

Always Be Ready/Jesus' Family Tree 1

Matthew 24:36-44 [MW19-27]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Kaiwaka & Wellsford, Sunday 01 December 2019

Always be ready ... always be ready ...

- today is the first Sunday of Advent
the first Sunday of the four weeks leading up to Christmas
- in the Anglican tradition we always have Advent
to help us get ready for Christmas
and the message of the first Sunday of Advent is always the same
- it is always about being ready
about being prepared, about always being on the look out, watching
being active, being involved
- always be ready ...

So are you ready???

- ready for what ... ???

Besides being the first Sunday of Advent

- today is also the first Sunday of the Church's year!
so "Happy New Year!"
- it's not even Christmas and I am wishing you 'happy new year'
are you ready for that?!
- today is about being prepared
it is about getting ready for Christmas
and getting ready for the new year

And yet this time of year is so busy, leading up to Christmas

- and then in January it is 'holiday time'
with everyone being in holiday mood
and everything in holiday mode
- so things do not really begin, start up, until February
the new year in church is now, in the country it is January
and in reality is February
- so I'm encouraging you to get in early and do some preparing
and thinking and considering
- what will you do in this new year
in response to the good news of God with us?
- what will you do in the new year
in response to the good news of Jesus born in our midst as one of us?

Always be ready always be ready ...

- we have Christmas every year
how do we avoid it being the 'same old same old'???
- you hear it said: it's too commercial, too busy, too much the same ...
which is why we are so blessed to have this season of 'Advent'
- it gives us the opportunity to sharpen up
so that we are ready to celebrate the amazing Good News
that Christmas really is
- God with us, as one of us
it is the biggest deal there is!

A poem for Advent by Michael Card:

*When the Father longed to show
A love he wanted us to know
He sent his only Son and so
Became a holy embryo.*

*No fiction as fantastic and wild
A mother made by her own child.
The hopeless babe who cried
Was God incarnate and man deified.*

*That is the Mystery!
More than you can see.
Give up your pondering
And fall down on your knees*

These four Sundays leading up to Christmas

- give us a chance to perhaps see aspects of this Good News we had not noticed before
- this year we are going to look at Jesus' Family Tree the ancestors of Jesus
- we will pick out just four: Jacob, Rahab, Josiah, Joseph
- but first ...

Who has ever read chapter one, verses 1-17 of Matthew's gospel?

- gripping, enthralling, unputdownable???
- the genealogy of Jesus
- boring reading, but not really
- let me read it to you and invite you to help for each name I will hold up a sign and encourage you to do or say what it says ...

“The Genealogy of Jesus”

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah [CHEERS, APPLAUSE],

the son of David [CHEERS],

the son of Abraham [APPLAUSE],

who pretended Sarah was his sister, let Pharaoh have her, and received many cattle [BOOS].

Abraham was the father of Isaac, whose name means laughter [CHEERS];

and Isaac was the father of Jacob, who stole his brother's birthright [HISSES];

and Jacob the father of Joseph and his brothers, who sold Joseph into slavery [BOOS];

and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah [HUH?]

by Tamar, who played the prostitute [BOOS]

for the sake of justice [CHEERS].

Perez was the father of Hezron [HUH?];
and Hezron the father of Aram [HUH?];
and Aram the father of Aminadab [HUH?],
and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, a fine captain of Israel [CHEERS].

Nahshon was the father of Salmon [HUH?],
and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, the prostitute [BOOS]
who saved God's people [CHEERS].

Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth [CHEERS],
the faithful foreigner.

Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of King David [CHEERS].
And David was the father of Solomon [APPLAUSE]
by the wife of Uriah, whom David had set up to be killed [BOOS].

Solomon was the father of Rehoboam,
who was faithful to God through much of his reign [CHEERS]
but abandoned God for five years [BOOS];

and Rehoboam was father of Abijah, who had fourteen wives [CHEERS, BOOS].
Abijah was the father of Asaph, who abandoned God at the end of his life
and died of gangrene of the feet [HISSES];

and Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,
and Joram the father of Uzziah, whose pride brought his fall [BOOS].

Uzziah was the father of Jotham, a very good king in every way [CHEERS];
and Jotham the father of Ahaz, a very bad king in every way [BOOS];

and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, who restored the kingdom
to piety and justice [CHEERS, APPLAUSE].

Hezekiah was father of Manasseh, who ruled as king for fifty-five years [CHEERS]
but was evil for all fifty-five years [HISSES].

And Manasseh was father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah,
and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers,
who were all faithful to God throughout their lives [CHEERS]
and were all deported to Babylon [HUH?].

And after the deportation to Babylon, Jechoniah was father of Salathiel [HUH?];
and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, a wise governor chosen by God [CHEERS]; and
Zerubbabel the father of Abiud [HUH?],
and Abiud the father of Eliakim [HUH?],
and Eli-akim the father of Azor [HUH?],
and Azor the father of Zadok [HUH?],
and Zadok the father of Achim [HUH?],
and Achim the father of Eliud [HUH?],

and Eliud the father of Eleazar [HUH?],
and Eleazar the father of Matthan [HUH?],
and Matthan the father of Jacob [HUH?],
and Jacob was the father of Joseph [CHEERS],
the husband of Mary [APPLAUSE],
of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah [CHEERS, APPLAUSE].

Did you catch the name Rahab?

- Rahab the prostitute is in the family tree of Jesus
that's something to really wrap your mind around!

And did you get that long string of "Huhs" at the end?

- there are nine of them
nine people directly before Joseph in Jesus' family tree
that we know absolutely, completely, nothing about
- there is some real humour in having such a long string of unknowns
before Joseph, Mary and Jesus
- if out of complete nonentities can come the Messiah
there still may be hope for our leaders today!

One commentator remarks:

The good news is that, if out of the worst can come the best, there is hope for our children

Why is all this important?

- because Jesus has a family tree just like yours
some of the people in it we are proud to acknowledge
we cheer and applaud them
- but there are others we would rather not know about
the 'black sheep', the baddies, the troublemakers ... we boo and hiss them
- there are the ordinary ones
and there are those we just do not know about, may be only names
and we say huh?

Jesus' family tree is just like yours

- take 'Jacob' for example
one of the ancestors of Jesus
and a famous one ... or infamous
- he was not such a good bloke in many ways
his name means "grasper"
because when he was born he tried to hold his older twin brother back
so he could be born first
- but that did not work so later he tricked his brother out of his inheritance
and then conspired with his mother against his sick father
so he would get the blessing that rightly belonged to his brother
- later he wrestled with God, had a vision of heaven
and led his people as well as he could
- however the fact remains that there is no "Jacob" in the Calendar of Saints
and though I have discovered some St Jacob's churches
I can find none in our country
- yet there he is, Jacob, in the family tree of Jesus

And that is Good News because if even a rascal like Jacob

- has a place in Jesus' family
- there is a place for everyone
- there is a place for you, and a place for me

Let's just take a moment for reflection, then I'll conclude in prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that we have a place in your family.

Please guide our paths and, more specifically, our thoughts, words and actions.

May we recognise your presence in our midst during this Advent season.

Help us to navigate whatever comes our way;

and most importantly, help us to live out our lives

in a way that is honouring to you.

Amen.