**Calvary Fellowship 2.20.2022 Matthew 1:1-25 “Trophies of God’s Grace”**

* **So if U aren’t aware, I was out the last 2 Sundays b/c my wife & I were celebrating 25 years of holy matrimony**
* It was very exciting - we went to Naples for a few days & stayed in this really nice hotel on the beach & I had a plan b/c I had something to prove
* I had this ring that I planned on giving to my wife for our 25th anniversary that is way nicer than the ring I gave her when we got engaged
* I was in college & I took a 2nd job doing construction so save up some money to buy the ring for her - it wasn’t great, but it was the best I could do
* The other thing is that the way I proposed wasn’t great - I proposed at her house in front of her family - mostly b/c a friend of mine almost spilled the beans that I was going to ask her, so I felt like I had to seize the moment
* And Carey wasn’t too thrilled about being asked in her house in front of her family b/c she didn’t like her home… or her family for that matter
* **So I had a plan I designed the ring w/ some help from a friend & I called another friend in NC to make the ring for me**
* Then I booked a reservation at the restaurant that was voted the most romantic restaurant in Naples - then the day before I told Carey I was going for a walk
* But I really walked to the restaurant & spoke to the manager & told her what I was doing, so we picked the perfect table that was closest to the beach
* She let the wait staff know that we were celebrating our 25th anniversary
* So we get to the restaurant & have dinner & it’s raining, so we can’t go on the beach, which is where I planned to ask her to marry me again
* So I said, “I’m sorry it’s raining. I had planned for us to walk on the beach after dinner.” - she says, “Bob, don’t worry about it. This whole trip has been perfect & it certainly makes up for when U proposed to me in my house.”
* So I said, “Well, speaking of that…” - and I got down on 1 knee & said, “Carey, I love U w/ all my heart. Will U marry me for another 25 years.”
* My heart was ready to beat out of my chest b/c I didn’t want to mess this 1 up
* And I wanted her to have an amazing story to tell
* And when I opened the box & she saw the ring, “She gasped” (That’s a good sign) - then she said, “Yes absolutely!” (That’s better)
* And then she said, “Is that diamond real?” (And that was the ringer) **(pic)**
* **“Yes it’s real & it costs more than my car so don’t lose it.”**
* **I tell U this for 2 reasons - 1st, b/c I hope it inspires the guys to step up their game & 2nd b/c we’re about to embark on another amazing story**
* **The Gospel of Matthew holds a special place in my heart for 2 reasons:**
* 1st - it was the 1st book of the Bible that I ready after becoming a Christian
* 2nd - it’s the 1st book of the Bible I taught when I started Calvary
* Unfortunately, I did a terrible job 22 years ago - so I’m here to do it right
* **But Matthew has a story to tell & he has a plan & something to prove**
* Matthew’s goal & theme throughout this book is the prove that Jesus is the long awaited Jewish Messiah & he will emphasize that over & over again
* Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience, so he’s going to give special emphasis to prophecy that Jesus fulfills, Jewish feasts, the miracles of Jesus & the words of Jesus like the Sermon on the mount & his private discourse in Matt. 24-25
* B/c Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience, Matthew’s Gospel is the only 1 that was originally written in Hebrew & later translated into Greek
* **And that’s why we’re calling this series, “The Story” - b/c I firmly believe if U learn His story, it will change yours**
* And everyone wants to live a better story - we want today to be better than yesterday - we want a better future for ourselves & those we love
* And Matthew is going to show us how that’s possible through Jesus’ life
* The theme of Matthew is found in Matthew 16, when Jesus asks His disciples who people say He is - they give a bunch of different answers
* “‘But what about you?’” he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:15-16)
* **So where do U start in sharing the life of the Messiah? What about starting at Christmas? That won’t work for a Jewish audience**
* Instead, we have to start 42 generations before Christmas to prove that Jesus is from the right Jewish tribe to even be in contention to be the Messiah…

