

A yellow banner with a white arrow pointing right. The text "the narrative of grace" is written in a dark blue, serif font, with each word on a new line. Four horizontal dotted lines are positioned between the words.

the
narrative
of
grace

#5 Culminating at Grace



**“Culminating at Grace”
The Narrative of Grace
Jacob Bender
Courage Church
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We have been in a series for the last five weeks on “The Narrative of Grace” looking at some of the names listed in the genealogy of Jesus. This is a series that we could have easily gone twice as many weeks on, there are so many names and generations that we could have explored but we only have so much time. Perhaps sometime in the future we will look at some of the others.

But the reason we chose to study the genealogy this Christmas season, is because everything about this lineage points to the grace of God, and as we are going to find out today, where grace is evident throughout the entire thing, this genealogy truly does culminate at grace.

This morning we are going to conclude our series on the genealogy of Jesus Christ by looking a bit more at Mary’s song “The Magnificat,” and at the last three names on the genealogy.

Matthew 1:16-25:

“and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

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.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a **just** man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord

appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Lets pray.

A lot of people read the way that this genealogy ends, by saying “Jacob the Father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born” then reminding us of the 3 sets of 14 generation gaps, and then telling us this story... about how Joseph was not actually the biological Father of Jesus, that Mary was pregnant with Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and suddenly you realize “have we really spent five weeks studying the ancestry of the man who adopted Jesus?”

and the short answer is yes.

At the end of the list of names we discover that the family that we are reading about, Mary, Jesus’ *actual* mother, married into, and Joseph, Jesus’ adoptive Father, was born into.

How could this be?

Matthew 1:1 says “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

That is how the entire New Testament starts!

And Joseph isn’t even named here.

It is more significant that Jesus was considered to be a son of David and a son of Abraham than even a son of Joseph, because of the things that were prophesied and promised both to Abraham and David. The prophesy

given to King David came from a prophet named Nathan, who said that a king would come from Him, which was obvious, because David was King... but Nathan said this would be different, that this king would reign forever!

But Joseph obviously has a key role in all of this.

Because if he doesn't marry Mary, then it would have been virtually impossible for anybody in that culture to accept Jesus as their Lord and savior because everybody knew that the savior was going to come from the house of David.

There are questions that have been debated and discussed for centuries about whether or not Mary was a part of the lineage of David herself, or not. But Matthew's gospel was written in an effort to win the Jewish people to Christ, and in that culture, it would have been of absolute necessity for Joseph, the Father, to be in the line of David.

The only problem is, that when Joseph finds out that his fiancée is pregnant, what does he do?

He opts out.

and who wouldn't? You live your whole life being faithful, playing by the rules, honoring your parents and those who have gone before you. You are engaged to be married to this girl and then all of the sudden you find out that she is pregnant?

He obviously knows and was thinking to himself "I never slept with her!"

So he decides in his heart to divorce her quietly. Which probably sounds a bit strange because in these days if you are engaged to someone and you break it off, it is called "breaking up." But in those days, to be engaged actually meant that you were "legally pledged" to be married to that person. So if you are legally pledged, then you would need to legally break off that pledge.

So I imagine that upon first discovering that the woman he has been pledged to be married to, whom he had not yet slept with, was pregnant, he was probably pretty hurt. He was probably pretty upset... but the bible

says something incredible about Joseph. The bible says “Joseph, being a JUST man, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

and this speaks volumes of the character of Joseph. Because though he was hurt, he still sought the welfare of the young lady whom he was very very disappointed by. So, being just, he decided he would do what he had to do, quietly. We talked a lot about Justice this series, the bible makes it clear how important it is, and the bible makes it clear, Joseph has it.

But that also speaks volumes about our world, and human nature in general.

Because You can be just, and still reject Jesus.

Christmas, for just about everybody, is a time of compassion. It is one of the rare times when naturally, everybody determines that the right thing to do is to do something for someone else. It is automatic this time of year.

Its really amazing. You go to the grocery store, and you drop money in the jar for the salvation army on your way in, and you get a warm feeling because you are helping someone who is less fortunate than you. Next week for Joy to the D, we will be partnering with people, who have nothing to do with our church, some of whom will have nothing to do with Jesus, but they love being a part of Justice, and this time of the year is an unbelievable opportunity to do that.

