

Good morning. Good, everybody. It's good to see you all here today. Back in the summer, we were at my Grandma Green's house celebrating her 95th birthday. And we just got to talking about family and about family heritage and tradition and just some of her experiences in life.

And she brought out a book that I knew existed, but I had never seen with my own eyes. And it's this book of our family history on her side of the family. And my grandmother maiden name was Cooper Ryder, but she was also a Harbaugh on her mother's side. And so she brought out the Harbaugh history. This book was put together in 1953 by her cousin who spent a few years traveling across the country.

He was a teacher, and so during the summer months, he would spend time traveling across the country going and learning about our family's history. And he compiled it in this book. And so I spent some time just looking through it that afternoon, looking at the names, looking at the stories, and I knew that the Harbaugh name was somewhere in our family. And so I started looking. I'm wondering if maybe I see Jim and John Harbaugh's name in here.

And then I Googled it, and I was like, oh, well, none of them were born. And by 1953, but what about their dad, Jack? He was born. And so I started looking, and sure enough, Jack Harbaugh, like the Jack Harbaugh dad of John and Jim that would come along later, is somewhere in our family heritage. Which means.

Which means I am related to John and Jim Harbaugh somehow along the way. And I don't know about you, if you can kind of see the family resemblance here, maybe I don't see it either, but they're my cousins somewhere along there. Now, here are two things that I know are true. Number one, you are not as interested in this book as I am. Right?

It's like going over to somebody else's house and seeing pictures from their vacation. You're like, okay, well, that's nice, but it's not your story. Like, these names in here don't mean anything to you. It's not your family. It's not your lineage.

It's not your story. It's just a bunch of names and dates in a book. It's not very exciting reading material. The second thing that I know to be true is that in this book are names of people that I am incredibly proud of, that I get to be a part of their family tree. There are people who fought in the Revolutionary War that are in this book.

There are service records listed in here. There are people in this book who fought for the Union in the Civil War. There are men and women who took risks for their family. Some of them paid off, some of them didn't. But it moved us along our story.

There are men and women who sacrificed for their family, who were honest, hardworking people. There are names in this book that I am proud to be a part a branch, distant branch in their family tree. But I also know that in a book filled with this many names, there are some people in here that I may look at. And if I knew the, the full story, I'd probably say, eh, let's just kind of skip on to the next page in this book. There are people that I'm sure were murderers, were thieves.

We're crooks, we're adulterers. There are people, I imagine, who pursued dishonest gain, who took advantage of other people to get where they were going to go. I imagine in the pages of this book there are some family secrets that nobody talked about when they got together for Thanksgiving. There are some things in our family and the names of these names here and the stories of these names that probably just they tried to sweep underneath the rug. But that's family, right?

You have those things in your family just like I have them in my family, just like Jesus had them in his family. Which is why I've always been fascinated by our text for today. Matthew Chapter one. And in Matthew Chapter one we find the genealogy of Jesus. And most of us, if you've been a student of the Bible, if you've read the New Testament, most of us treat Matthew Chapter one the same way that we would treat it.

If I came up to you and I said, man, you have got to read this book. It is fascinating. You'd be like, I'll pass. Because there's a lot of names in here that don't mean anything to you. There are stories that are not your story.

And so we get to Matthew chapter one and we read all of these unfamiliar names and we don't know how to piece it together. We don't know what it all means. And so we just kind of pass right over it to get to the good stuff about Jesus birth. But I'm telling you, if you are in Christ, if you have given your life to Christ, one of the New Testament's favorite ways to identify who you are is you are in Christ. You have been adopted into God's family.

Which, like it or not, means that the names in Matthew chapter one, they are Part of Jesus family, and they're a part of your family, too. And in these 15 verses, there are names and there are stories that mean something. And some of the stories are good, some of them are bad, Some of them honestly are just downright ugly. But it's the story of Jesus family. And I think that it has something to teach us today.

And we're not going to look at the entire thing. I'm not going to read, although we do have kind of a creative way that we're going to go through through it through a video here in just a little bit. But there are two things for me every year that kind of mark the official beginning of Christmas for me personally. Number one is putting up the

Christmas tree with our family while watching Elf. That has been a family tradition for as long as I can remember.