**———(v. 1-6)———**

* **If anyone is going to clam to be the Messiah, the 1st order of business is to show he’s Jewish - a son of Abraham - & descended from King David**
* If he isn’t descended from the family of David, he is out of the running b/c in 2 Sam. 7, God promises David that the Messiah would come from his family
* So that’s where we begin - then we get to Isaac, the son of Abraham & then Jacob & his sons - this is also important b/c the Messiah had to come from the tribe of Judah - that’s spoken of in Genesis 49
* “The scepter shall not leave Judah; he’ll keep a firm grip on the command staff until the ultimate ruler comes and the nations obey him.” (Genesis 49:10)
* **Then we have something very unusual - 4 women are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus - that’s not common at all**
* But there’s a reason for this - Jesus’ birth came about through unusual circumstances - we accept the virgin birth b/c we’ve heard it so many times
* But it was not a normal thing - it caused some people to stumble & not believe
* Even though it was prophesied by Isaiah
* But Matthew is showing us that even Biblical heroes had children born through strange circumstances & their families weren’t entirely squeaky clean
* **So Judah (a Biblical hero) gives birth to twins through Tamar - Matthew mentions this b/c this story was a scandal when it happened**
* Tamar & her story is worthy of a daytime soap opera b/c it has all of the elements - affairs, incest, the guilty party calling for murder of the innocent 1
* **The story is found in Gen. 38 & here’s what happened: Judah has 3 sons:**
* Er, Onan & Shelah/ Tamar married Er, but he died, so according to Jewish custom, Onan married her so their son could carry on his brother’s name
* But he didn’t want to carry on his brother’s name, so he died
* Judah starts thinking, “2 sons died, what’s the common denominator?”
* So he won’t give Shelah to marry Tamar b/c Tamar is 0-2 w/ husbands
* So he sends Tamar home to wait for Shelah to be old enough
* **Couple of things U need to know - Tamar was probably 16 years old**
* In that culture, most people got married right after they hit puberty
* The other thing is that Shelah is probably 11 or 12 - so Tamar is led to believe that she will just be waiting for a year or 2 until Shelah is old enough
* Then Judah stalls on giving Shelah, so she takes matters into her own hands
* “When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep," she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, "Come now, let me sleep with you." "And what will you give me to sleep with you?" she asked. "I'll send you a young goat from my flock," he said. "Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?" she asked. He said, "What pledge should I give you?" "Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand," she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again.” (Genesis 38:13-18)
* **What is the staff, cord & seal?**  It was like asking for his driver’s lic., SS #, & a major CC - The staff was his position & the seal was his identity
* **Why ask for this? She knew what would happen next**
* “About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant." Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!" As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah.” (Gen. 38:24-26)
* This situation would have made her a notorious woman in Israel forever
* But God was able to take something horrible & turn it into a literal blessing
* “Through the offspring the LORD gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.” (Ruth 4:12)
* **What’s God showing us here? That He has the ability to turn a messy family situation into a blessing b/c there are no squeaky clean families**
* Who would have thought the name of the girl who slept w/ her dad-in-law would become the name of blessing for woman having kids?
* Everyone has stuff they aren’t proud of, yet God has the ability to turn our weaknesses into our strengths & turn past failures into future blessings
* **Woman #2 is named Rahab - now friends, Rahab was not a model citizen**
* She was a prostitute living in the city of Jericho
* The word “harlot” in Hebrew can also mean “innkeeper”, so it’s possible that she was running a hotel that had other activities going on in the evening
* **Now her story changes when she’s faced w/ a choice**
* To believe what she’s heard about God or ignore that & turn away God’s ambassadors to the future she could have