For most people, Christian or not, Christmas is a time when they step out of themselves. For some it consists of buying a few modest presents for family members, for others it means they are giving left and right to charity, serving at the soup kitchen, buying angel tree presents and looking around for needs that they can meet.

And its great and its helpful, but its seasonal.

And people can work seasonally for a cause and give to it and love it and enjoy it externally all the while rejecting the essence of what its all about, deep in their hearts. But transformation will never come to the person who can't see that everything that they are giving of themselves they are giving out of the grace that was demonstrated to them 2,000 years ago.

But for the Christian, the person who understands what Jesus did for us, and a person who understands the generosity of God, we must understand that those types of things are just the way that we live because that is what it looks like to have Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

That was what Mary's song that we have been looking at (Luke 1:43-46) was saying. She was singing about the reality of Christmas and what it really means. It teaches us who God is, and what his nature is, and if we can let our lives be transformed by *that*, then we will be generous *all* the time. We will serve people, and love people, and help people, *all* the time.

Because you can know what it means to seek justice, but never learn what it means to seek Jesus. And you will have a few happy moments in your life when you feel like your actions are fulfilling you but if grace is not in the middle of it, eventually you will get tired, burned out, burned, and bitter.

Because every time you do a good deed you add it to the list of reasons why you are good, and why you are deserving of good things, and if those good things don't come you are going to find yourself very lost.

Especially if nobody is serving you the way that you are serving others.

If we serve in our own strength then we will rely on and be driven by the feelings of our own human hearts.. hearts that are, in reality all *fractured*.

and that is how charity turns to bitterness.

One of the biggest causes of people leaving the church of Jesus Christ is for this very reason... "I gave and gave and gave and gave... for what?"

So the *what* is something that you have to determine from the beginning.

But one beautiful thing about the gospel is that it is so so much bigger *than justice*, and it *is* justice, all at the same time.

and that is basically the first thing Mary says in her song. She says that her soul magnifies the Lord, and her spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he looked on *the humble estate of his servant*.

She is saying, "Why me God? I am a nobody."

“I am a teenager!”

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:27 that God has chosen the foolish things to shame the wise, and he chose what is weak to shame the strong. - its a message that we totally read past as we try and elevate ourselves to new heights and new promotions and new statuses in society so that we can be noticed and then justify our self-elevation by maybe trying to make a difference in the world. But that wasn't the way Jesus lived, and its certainly not the circumstances by which he was born.

And so here is this 14 year old pregnant girl acknowledging that she is the reality of those words, “God has looked on the *humble estate* of his servant.”

This God is so big that he can bring about the salvation of the entire world through this unmarried 14 year old virgin girl who has nothing to her name besides a fiancée that who was on the brink of divorcing her.

and all she can sing about is how mighty this God is.

How merciful this God is, to, after everything that Israel did to distance themselves from him, still fulfill the promise that he made to Abraham when he told Abraham “Come out of your tent. can you number the stars? So shall your offspring be”... And that promise was living and growing inside of her teenage body.

and so she concludes her song by saying “God remembered his promise!”

We have said this several times throughout this series, and we are going to look at it more closely, today. We have said “God is doing something, and it is going to bring injustice to its knees.”

But in a way that only Jesus can do. Only through the church can it be done, and only by the grace of God and in his timing, will it happen.

So back to Joseph. here we have a *just* man, resolved to do the wrong thing. So Joseph wants to quietly divorce Mary, so that He can move on with his life and so she can be spared of public humiliation. But as he was considering these things, an angel of the Lord comes and tells him, “Joseph, you don't understand. She didn't cheat on you. She is pregnant by

the Holy Spirit and this kid is going to change everything! Take Mary as your wife.”

Joseph was the first person who had the opportunity to reject Jesus. He was the first person who had the chance to say “this is just too weird, I am out.” He had the chance to say “I am just too hurt, this whole thing is just too broken... I am out.”

and that was exactly what he had intended on doing.

Instead, He became the first person to *accept Jesus*.

and to welcome Jesus like his own son, into the family line and lineage of David.

And so this is what the angel tells him...

You shall call him “Emmanuel”

which means “God with us.”

The angel comes to Joseph and he tells him, God is with you. You are going to be able to experience God in a way that nobody on earth has... You will hold him in your arms....

And that is what Christmas is all about. It's about experiencing Jesus. It is about Emmanuel.

Joseph was the first one to experience Emmanuel first hand. He was the first one to be able to hold that baby, and God was with them in that tiny setting.

