21, doesn't he? Right. In this verse, he mentions three things.

Firstly, he mentions that it is Jesus alone that will save. The second half of that sentence actually literally reads, For he, he will save.

In the original. The angel's emphasizing that Jesus and none other will save. Friends, that's true. Whatever your view of Jesus, you need to know this.

Salvation is found in no one else. There's no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Secondly, verse 21 reminds us that Jesus will save his people.

Friends, in God's kindness, Jesus is drawing a people to himself. They belong to him already, and he will never let them go. And thirdly, verse 21 reminds us that angel says he will save his people from their sins.

[21 : 55] You see, the question throughout Israel's history over and over again was this. God, will you send someone to save us? And throughout history, God does that, yet not fully.

Did Moses save his people? Yes. Forever? No. Did Joshua save his people? Yes. From their sins? Completely? No. And whether it's David or Solomon or Hezekiah, time and time again God sends deliverers.

And yet every time Israel is physically saved, they were often spiritually lost. Why was that? Well, I think we should know, shouldn't we?

Just like the Israelites, I think if we asked ourselves honestly, many of us know what it's like to be physically safe, but spiritually lost.

Our hearts are black and empty, and we too need to be saved from our sins, from the standards we can't even keep up in our own lives. From God's law that we break.

[22 : 58] That's what God sent His Son Jesus to do, isn't it? One day, this baby in a manger, He grows to be a king, who strides into Jerusalem on a donkey, while crowds of people are shouting out, Hosanna, which means save us now.

Hosanna to the Son of David. And Jesus says, yes, I will be your Savior. How? By wearing a crown of thorns, and by giving up His life on a cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Friends, in the name of Jesus, God promises to save us from our sins. Named Christ for a new beginning for everyone.

Named Jesus because He saves us from our sins. Finally, Matthew reminds us with the third name, that in the name of Emmanuel, God promises to draw near to us.

I'll say that again. In the name of Emmanuel, God promises to draw near to us. Now let me ask you a question. When was the last time you pondered deeply about the virgin birth of Christ?

[24 : 14] I wonder what goes on in your head, actually, when you sing those words, right, from the creed. I believe in the virgin birth. The virgin birth, it's one of those doctrines, truths of Scripture, that people love to criticize, isn't it?

I wonder if you find it hard to believe yourself. Do we just let this one go? Does it really matter whether Jesus is born of a virgin? Well, Matthew thinks it does.

Because he states it multiple times in our passage. Verse 18, Joseph was pledged to Mary, but they had not come together yet, right?

Verse 25, but he had no union with it until she gave birth to a son. You see, Matthew wants us to remember Jesus was born of a virgin. The Messiah took human flesh, yet his conception was fully divine.

Why is that? Well, have a look at verse 22, and Matthew answers this. He says this, Here, Matthew is quoting an ancient prophet from the Old Testament, the first half of the Bible, quoting Isaiah 7, verse 14.

[25 : 42] There's a bit of debate about how exactly Matthew is using this passage. But what is clear from the original context, when Isaiah makes this prophecy, he is speaking God's word to the king at the time, King Ahaz, actually one of Jesus' ancestors.

You see him in verse 9. Now, King Ahaz, at the time, was ruling over Judah, the southern part of Israel. And he was terrified that the neighboring Assyrians were plotting to invade.

And in their panic, God says and promises, I will be with you. This is how. The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.

That's my sign for you. And then in the next chapter, the Lord then promises to break and shatter the far countries. For God is with us.

Isaiah 8, verse 8. And so Matthew is picking up on this point. Just as Jesus' ancestor Ahaz had God make a promise and keep that promise to them.

[26 : 46] Here, we see God make a promise, fully realizing it, that he will be with his people through the virgin birth of Christ. You see, in Christ, God can now be truly and fully God with us.

Emmanuel. So without the virgin birth, friends, Jesus could not come as man and as God. Let me try and explain this to you, illustrate it.

When I was young, I grew up playing my fair share of computer games, epic role-playing games, RPGs in particular. And one of my favorites was one called Final Fantasy VII.

And when I saw the posters come out again of the remake, I was so excited. It brought me back to my childhood, where my brothers and I spent hours wanting to be like Cloud Strife.

The cool guy with a massive sword and the spiky hair. Now imagine if you were Cloud yourself. You were that character or another character in a video game.

[27 : 49] If you were a character in a video game, how could you ever know your creator personally? Perhaps you could wander around your world, your computer world, looking for signs of a creator, signs or signatures of him.

You might find some hints, right? But the only way you'd really know your author and even speak to him is if he writes himself into your story. And look, that's what we have here in the virgin birth.

Here we have the author of the universe, God Almighty, saying this. I promised I would draw near to you. I'm going to keep that promise. I'm going to write myself into this world I've made.

Friends, this is remarkable. No other religion has a God that does this. Only the Christian God promises to draw near to his people and then actually does it in Jesus.

Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. Can you believe that? It's hard to fathom, isn't it? The Word became flesh. God became human.

[28 : 55] The invisible became visible. The eternal one entered time and space. The holy one drew near. Friends, I don't know what you're going through right now.

You may be unsure about all kinds of things in this very complex and difficult season. What will I be doing this time next year? When will I see my friends and family from overseas again?

Will I find happiness again? What will my purpose be in life from here on? Whatever you're wrestling with, friends, one thing you can be sure of is this.

Here we learn of a God who can be trusted, who keeps his promises. Matthew 1 tells us this time and time again. He is the promised king. And he shows us in all these names that should matter to us.

These names of Jesus. You see, Jesus is the Christ. He is God's promise of a new beginning for everyone. Jesus is Yeshua, Savior for sinners.

[30 : 03] And friends, our Lord is Emmanuel. He is God with us. Friends, these are names that truly matter for us.

For our friends and our family, Jesus' name matters for everyone who will believe him. Let's pray. Father, what a beautiful name the name of Jesus is.

Thank you for revealing him to us through sending him into our world. We were confused, wandering, lost, and yet you were so kind.

You wrote yourself into our story. We thank you for that. Thank you that he is the Christ. He is our king. The promised one. Thank you that he is our savior. Saving us from our sins.

Thank you that he is God with us. In him, we know that you are with us. And you promised to never let us go. Thank you for that. Father, I pray that you would help us to remember these truths and put them into our hearts and lives.

[31 : 09] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.