* She a woman w/ a shady past, but now her name is synonymous w/ faith
* “Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, ‘Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.’ So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, ‘Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.’ Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, ‘Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.’ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)” (Joshua 2:1-6)
* Rahab’s life began to change when she had a choice to make - stay out of it or get involved in what God was doing
* **Listen - there are 2 ways U can live your life - U can watch life happen to U or U jump in & be part of the work that God is doing**
* U may not realize it, but God can use anything in your life as long as you’re open - God used Rahab’s home - that was the game changer for her
* We make all kinds of excuses as to why God can’t use us & things can’t change - God has different plans
* **Woman #3 is named Ruth - Ruth is a real problem b/c Ruth wasn’t even Jewish - she was from the neighboring country of Moab**
* Here’s what U have to understand about Ruth - she was from Moab
* Moab was the hood - I’ve been to Moab, it’s still the hood, nothing has changed
* “Moab is My washpot.” (Psalm 108:9)
* Washpot is a nice way of saying “toilet” - “Moab is a gas station bathroom.”
* To add this woman to the genealogy of Jesus is to go out of your way to say that Jesus is someone who includes outsiders
* The reason Joseph & Mary have to go to Bethlehem to be counted in the census is b/c of ruth & her husband Boaz - that was his hometown
* Ruth is in the family tree b/c she chose to believe when there was no reason to
* Her sister-in-law went back to her family when Naomi, her mother-in-law told her to leave so that she could start a new life - but Ruth decided to stay
* “But Ruth said: ‘Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.” (Ruth 1:16-17)
* **I read this passage at every wedding I officiate b/c it encapsulates the commitment that a man & woman make to each other**
* She’s in the genealogy of Jesus b/c she defines what it means to trust God & be faithful & resolute when life hasn’t given U 1 reason to believe
* Sometimes for our lives to change, all we need to do is make 1 good decision & stick to that 1 decision until it pans out
* **Woman #4 is probably the most scandalous - it’s so bad, Matthew won’t even write her name - he just says, “Her who had been the wife of Uriah”**
* U know how it works - your kids do something really bad & say, “Honey, look what your son has done!” - Or someone who aggravates U & U say, “What’s his name?” - Her name is Bathsheba & her story is found in 2 Sam. 11
* She has an affair w/ king David - king David has Bathsheba’s husband killed
* And everyone found out about it - yet there she is, Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon in the genealogy of Jesus
* Think about this - the woman who committed adultery becomes the teacher for Jews & Christians on what to look for in a wife
* “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him.” (Prov. 31:1)
* Lemuel = Dedicated to God - it’s a pet name Bathsheba had for Solomon
* What’s Proverbs 31 about? What kind of woman to look for in a wife
* **There’s 1 more scandalous name that written & this is a deep cut, so don’t start fading on me now**
* “Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.” (Matthew 1:11-12)
* Jeconiah was the 2nd to last king of Judah & he only reigned for 3 months
* He was so bad as a king that God pronounces a curse on him
* “‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear—the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans’…Thus says the Lord: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’” (Jeremiah 22:24-25; 30)
* Now, some would read this & think, “Well, God just shot Himself in the foot b/c the Messiah has to come through David, but the royal line is cursed.”
* Well, that’s what Matthew wants U to think about
* **Then U realize that Joseph is in the royal line & if Jesus were the physical son of Joseph, He would have inherited the blood curse as well**
* But…as the oldest step-son of Joseph, Jesus inherits the right to the throne w/o the curse that’s associated w/ it
* So the only way for the Messiah to come into the world & have a right to the throne is through a virgin birth
* And that’s what brings us to the story of Jesus that we look at every Christmas