In fact, last weekend when we put up the Christmas tree, we were getting everything out and the girls were like, can we watch Elf? I'm like, of course. We're putting up the Christmas tree. This is what we do. This is like our family tradition.

Number two. Christmas does not officially begin until I have gone through Andrew Peterson's album, Behold the Lamb of God. Andrew Peterson is one of my favorite musicians, artists, singers, and his album, Behold the Lamb of God. It tells the story of the birth of Jesus going all the way back to Passover, going through the Old Testament, all the way up to the scene in the manger. And then what that means for us.

It is this beautiful artistic telling of the birth of Jesus. And I listen to it at the beginning of every Christmas because it just puts my heart in the Advent season. And right in the middle of the Behold the Lamb of God album is a song called Matthew's Begats. And Peterson takes Matthew chapter one and puts it to music. And I think kind of a funny and creative way.

And so let's check out this video.

Wow. That version. It is pretty amazing how you put all of that to music. What is even more amazing are the names in that list. And what's even more amazing than that are the stories behind each one of those names.

These are the people in Jesus lineage. And I imagine that as Jesus grew up, there were probably people that he was very proud to call his family. And then there were probably people like your family, like my family that made Jesus go, oh, yeah, I remember that.

Kind of make him want to just skip right over that part of it. In Jesus lineage, there were murderers, there were adulterers, there were thieves, there were crooks. And right in the middle of this section, Matthew, brings our attention to the kind of event that most of us just want to pass right by. Like, if it were a part of our family, we would just want to pass right over it. Look at it with me.

Matthew, chapter one, starting in verse five, says Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. There's a whole story behind that. For another sermon, Boaz, father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed, the father of Jesse, and Jesse, the father of King David, and David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Now, even if you don't know anything about Scripture, you probably hear that last part, whose mother was Uriah's wife. And you might think to yourself, I think there's a story there.

And you'd be right. There is a story there. It's one that most of us would want swept underneath the rug and forgotten about. But Matthew doesn't do that. Instead, Matthew shines a spotlight on one of the most scandalous stories in Jesus family tree.

It is a story of pain. It is a story of betrayal. It is a story of abuse of power. It's one of those stories that you would want to fly over instead of focus on, but reminding us that Solomon's mom used to be Uriah's wife. Matthew is not just saying the quiet part of his family history out loud, he is shouting it.

Matthew does not want us to miss this part of Jesus lineage, which is why he stated it the way that he did. If you have a Bible open, turn back about 630 pages in my Bible and about a thousand years in history to 2 Samuel, chapter 11, 2 Samuel, chapter 11. David is king. It's springtime, which means the nights are getting warmer. People linger outside just a little bit longer, and King David found himself at home.

And springtime was also the time when all of those battles that had maybe kind of been put on pause during the cold winter months started to pick back up. And so David was at home. But what we find in 2nd Samuel 11 is that his armies were out fighting. And so David, this mighty warrior, instead of being in the battle with his troops, with his men, he's at home in Jerusalem. And he's out walking one night, and he sees Bathsheba in this battle that he wasn't fighting out there.

He now comes and he's fighting in here. And this is what we read in verse two.

It says, one evening David got up from his bed and walked around the roof on the palace. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing the Woman was very beautiful. And David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, she is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Now that's just not a random name David would have known.

This is one of his mighty men. This is someone close to him. Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her. And so King David is not where he's supposed to be.

This man known as a mighty warrior. He is at home and he's out walking on the palace. And one night he looks down and he sees Bathsheba. And he finds her attractive. And he does not care that she is married.

He does not care that her husband, Uriah, had pledged his life to King David, to serve him, to protect him, to fight for him. Uriah, who is currently out on the battlefield fighting David's battles, he doesn't even care what Bathsheba wants or doesn't want or that Bathsheba has

her own agency. Instead, King David simply says, go get her for me. Like she is a carry out order from a local restaurant. And he sleeps with her.

And a little bit later, Bathsheba sends word back to David and says, I'm pregnant. And we often at this point in the story, focus a lot on what happened next for David. We think about all the ways that this affected David in his life. And in doing so, we look right past what all of this meant for Bathsheba. But try to put yourself in her shoes.

This is a dangerous time for her. She doesn't know what's going to happen next. She didn't know what was going to happen from here. David was the most powerful man in her life. He could have easily had her killed.

