

*Read also Acts 17:26-27a, Revelation 21:23-22:3*

Some of you are into genealogies. My great-grandfather began a book tracing the family history which my father is now responsible for. My cousin traces the other family history on my mother's side. My aunt on my paternal grandmother's side actually wrote and published a book on the Kemper family history.

Those of you who do genealogy know that as you go back it becomes evident that it's less about individuals and more about branches of the family and how and where they grew.

Knowing that Brenda Everett, a member here, is into genealogy, and enthusiastic about it, I called her. She said studying family history gives us a connection with where we came from; linking us with all those people who brought us here; their problems, trials and victories – you realize part of them survived to get you here.

Brenda says it's not just personal connection but a sense of community. You have a place and it is a distinct, important little piece. And, you begin to realize you are going to be a part of that for someone else.

Even adoptive or foster families are important links because someone committed to taking you in; raising you. They wanted to include you.

So genealogy brings history alive. Its stories, even from long ago, impact you. Such is the Bible. God gives us that connection. It's a spiritual heritage.

Genealogies are included in the Bible from Genesis, the first book. It explains the beginning of God's family; a family that went through significant events just so you can be here. A non-geographic nation grew out of that original family of Noah. – a God-established structure of marriage, the relationships of parents and children, and the broader network of the extended family, eventually leading to national identity.

You are a part of that history. First Presbyterian Church Duncanville is a part. Together we have a piece of it. So this morning we look at one of those genealogies.

Genesis 9 says: "The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth." (18-19)

Genesis 10 repeats: "This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood." (v.1)

Whenever you see repetition in Scripture, take note. God wants you to see something. God just saved these people and out of them fruitfulness will come.

The Bible is full of genealogies. What do you think God wants you to see?

- You see the history of God's divine dream. God underwrites not only the rhythm of the day and seasons, but ensures fruitfulness so that families become nations, and nations survive.
- God's intention is that nations "seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:27a). This encourages you to walk in faith.
- You see a unified story, as we shall see when we look at maps;
- As God was involved in their history, God is involved in your history;

Secondly, we notice people do not live isolated lives. People form networks, clans, and nations. When people came to this nation, communities, cities, and colonies formed. Nations operate as a collective body who either honors God or does not honor God. Such is it across not only centuries, but today.

The first son this passage mentions is Japheth. READ Genesis 10:2-5

You might say, wait a minute, they did not have languages yet. Remember, this is the story of the development of nations. It is not a linear document, and perhaps is meant to be read alongside Genesis 11, which interjects how languages began to develop.

Japheth's people settled north and northwest of biblical Israel, in the general area of Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus. They became seafarers and developed into the coastland people.

Next is middle son Ham. READ Genesis 10:6-19

Ham's people are the descendants who lived south and southwest of biblical Israel, in the areas of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Libya. We are given interesting details here about a man named Nimrod— who was the first hero, building a great nation. He moved over a vast area. The Philistines came from this group. Remember Goliath, the giant whom David fought? He was a Philistine.

Genealogy points to history and connection, and we will see later how God works with these nations.

Next is Shem. READ Genesis 10:21-31

His descendants represent the nations east of biblical Israel, in the modern-day countries of Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The writer is most interested in this area as it is the origin of the Israelites. His descendants include the Assyrians in Mesopotamia. Our own Youth Pastor Steve Netniss is Assyrian.

Genesis lists these genealogies. Go to 1 Chronicles 1. Here's the genealogy again.

Take a look at this genealogy. SEE Luke 3:23-38. Do you see the connection with Jesus?

God is building a nation of people. That nation continues. You are a part; you are connected.

After Jesus' death and resurrection the disciples carried the Good News to where? *To all nations*. Why? God desires that nations "seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:27a).

Within all nations, then, is a non-geographic nation; the people of God which God has sovereignly planned. That plan contains the best news possible – which Noah experienced when he and his family were saved from death. God has begun a new creation.

Biblical genealogies point to exactly that. History links you to those people and to God's intent that you should be a part. They sacrificed so you could be here.

Are you letting your identity show, and inviting others into the family? What is your identifier? It costs to be a part of the growth of God's nation. But YOU are the way, the link, for those who come after you.

Scripture says, *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD* (Ps. 33:12). According to Christianity Today about 75-76% of adult Americans claim to be Christians.<sup>1</sup> That is a decline of 12% since 1990.<sup>2</sup>

That begs the question, *how is your faith impacting our culture?* Is our culture reflective of our faith? Are others who come into this country introduced lovingly to Jesus Christ? What do our lifestyles and expenditures show that we value?

The Barna Group researches this sort of thing. Their nationwide studies show barriers to our maximizing a connection with God. According to Barna, "less than one in five self-identified Christians claim to be totally committed to investing in their own spiritual development." Secondly, while most Christians state that they confess their sins to God and ask forgiveness, "few are serious about abandoning the lure of sin and handing total control of their life to God." Thirdly, while four out of ten Christians have participated in attending worship services, praying, or reading the Bible, less than one in ten have talked about their faith, fasted, or practiced spiritual disciplines regularly. Fourthly, only one out of five Christians believes that spiritual maturity requires a vital connection to a community of faith.<sup>3</sup>

Will we be a generation that is proud to stand before God? Will we endure to hear "well done, good and faithful servant?"

Jesus talked about the nation of God. He said, "This family of God began as a mustard seed. But when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air make nests in its branches" (Mat. 13:31). Are you part of that growth process, becoming fruitful because you are willing to commit to God's vision for His nation?

---

<sup>1</sup>"Christianity Today - General Statistics and Facts of Christianity," <http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.htm>, accessed 11/4/2011.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce Feiler, "Where Have All the Christians Gone?," <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2009/09/25/>, accessed 11/10/11.

<sup>3</sup>The Barna Group, "Self-Described Christians Dominate America but Wrestle with Four Aspects of Spiritual Depth," September 13, 2011, <http://www.barna.org/>, accessed 11/10/11.

To do so takes connection to these people in the Bible, and commitment to Christ. If we are not doing that, we entirely miss the mission of our family, our family history, and what we are here for. Are you taking pride in your family, the one God is building?

AMEN