The bible over and over paints a vivid picture of a God that is with us, in our experiences. In our troubles and in our joys. He is with us in our friendships and in our failures. In our families and in our futures.

Reminding us why at Christmas time we love to sing Emmanuel.

Emmanuel, God with us.

The Lord's Prayer

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us how to pray" he told them to pray a simple prayer. "our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...."

And every time I ever heard that it just never resonated with me. It always felt so distant. So foreign.

"Our father, who art in heaven..."

It sounds like our Father is so far away.. Like he lives somewhere far away and sends child support every once in a while to keep us going.... but like we learned earlier this fall, the word there for heaven is the Greek word *ouranos* and it is actually the same word that they used for air. and it's so crucial... Stop saying "our father" and feeling like it is someone who is far away, and start saying it this way, our father, who is as close to me as the air that I breathe... And we learned that when we were studying the Ten Commandments but here is something that I want you to think about:

What is air? It is the single most valuable commodity in all of the world.

There is not one person on this planet who does not depend on air every second of every day.

He is the very thing that you are completely dependent on every day.

Even the fact that Jesus says to call him Father is a sign of closeness. Not all Fathers are close to their children. I know that some of you have had distant fathers, abusive fathers. No fathers. And respectfully I have to say that any of those are fathers that did not do their job. The job of the father is to be there. It is to raise up a child. It is a relationship designed to be cultivated by closeness and by love.

But notice that Jesus does not just say "my father..."

We all know that Jesus is the son of God. He easily could have told us to pray to his father, but he didn't.

He also didn't say To pray like this: "MY FATHER" even though we are all children of God and could easily individually call him father.

He said to pray like this, "OUR FATHER" because we are in this together.

We are our.

we are a not meant to be an island. We are not meant to be alone. This wording speaks strongly to the idea of community, and even stronger to the idea of family.

Emmanuel speaks the same way. God with US.
Us. More than one. Everyone.

We are a family of people doing life together completely dependent on God our Father who is with us. Who is right here in our midst right here and now.

Emmanuel.
Every second of every day.

Emmanuel. Letting our lives be transformed by who God is this Christmas.

Doing life like a family, with God in our midst, eager to take in anyone who wants to be a part.

But it has to be together. That's why the bible says when TWO OR MORE are gathered (Matthew 18:20)...

God lives in community.

And he entrusts community to the church. We are a body and we take care of each other because who on earth would not take care of their own body?

We love serving our city and doing things like Joy to the D next Saturday, but we are called even more primarily to make sure that the needs are met among each other.

Because that allows us to minister outside, *in health*.

The church takes care of each other.

The idea of taking care of each other has been around for a long long time.

Not only that, but the idea of complete dependency on God has been around for a long, long time. It goes a lot farther back than Jesus giving the disciples the Lords prayer, both principles, Dependency, and Justice, are laid out in their most radical forms in the Torah.

So we are going to go back to it today.

I am going to paraphrase this but if you want to read it it is found in Leviticus 25.

Verse 1-7 talks about something that, if you were with us this fall, you should be a bit familiar with, and that is the Sabbath year.

The command is just like that of the sabbath day, for six days you labor, and on the seventh you rest... well the sabbath year was a time commanded, that for six years they were to work the land, and in the seventh year they were to let the land have a solemn rest (Leviticus 25:5)

So they would count the years. 1-2-3-4-5-6- and when they got to 7, they were commanded to stop!

Nobody was allowed to sow, nobody was allowed the reap, nobody was allowed to grow.

Verse 6 says that "The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you."

This was God's way of saying, "Trust me."

"Prove to me that you don't rely on your own strength. Prove to me that you know deep in your heart that I am all that you need."

But they just couldn't bring themselves to trust fully in what God was doing in their lives.

For a group of people who had been slaves for 430 years before that, and were used to working all day every single day doing hard labor with their hands, the idea was impossible to grasp, which is why, like we talked about last week, eventually God had to remove them from Israel for 70 years so the land could finally rest. (2 Chronicles 36:18-21)

So that is the command for the Sabbath year. It was a vacation. It was grace. It was mercy. It was time off at no cost to them, God still wanted to feed them. He still wanted to be there for them, he was still as close to them as the air that they breath...

It cost them NOTHING. And benefitted them in every way, And yet they couldn't bring themselves to do it.

Why is it so hard to accept grace? When it is free.

So verse 1-7 is grace.