Just take the problem away. David could have lied about what happened. He could have tried to cover it up. He could have tried to paint her out as someone that she was not. David was the king.

He was the one driving what happened next. And Bathsheba just had to wait to see. And in pride or fear or both, David calls Bathsheba's husband Uriah to come home from the battle. And he. And he's hoping that, like, okay, he's been out, he's been fighting, he's been with all these men.

And so he'll come home, he'll be with his wife, and one thing may lead to another, and then we'll just kind of be able to say, oh, Bathsheba got pregnant while Uriah was home from battle. Uriah has more integrity than that. And so he actually spends the night sleeping outside of the palace. And David's like, why didn't you go and be with your wife? And he's like, well, how can I do that when my brothers in arms are out fighting?

They're out sleeping in tents. I'm not going to go and sleep at home. So David tries to encourage him the next night and sends him home with a bottle of wine and some flowers and says, just let happen what happens. But again, Uriah's integrity was too strong. And so David left with, in his mind, no other option.

Lots of options. But in his mind, no other option. He gave Uriah a note that was sealed and said, give this to your commander when you get back. And Uriah carried his death warrant back into battle because in that letter were instructions from David to go and when they fight the next battle, to put Uriah on the front lines and right at the point of attack to pull everyone else back. And so that's what happens.

And Uriah is killed. And we pick up Bathsheba's part of the story in verse 26.

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord. 2 Samuel 11 doesn't have a verse 28, but we can probably start to fill in what happened next. We can probably imagine how Bathsheba felt after all of this had happened. By all accounts, Uriah was a good, honorable man and she was grieving the loss of her husband.

The pain of losing him had to be intense, and not just the pain of losing him, but the circumstances that surrounded it, how it all happened, the shadiness of it all. It probably had just leave her shocked and confused. She probably felt a little disoriented as she moved from this home that she shared with her husband into the room of this man who had taken advantage of her, who had had her husband killed. And I imagine that she felt powerless. I imagine that Bathsheba felt trapped in her circumstances that were out of her control.

Maybe even she felt a little sense of shame, as victims of sexual assault and abuse oftentimes do. And as she grew older, she had more kids with King David. And I imagine that this part in their life didn't come up as a topic during dinner conversations. When families got together, they probably knew what not to talk about as they went into the home. People who knew the story probably never brought it up.

Like, when you tell the story of your family, these are the parts that you just kind of gloss right on by. And yet what we see is Matthew puts it right here in the middle of Jesus genealogy. When Matthew writes, David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. This is the exact story that Matthew wants us to remember. And he could have just said, Jesse, the father of David, David the father of Solomon, Solomon the father of Rehoboam.

He could have just passed right on by it. He could have followed the pattern that he used in other family stories and just said, and Solomon, whose mother was Bathsheba, and just moved right on from it. But he didn't, which means there's probably a reason why he didn't. I think Matthew highlights this account in Jesus lineage to emphasize the overall point that he wants to make in his gospel. He uses it and he uses other names and stories in the genealogy to introduce Jesus as the one who will save his people from all their sins.

As he goes on to say in verse 21, you see, the Christmas story, it did not start, did not start with Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus. In the Christmas story, it begins with people who are broken and flawed, people who turned their backs on God and did their own thing and went their own way. The Christmas story starts with people who caused pain

and suffering in the lives of others and people who were the result and the ones who were affected by their actions. It starts with people who sometimes feel forgotten and powerless, people who are carrying around a weight of guilt and shame and regret. That is where the Christmas story begins, and it is where so many of our stories begin as well.

But it doesn't end there. And your story doesn't have to end there either. Christmas is a reminder that God can take the broken pieces of your life and weave them into his redemptive story. The account of Bathsheba points us to a savior who came to redeem all of humanity, including the outcast and the wounded Jesus. Birth is a reminder that God can shine light out of the darkest moments of your life.

The moments that you just want to pretend never happen. The moments that you have so much guilt and shame and regret over. Christmas is a reminder that God is really good at working through our really messy situations and that he's really good at working through unexpected people in unexpected ways. By God's grace, and I imagine some of her tenacity, Bathsheba would go on, and she would navigate the complex dynamics of her new life. We don't read a whole lot about her, but there are a handful of moments where we can kind of glean that she did not let this moment identify her and she did not let it consume her.

