

Read also Ruth 2:10-13, 4:13-17; 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 11-13; 2 Kings 18:5-6, 13, 19:14, 20; 2 Kings 22:1-2, 8; 23:1-3

My great grandfather began a book. Though he began it about 100 years ago, it's still a work in progress. My dad owns the book now, and in a few years, it will be passed to me, with the expectation that I will do my part to record the generations.

The book is handwritten in beautiful Old English scroll, It records the genealogy of my father's ancestors back to the 1600s. My great grandfather could not go back any further because the church with the family records located in Sponheim, Germany was destroyed by Napoleon. Back then, churches kept records of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths.

Historically, recordkeeping has been very important to the Judeo-Christian faith. Scripture lists numerous genealogies. Jesus' genealogy is recorded by both Luke and Matthew. If you have read the genealogies, (and they are worth reading!), you will notice they vary somewhat. While some scholars believe that Luke recorded Jesus' genealogy through Mary's line, it is more likely that both genealogies are of Joseph's family. Lineage was always reckoned through the male line in Jewish culture.<sup>1</sup>

Matthew records Jesus' lineage through King David's son Solomon, while Luke records Jesus' lineage through David's son Nathan. Luke's genealogy seems to trace Jesus' biological descent, whereas Matthew, who has concern for the kingly line, traces Jesus' legal descent. Today we shall look at Matthew's genealogy. You heard it read earlier.

What's so important about a list of names? Oftentimes in genealogies other information is available. For instance, my great-great grandfather came to America in the 1850s. He was a confectioner and opened a candy store in Philadelphia. He died young and his son took over the support of the family at age 12. I know that from reading other family letters and journals he kept.

Each name listed in the genealogy represents a story about Jesus' relatives. We can look them up at other places in the Bible, and often in other historical writings. I will highlight four men:

- **The first man is Boaz**, a Jew who married Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi. You know the story. Naomi was from Bethlehem, but due to a famine, the family moved to Moab then her husband and sons died in rapid succession. Devastated, she returned to Israel where eventually Ruth met Boaz. READ RUTH 2:10-13, 4:13-17 (KATHERINE LIDDLE)
- Next, we read the name of **King David**. Here's how he was chosen to be king. READ 1 SAM 16:1b, 6-7, 11-13 (DARRELL INGRAM)
- **Hezekiah** is the third man. He reigned at a time of major political threats. READ 2 KINGS 18:5-6, 13; 19:14, 20 (SCOTT HARTLESS)
- Finally, **Josiah** ruled at a time when Israel had lost sight of God and turned instead to the idols of surrounding nations. Rd 2 KG 22:1-2,8; 23:1-3 (Steve)

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<sup>1</sup>All notes on genealogy from Donald Alfred Hagner, "Matthew 1-13," *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A. Hubbard Bruce M. Metzger, and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 8-9.

Four good men; all were admirable in God's eyes. What made them special? How does God define a good man?

God's definition of a good man is not necessarily gender specific! So ladies don't go to sleep! We also can learn from these men. Let's begin.

Naomi experienced huge, unanticipated losses. Life is like that sometimes; such events are not uncommon. I've known several families who have had similar tragedies. So this story is not farfetched.

Yet Boaz' story teaches us that no suffering is too far from God or too deep for God to handle. God reached out to overturn Naomi's emptiness and sorrow. And the way God works is in and through you and me.

As Boaz lived out his faith, God was at work; graciously loving and providing for Naomi and Ruth.

As Boaz acted generously toward them, he showed God's great faithfulness and kindness. As Boaz responded to their needs, he demonstrated God had not abandoned them.

The way God works is through you and me.

Now, there was another man in the story who was legally obligated to help Naomi, according to Jewish law. But that man shirked his responsibility. He said, "I can't do it without hurting my own inheritance." And he did nothing.

So we always have the say to live out our faith. Or not.

For Boaz to take on Ruth and Naomi, it looked like all burden and no gain. But he did it anyway. Boaz was God's idea of a good man.

He expressed God's kindness, grace, favor, and loyalty. And the most wonderful blessing happened. When Ruth and Boaz gave Naomi a grandson, the neighbors said, "God has restored life to you. God has given you a better gift than seven sons!"

Boaz gave hope not only to Naomi and Ruth, but to the whole town. In God's eyes, that's a good man.

King David was an unlikely candidate for God to use. He was only a shepherd. Humble beginnings. But God doesn't care about that. God was looking for a man whose heart was right.

Can you imagine interviewing someone for a job and saying, "I'm going to look at the heart?" What does that mean? What's a "right heart" in God's eyes?

God doesn't say exactly; so we'll have to read between the lines:

As a shepherd, when a lion attacked, David went after it and struck it down to save the lamb, believing God would give him victory. And God did. (1 Sam 17:34-37)

When he attacked Goliath, David did it to protect God's honor. David defended Israel, shouting, "God will deliver you into my hand!" And God did. (17:45-47)

David believed God honors faith. David believed that God helps those who depend on God. It's not "God helps those who help themselves." Men, how dependent are you on God? God will help you much more than you can imagine.

In addition, even though David was king, he was willing to take off his crown to worship God, in a citywide parade, no less! Though king, he remained humble.

David was a good man in God's eyes, even though David had many flaws. When he failed, he turned back to God and started over. God honored his honesty.

King Hezekiah was honest in a different way. A wartime king, he had a huge task of stabilizing his people and resisting the enemy. His was a deep military and political crisis.

What to do? He didn't know. But he knew who to go to. He went to God.

He carried a threat letter from the Assyrian king right into the temple, got down on his knees, and laid it out before God. He didn't say some benign prayer; he prayed like this: "This is a day of distress, of rebuke, of disgrace. We are like a woman in labor who has no strength to deliver the baby. God save us!"

And God did. God acted immediately.

According to Scripture Hezekiah turned to God in prayer numerous times. Every time God listened. God loves it when we pray. Hezekiah was a good man. A good man does not have to carry everything on his own shoulders but turns to God.

Are you opening the door to God's help through prayer?

Another good man in God's eyes was Josiah. He had vision for Israel's heritage. He knew godly heritage is only sustained through correct worship and understanding of Scripture. So he repaired the temple facility that the people had sorely neglected. He stopped the leaks and fixed the torn carpet. Then he taught the people God's Word, which had essentially been folded up and put away.

A Christian heritage does not automatically happen. It didn't happen then and it won't automatically happen now.

A good man in God's eyes has vision to move faith forward. A good man in God's eyes steps up and does something about it.

This is the heritage of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is His human family tree. What a wonderful heritage. Are you willing to be in that long line of good men to continue that heritage?

If so, God will honor you. If so, God will bless this church.

God is already blessing us. Let us continue to be generous beyond what is required; let us be courageous to do the work; let us commit ourselves to rebuilding this church; let us read and know the Bible, and let us always pray.

AMEN