But when you get to verse 8 of Leviticus 25, that is when you get to Justice, and you see then that even justice requires grace. It can't exist without grace.

It is called the year of Jubilee.

So the Sabbath year was every seventh year.

The Lord commanded the Jubilee year to be every 7th Sabbath year. So likely you would only experience one, maybe two of these in your lifetime.

So you would count years:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=1

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=2

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=3

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=4

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=5

1,2,3,4,5,6,7=6

1,2,3,4,5,6, Jubilee.

you go through that cycle six times, with life staying relatively normal. Every seventh day you took a day off. Every seventh year you were supposed to take an amazing year long vacation and God was still going to provide, and you were going to completely live in his grace.

But when you get to that 7th set of years, you were counting down to the Jubilee.

Because on every 7th sabbath year, when you get to Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement *that year*, the bible says to sound a loud trumpet, and declare liberty.

Then this happened:

If anyone was a slave, he was set free.

Amazing.

If anyone is owed a debt of any kind, he is to forgive that debt and release the person from the bondage of what he owes.

But it gets better. Because just like what we talked about two weeks ago when we talked about Naomi and what had to happen with her land... what happens today happened back then.

Here today, the majority of the world is owned by a small amount of people. And they are able to leverage what they have to get more, while circumstances often cause families on the other side of the fence to lose what they have, just to survive.

So property is always turning hands.

And everything is becoming more and more off balanced.

Well, there were a lot of people like Naomi in those days. A lot of people

who were given land when the Israelites settled... and that land had been in their family for generations and generations.

But because of circumstances sometimes beyond their control, like when a husband dies and the sons are too young to work, or possibly just a series of bad decisions... suddenly land that had been in families for years was being signed over to other people. And suddenly their society began to become very off balance.

Here is the real problem with this. Maybe you *deserved* to lose what you had because of a bad decision that you made, but the problem is that as families most valuable assets starting switching hands, children began being born into utter poverty... because of their parents decisions, or their grandparents decisions... They were born into injustice.

Well on the year of jubilee, when that trumpet sounded, and liberty is declared...

All land was returned to its original owner... So even if you rightfully acquired a piece of land, even if you caught someone in a hardship and bought the land from them, on this year, they got it back. They got a clean slate. They started over.

Eliminating the possibility of children being born into poverty... because every 50 years there was a reset, and you at least had what you started with.

And what a better day of the year to proclaim liberty than on Yom Kippur. If you are unfamiliar with Yom Kippur, for the Jewish people it is the Holiest day of the year.... it is the one day when all of your sins for the whole year were taken to the altar, and forgiven. Think about it.. Every scar. Every bad decision. Even injustice that *you* were apart of...

Everything on that list of times you were guilty and how you let that dictate your current situation...

The chapters of your story that you don't let anyone else read...

It was all taken away that day. It was a very grateful day. Grateful for all you were set free from yourself... It was the one time your heart would be okay giving back land that technically you paid for.

So on that day, every 7th sabbath year, Equality was returned.

It was incredible.

The reality is, we live in an utterly fractured society. It is so broken.

When people say that they want justice in a broken system (and I echo their cries and I am right there with them.. I WANT JUSTICE...)

When we say that WE want justice, here, in this broken system, what are we really saying? What are we really saying when we say that we long for true equality.

We are saying we want heaven. We want something that a broken world we will never fully be able to see because we have taken our society down a path that has thrown out Jesus, and bible, and the only real basis we have for which to live, and we as a culture are trying to rebuild our ruins off of human logic and human reason, when in reality, all of us reason a little bit differently.

Our world is so fractured because we fractured it.

Its our fault. We broke it.

and inequality and injustice has been going on forever.

And God didn't like it. He doesn't like it now, and he didn't like it then. And He had a way to solve it!

According to Leviticus, God had a plan for equality. Justice was on his radar. He gave them a way.

He says "if any of you have fallen behind, here, lets catch you up."

But for someone to be free, someone has to let them go. So he says to those who had slaves:

If any of you have slaves, let them go!

If any of you got rich at someone else's expense... It's time to Give it back!

On the Year of Jubilee, everyone gets a Kinsman Redeemer.

But for every person who received grace, someone else had to be on the giving side of it. It was a decree from God for the absolute radical generosity that it takes to look at a circumstance, and all that you have, and realize that “if I am actually going to love my neighbor as myself, I can’t live well on *His* land while he is living on the street.”