**———(v. 18-25)———**

**#1 - Jesus Included People who Society Excluded**

* **This list of people is a testament to the fact that God uses imperfect, messed up, & slightly unstable people todo amazing things through**
* But somehow we get this idea that God only uses perfect people to do great thing through - God doesn’t use perfect people - He uses willing people
* **So 5 years ago, I bought tickets for my 2 oldest kids & I to see Coldplay**
* Livi was too young & my wife hates Coldplay (no one’s perfect)
* **But we almost didn’t go b/c my son wasn’t sure if he wanted to go**
* He wanted to go, but then he said no when he would out the show is at 8pm
* He said, “Dad, I’m sorry, but I can’t go. The concert is too late & U know what happens when I stay up too late. I go negative.”
* **Now, Xander has always been the happiest, most positive kid in the world, but when he was younger & it got late, he’d go negative**
* 1 night we were going to watch a show & the kids were taking a long time to get ready for bed & they needed to be ready for bed before they could watch it
* He says, “It’s never going to work out. I’m never going to see the show b/c I’ll never get ready on time. I shouldn’t even be part of this family.”
* So I say, “Xander, what’s happening? You’re not negative. Let’s be positive.”
* He says, “OK. I’m positive things aren’t going to work out.”
* So Xander says he can’t go & he starts to cry b/c he says, “Dad, Coldplay is my favorite band & I’m not going to be able to see them b/c I’ll go negative.”
* I said, “Buddy, the show is 8 months from now & you’ll be 8 years old when the concert happens. But U can also make a decision to let God work in your life.”
* He agreed & the result was amazing ——video——
* **That night was 1 of the best nights of our lives together, but it almost didn’t happen b/c of something we do to ourselves**
* We make all of the excuses why it can’t happen - why we can’t be used by God
* Why God works in other people’s live, but not in ours - stop it
* “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.” (James 5:17)
* **Let me tell U a little secret - Elijah wasn’t the reason it stopped raining & he wasn’t the reason it started raining - it was God**
* Too many people can’t believe God for greater things b/c they think it’s about them - it’s not about U - God wants to work in your life b/c He loves U
* “Well, I don’t understand why He loves me?” - I don’t understand that either
* Most people are generally unimpressive - but the fact remains that U are the object of His love - So receive it & ask like it
* **The worst people to buy gives for are people who won’t receive the gift - “Oh, U spent too much” - “Oh, U shouldn’t have”**
* “Oh, this isn’t right. There are people starving in the world” - Oh, shut up already & accept the gift gracious - someone loves U & wants to express their love to U - stop making it harder than it needs to be
* If U want God to work in your life, that’s the 1st step - acknowledge that God wants to work in U & then look for Him at work & jump in…

**#2 - Jesus had Godly Parents who Trusted God**

* **We don’t pay enough attention to Joseph - we focus on Jesus & that’s good & then our Catholic friends worship Mary which makes Protestants uncomfortable, so we try to downplay her to even things out**
* But here’s what I want U to know - Joseph & Mary were godly people
* Listen, God the Father had the ability to choose what family his son was born into - and Her didn’t choose a rich family or an influential family
* Instead, he chose 2 godly people who were willing to be misunderstood for the sake of doing God’s will & bringing the Messiah into the world
* Listen, the greatest gift U can give your kids isn’t a thing - it’s a faith that will help them know God & navigate the storms of life
* I talk to parents who say, “Well, I’m letting my kids figure out their own way when it comes to faith. I’m not pushing it on them.”
* That is the lamest answer I’ve ever heard - listen, U don’t apply that logic to any other area of life - U wouldn’t even do that w/ a sports team - why?
* B/c that’s something a father passes on to his kids & faith is the same way only to a much greater degree
* If U don’t want to pass your faith to your kids, it’s just a sign that your faith isn’t doesn’t mean enough to U to pass on
* **So here’s the solution: have faith that’s worth passing to your kids**
* Have a faith that’s so integral to your life, that your kids would have no idea how to navigate life w/o God who loves them & wants to lead & direct them