Bathsheba would become the mother of Solomon, who would be known as this wise and powerful leader in 1 Kings 1 that she boldly approaches David to ensure Solomon is anointed king. As promised. She acted with wisdom and courage at standing up for her family's rightful place in God's plan. And God took the broken pieces of Bathsheba's life and weaved them together in his story of redemption. He shined light in the darkest moment of her life and worked in ways that she could not have imagined to bring the Savior of the world to earth.

And so this Christmas, for those of you who feel unworthy, feel broken today, be assured that God can use your story for his glory when you put your trust in Him. For those who feel forgotten, God remembers you and is working all things out for your good and his glory. And the end of the story may not be what you want or what you expect, but you can trust that he is working good. And for those who feel helpless and hopeless, God can bring light into your darkest of moments. For those who have been taken advantage of, God sees your pain and he is fighting for your injustice.

For those carrying the weight of pain and grief that no one should have to bear, God offers healing and comfort and a future filled with hope. For those who are walking through something and you feel alone, Christmas is a reminder that God is with you. For those who feel like their identity is tied to someone else's action, God calls you by name. He knows your story, and he wants to give you a new identity in Christ. And for those who wonder if their story is beyond redemption,

Bathsheba's inclusion in the lineage of Jesus is a reminder that God can take even the most broken pieces of your life and he can weave them together as part of his redemptive story when you trust it with him.

Bathsheba was a woman caught in tragedy, but God redeemed her darkest moment. And through her lineage, a king would come who is mightier than David, who is wiser than Solomon. A king would come who would not abuse his power, but would lay his power down to save his people. And Jesus was born in a humble manger. For people like Bathsheba and for people like us, who oftentimes feel weighed down and burdened by our sin, who try hard to bury things in our life that bring us shame, Jesus came to Deal with those things once and for all on the cross.

And when we put our faith in Jesus, we exchange our shame for his glory. We exchange who we were for who he is creating us to be. We lay down our old life and we find new life that is no longer defined by who we were, by what we've done, or even by what's been done to us. We exchange. We exchange our death for Jesus life.

And we are defined by his love for us above all else. As we move into response time, we're going to take a few moments to remember and celebrate this love that came for us. Jesus laid down his life to redeem ours. And through his life, death and resurrection, he is inviting us into his story of redemption. As we come to the communion table today, we've got tables up here and we got tables in the back.

We bring our pain and we bring our burdens. We bring our sin and our shame. And we trust that the same God who redeemed Bathsheba's story has the power to redeem ours as well. And so as you come forward and you take one of the cups, take it back to your seat, and whenever you're ready, partake. One side of the cup has a piece of bread that helps us remember Jesus body that was given the other side some juice that helps us remember his blood that was shed.

It was through this sacrifice on the cross that we can be forgiven and that God begins His redemptive work in us. If you're here today and you're carrying some of that weight that maybe we've talked about today, just want someone to come alongside and pray with you, we'd be honored to do that. We'll have some people in lanyards around the room. Just go to them. You don't maybe even need to share anything.

Just, would you pray for me and let them pray over you? Maybe you're carrying the weight of guilt and shame for something that you've done to somebody else. There's forgiveness for you as well. Let them pray over you today. Or maybe you are ready to lay down who you were and take up new life in Christ to enter into this relationship with him through baptism.

We have two baptisms here at the end of our service this morning, and



we're ready if you're ready to help you take that next step. So I'm going to pray and then however you need to respond today and use this moment for it. God, thank you for your redemptive power, your ability to take the broken pieces of our life and weave them into an incredible story that you are writing. A story that is glorifying you and that's pointing other people to the salvation that we can find. And thank you Jesus that when you came to this earth you humbled yourself not just by being born in a barn and laid in this manger, you humbled yourself by being associated with people like us who have a lot of things in our life we'd rather just skip over.

But you enter into that with us and you deal with it. You dealt with it for us so that we no longer have to be defined by those darkest moments in our life, but we can be defined by the light of Christ living in us. And so Lord may we today just reflect and remember and celebrate the freedom that we have found in you. And for the person here today who maybe feels like they are living in darkness, living in pain, living in regret, Lord help them. Give them the courage to find new life in you today.

I pray it in Jesus name amen.