Fifty Five

Two years ago, our church in New York did this project called 55. I have told you a couple little stories about it a couple of times before, and even mentioned this story a couple of weeks ago.

What we did was, for 55 hours we lived on the streets, of New York, right before Christmas. It was cold, there was a snow storm one of the days, we slept on a hard concrete sidewalk of the city not far from the Rockefeller tree. We weren’t trying to pretend like we are homeless, we weren’t trying to belittle anyone, and downplay what they go through because we obviously knew that after 55 hours, when they were still on the streets, we got to go home to our warm beds.

We chose 55 to represent the 55,000 who were considered homeless that Christmas, and we raised thousands of dollars for that community.

If you want to see a Christmastime economic divide, it is New York City. It is one of the most sought after tourists cities leading up to Christmas, from the Thanksgiving Macy’s Day parade to the Rockefeller tree, from ice skating in the park to the Radio City Christmas Spectacular - all the while 55,000 others spent Christmas either on the streets, or in shelters.

One third of them were children.

So what we did while we were out there was we went to two of the family shelters, that were housing homeless families with small children, and we threw them Christmas parties. We really went all out, Santa was there, Mrs. Claus was there, hundreds of presents at each one... cookies, dinner, it was really incredible.

The second shelter we went too was the one that really stayed with me. I feel like I will remember this night the rest of my life.

The shelter was for: Single, homeless, *teenage* mothers.

Do you want to talk about Justice?

Go and spend some time with those kids, born into that circumstance...

the streets or the shelter.

Go and spend some time with those moms.

You will look at them, and you will listen to them talk, and cry, and after you have gotten through the first five minutes of your own tears enough to think even remotely straight, all you will want to do is level the playing field.

You won't for a moment be thinking about their decisions or about their mistakes, or what brought them *here*.

All you will want to do is figure out how you can at least get them back to what they started with... or back to what their parents started with... You will want to rewind to any other moment in there life than this one... when they were treated like every other teenager, when they have what most other teenagers have... and then keep them in that moment forever.

If you have kids you will run home and you will hold them so tightly. I remember Dawn was there with us and we had just had Fiona a couple of months ago, and of course she didn't spend the first night with us because we were on the streets but she encountered a woman with a two week old, and she recalls all the emotions you already are feeling at two weeks post

pardon and then adding to that the stress of literally not having a place to go. And I saw what seeing what that did to Dawn.

And I remember, because we were documenting the entire event (and you can watch the documentary on our website) we sat down and interviewed some of these moms, and we asked them what they want for Christmas, and we asked them what they needed this year.

And we listened to them tell us about how much they hope that their children don't remember *this* Christmas... How they hope that they can get some things together and that they can make next year better.

And then one of them said something to us that I will never forget.

She looked at Dawn and I, and with tears in her eyes she said:

"My family unit is so broken. I wish it was that, I wish it was a family.. But Everyone is in their own place, living their own life."

Even in her own family, there was not equality. There was not justice. Some spent Christmas in a warm house with people they love, while another in the same family, spent it in a shelter just a few miles away, with her tiny daughter.

There are just so many hurting people out there.

So many who are alone, who are lost. Who are cold.

Who don't know what they are going to do this Christmas. Who don't know what they are going to do this winter as the temperatures drop.

People who have been on the wrong side of Justice their whole lives.

That is why we are doing things like Joy to the D. We can't help everyone, but for the few that we are helping, we are going to really go all out for them. We are going to shower them with the love of Jesus next week, with Christmas presents, with smiling faces, with hope and with grace next Saturday. And make a genuine effort to make a significant change in the way that they remember this Christmas.

We don't want them to be like those moms, who hope with everything in their hearts that their children do NOT remember this Christmas.

And we may not be able to give them back everything that was taken from them, but we can give some of them a Christmas.

And that is exactly what we are going to do next Saturday. Come out, be a part of it with us. Join us, help us bring a little justice to a broken world.

Help us give a Christmas where there is no Christmas.

So today, we looked at the end of the lineage. We looked at where it all stopped. On Joseph, having to choose whether or not he was going to accept Jesus as his firstborn son and his rightful heir.

But Where does Mary fit into all of this?

We know she sang a nice song about Justice and the fulfillment of prophecy. We know that she was a virgin Mother of a miracle baby...

But she didn't really come from anywhere.

and this blew me away when I realized it.

Mary is that single, homeless, teenage mother.