**#3 - Jesus Became a Misfit to Save Misfits**

* **The Gospel of Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience**
* And every Jewish person reading this would be freaking out - why?
* B/c there is a problem surrounding Jesus’ birth - In a Jewish world, your family history, your genealogy meant everything
* So to have a problem w/ your birth or there a bizarre circumstance surrounding your birth, meant a stigma you’d carry your whole life
* These people were called “Mamzers” = Illegitimate
* This title followed Jesus b/c His birth was not normal to say the least
* “Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?” Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of Maryand the brother of James, Joseph,Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.” (Mark 6:1-3)
* **In the Jewish world, U were called “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the son of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”**
* We think in terms of my individual name, but in the East, people’s names were associated w/ their father
* So you were Simon Ben-Jonah = that was Simon Peter’s name
* He was Simon the son of Jonah - But what did they call Jesus?
* To call someone “the son of” & add his mom’s name was an insult
* It meant he had no father to attach him to b/c he was a mamzer
* A mamzer is a strong word in Hebrew - it’s a very derogatory word that means illegitimate, but it carries all kinds of other connotations
* That word only appears twice in the Bible & it’s strong
* “One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 23:2)
* By the way, this is why there was no room at the inn - that word “inn” is “Kataluma” or guest room - Joseph’s family wants nothing to do w/ this child
* It has nothing to do w/ occupancy - you’re trying to tell me there’s a woman that’s 9 months pregnant & you’re not going to make room
* When my wife was pregnant, she could ask anything of anyone & they’d give it to her - she once asked me to to go Burger King & buy her a Whopper
* Then go to McDonald’s & buy her fries & then go to Wendy’s & buy her a Frosty
* And do U know what I did? I got it for her b/c U don’t refuse pregnant woman
* So of a family member of yours who was pregnant asked to stay at your house, would U let them? Of course!
* **Now take into consideration that hospitality in the East is everything**
* We have friends who live in the Middle East & you can knock on anyone’s door & if you have to use the restroom, they let you in - No questions
* U just point them in the right direction - Once you go, they’ll offer you tea, food, anything, b/c hospitality is such a high virtue in the east
* **So to a culture that views hospitality as the highest virtue, why would they say no to a woman who is 9 months pregnant?**
* It was b/c the baby that she is carrying is a mamzer & Joseph’s family believed that this child would shame their family forever
* So instead, they ended up in a cave while the rest of the family was in the house, b/c they couldn’t make room for the savior of the world
* But Joseph makes the choice to stay - I love Joseph so much - he has become 1 of my favorite Bible characters b/c I love his faithfulness to God & to Mary
* **And this is the moment that many of us struggle w/ b/c let’s be honest, we could easily talk ourselves into leaving & give all the reasons why**
* Joseph stays knowing it’s difficult, but it’s what God wants him to do - listen, too often we opt for what’s easy & then look for the Bible to confirm it
* Listen - no 1 ever found joy or success in taking less responsibility
* Instead of praying for a lighter load, we need to be praying for a stronger back
* Sometimes doing what’s right is harder, but it always leads to greater blessing
* How do I know? B/c it’s 2,000 years later & 1/2 a world away & we’re talking about Joseph - he made a hard choice to stay & the world is better b/c of it
* An that Mamzer didn’t curse 10 generations - He blessed a 1,000 generations when He died for us & brought forgiveness & grace into our lives
* **So here’s the point - this isn’t the cast of characters you’d pick**
* We want people like us who don’t have all the drama & strange career choices
* But God purposely sent His son into the world through this family - why?
* In my brother Billy’s bedroom growing up, he had this shelf w/ all of his trophies
* My brother excelled at everything - Hockey, photography, drums - & every activity has several trophies to show for it – I would sit in his room when he wasn’t there & just stare at them & hope I could win a trophy someday
* B/c my room was different – there were no trophies - b/c I was the screw up
* I was the 1 who took an extra year to graduate High School
* But I learned something when I came to know Jesus 29 years ago - the 1st chapter of the Bible I ever read was this 1
* And I learned that in God’s eyes, I am a trophy – a trophy of God’s grace
* Someone God can display to the world revealing what He can do even when He has very little to work with - Guess what? You’re a trophy too
* We stand as monuments of God’s grace - b/c people can look at us & think, “If God could do something w/ them, He can do something w/ me.”