That's it. Had Joseph followed his original plan, and had he become the first person in history to reject Jesus, She was just a girl who would have been on the streets, pregnant, and soon with child.

We don't know for certain if she was of any lineage, or any genealogy.

She represented all of humanity in the fact that she was literally just dependent on grace.

She was nothing, had Joseph rejected her.

She was potentially one of the most marginalized people in all of society, and the fate of the world rested on *her* being *chosen*. The only way that Jesus could be born into the house of David is if Joseph accepted Him as his own son.

She was alone and she needed a home.

Just like so many in our city.

And Courage Church will always work to bring justice to people, it's one of the greatest reflections of the gospel and of our maker, but we can only do what we can with what we have. And sometimes we may fall short in giving justice, but we must never, ever fall short in giving Jesus.

Peter says in his first epistle (1 Peter 2:5) that "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"

We are A spiritual HOUSE. A bunch of tiny, let down, sinful people in our tiny jacked up little worlds that come together in an incredible story...

A FAMILY that God is in the midst of every day and when You and I come together, like bricks as Peter describes... We become something so much more powerful than even justice on its own can ever be.

We become a home.

A place where everyone belongs. A place where everyone is family. A home where there is no racial or social status or division.

A home where it's easy to see that your story is no different than that of the girls at the shelter...

Your story is no different than Joseph's story... at the end of the day the question is Do you accept Jesus? or do you reject Him?

Your story is no different than Mary's story... You are completely dependent on grace, yet you carry in you the hope of the world.

Your story is no different from the poor Israelite families story, who had lost everything because of bad decisions, but on the year of jubilee you get it all back.

You know, genealogies can be very difficult to study. There are a lot of questions that arise about who was actually whose father, and what any of it meant. But Matthew, in a mysterious, beautiful way, basically says you can throw all that away...

He says yes the names on that list are so jacked up, but they represent a grace that is far greater than them.

and then watch what he does.

Essentially He says without saying, forget what you think you know about the timeline and all the confusion and all its corruption!

Forget that half of the names you can't pronounce.
Forget it all. And focus here:

Because I am trying to tell you about something so much bigger.

Then he says something that doesn't seem to add anything to the narrative.

He says there were 14 generations between Abraham and David,
and 14 generations between David and the exile,
and 14 generations between the exile and Jesus.

What is 14 plus 14 plus 14?

$$\mathbf{14+14+14 =}$$
$$\mathbf{7+7+7+7+7+7}$$

It is six sets of 7 generations. And then Jesus' birth, and the birth of the seventh set of seven generations.

What Matthew is saying through this genealogy is that Jesus is our sabbath day... He is Our rest.

Jesus is the sabbath year... You can depend on Jesus. You can rely on Jesus.

Jesus is the year of jubilee.

Every slave set free, every debt cleared, every piece of land returned to its original owner.

He is here to restore everything.

And that should change the way we live. It should change the way we do community.

Because Jesus is saying that in me, you can have it all back.

You don't have to spend Christmas alone. God is with us.

He is Emmanuel.
He is our jubilee.

And here is the takeaway from all of this:

As I studied the year of jubilee I realized something incredible. What the Lord commanded of his people this year was *so* unbelievable, that many scholars and historians find it incredibly hard to believe that the Israelites actually did what the Lord commanded.

In fact, I have not found one trusted source who has studied the year of Jubilee who will say that they believe that it actually happened.

They all will tell you that it was 100% what God commanded the Israelites to do.

They all will tell you that it is exactly what they should have done.

But nobody thinks that they actually went through with it.

It is just too generous.

It is easier for these guys who study the bible all day long every single day, to believe that a 14 year old virgin was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, that

Jesus lived a sinless life, and that after He was brutally murdered and laid in a tomb for three days, He resurrected... and ascended into heaven...

it is easier for them to believe all of that, than to believe in the goodness of humanity enough to think that it would even be possible that someone would restore another person in such a generous way.

That someone would demonstrate their love *and obedience* in such outrageous way. It would have taken so much effort!

To forgive everything? Clear Every debt? Free every slave? Give back the land that you rightfully acquired to the person you got it from?

Do you realize the implication of that? Do you realize what that would have meant for their society?

It would have meant that nobody got so rich at the expense of the poor. It would have meant that it was literally impossible to be born into total poverty because your family at least had what it had inherited whether you blew it along the way or not. If you were once a slave, you were no longer a slave. You are free!

So radical, many people believed that there is just no way that they actually did that. And this completely convicted me.

Because I don't believe that they did it either.

But it is what the bible tells us to do.

So let me leave you with this question, as we end this series and we prepare to enter into the most generous week of the entire year...

What are we doing that will read that way in history?

How is Courage Church, in Detroit, MI living in such a way that when we are all dead and gone and time continues on without us, the stories people tell about us will just seem so wild. So outlandish. So hard to believe because NOBODY ACTUALLY LOVES LIKE THAT.

I want people to say "those are great stories but they are just myths. They are fairy tales. Nobody really does that.

What is it going to take?

What kind of life will it take living, to make history record our facts as if they are fiction.

The apostle John says that that you can tell Christ's followers by their love one for another. That's it. It's love.

Love is what separates us. And love should cause us to do some unbelievable things for each other. For our community.

It should change the way we care for each other, and carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and help each other through disappointments,

and it should change the way we accept each other.

Because God is with us in all of this.

Let us live according to Emmanuel.

Emmanuel is a reminder that God always keeps his promises.

Emmanuel is a reminder that God always shows up, that He is in our midst, and that He changed everything.

QUESTION & ANSWER:

Q: is everyone's sabbath year the same? So if I start working in 2003, and you start in 2005, is my sabbath year 2010, yours 2012 or both in 2010?

A: You can read about it in Leviticus 25, but essentially what happened was God said to the Israelites "when you come into the land I have given you... The land shall keep a sabbath." So the way I have always understood it (I am not 100 percent though) is that from the time they all arrived, together, the cycle began.

How that applies to you today may vary... For me the primary takeaway from the sabbath year is, "do you trust God, truly? With everything?"

Simple, but in the new covenant, that is how I personally apply it.

Q: Do you think that Luke's genealogy pertains to Mary & not Joseph? It would resolve some apparent contradictions between Matthew and Luke's genealogies, but wouldn't that also mean that Jesus was physically of the line of David through Mary?

That's a great question, one that I wish I had mentioned in the sermon, and one that we don't know for certain the answer to. It would make sense that the genealogy would belong to Mary because they are the same until we get to King David, and then the genealogy in Matthew continues through David's son Solomon (the King) and Luke's genealogy continues through David's son Nathan. However, it is hard to say for sure because even Luke's genealogy begins by saying (Luke 3:23) Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli... Luke's genealogy is listed in the more traditional way, only listing the Father and son, and actually takes it all the way back to Adam.

The other question that arises in Luke comes from Luke 2:4-5, when it says that Joseph goes to Galilee to register, because HE was of the house and lineage of David. It said that he went to be registered with Mary, who he was engaged to, who was pregnant, and it was during that trip that she gave birth to Jesus. The way this is written seems to emphasize that he needed to be registered, not her, and that she was marrying into the family.

Matthew in general follows the story of the birth of Jesus from the perspective of Joseph, while Luke takes it more from Mary's perspective, also adding more weight to the possibility that the genealogy in Luke

belongs to Mary. (ie - in Luke, we read about Mary's encounter with her cousin, Elizabeth, about John the baptist leaping in Elizabeths womb when he is in the presence of the Christ living in a pregnant Mary. It also records Mary's song the magnificat, and the angel of the Lord visits Mary in Lukes account, where Matthew records when the angel visited Joseph, and the battle that Joseph had internally to keep Mary as his wife after everything that had happened. Romans 1:3 also says that Jesus descended from David "according to the flesh" which many also use as evidence that Mary was also a descendant.

In this message, I should have made this more clear, because it is very possible that Mary was also of the line of David, but we know without a doubt that Joseph was, and because this study is on the genealogy in Matthew, we tried to look at it from the perspective of whom Matthew was writing to. Matthew was written to the Jews, to win the Jews to Jesus, and he knew that in that culture, if the Father, adopted or not, was not of the family line, they would never have accepted him as the savior.

So at the end of the day, Mary needed Joseph to not leave her alone on Christmas, and the Jews needed Joseph to accept Mary if they were going to accept Jesus. It can be said with certainty that Joseph was of the family line of David, and in the case that the genealogy in Luke does belong to Mary, it would reconcile some complicated issues between the two genealogies and would have fulfilled the prophecies with or without Joseph but it would not change the fact to that the Jewish culture whom Matthew was writing to win to Christ, Joseph was a key to this story.