

***Women of Jesus' Genealogy: Mary***

Trinity CRC, Edmonton, December 25, 2021 AM  
Christmas Day

**Matthew 1:1, 16-25**

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Dearly loved, messy People of God,

Jesus was born into a messy world.

*Joyce Berger* in the Reformed Worship website submitted the poem **It Didn't Go As Planned** in which she writes,

Mary and Joseph didn't plan  
to have to take a journey,  
to not find a place to stay,  
to have a baby in a manger,  
to have to welcome lowly shepherds  
to host strangers from foreign places,  
to become refugees —  
Mary and Joseph didn't plan any of that.

Yet, God showed up.  
In the midst of all that didn't go as planned,  
God gave them strength for the journey,  
a stranger welcomed them in,  
they became the parents of a healthy baby boy,  
shepherds testified of angels declaring this child was the Messiah,  
foreigners brought much needed gifts and a warning —  
God made himself known in the unexpected.

There's more that I'll share later.

But as I said, Jesus was born into a messy world. Our messy world. Really, his messy world.

Everything we've seen in the four previous women we've looking at in the genealogy of Jesus spells messiness in one way or another. Now we come to Mary. Here's another young woman whose life when we first meet her appears to be getting messy. Not much about her situation looks glorious in the eye of the people all around her. Everything was looking pretty good but it got messy real quickly. She was a nice Israelite girl. Specifically, from the tribe of Judah. She had a righteous boyfriend named Joseph to whom she was engaged. Granted, they weren't going to become millionaires in their village of Bethlehem. He'd be a carpenter and she'd be a homemaker. But they'd be surrounded by family and friends. Their life looked to have an average but good trajectory.

Good until God seemed to mess it all up! Regardless of all the behind-the-scenes stuff that happened—the angel visitations and Holy Spirit conception—it didn't look good from the outside. It was hard enough for Joseph to believe God made Mary pregnant. Joseph even planned to dump Mary and quietly move on

until God sent the angel to him too. So, Mary and Joseph knew what was going on but it was really hard to understand. They were alone. No one else really believed them in their hometown. From the outside alone, you'd simply see an unmarried, pregnant teenager. A messy situation.

Mary's place in the genealogy of Jesus, then, says a few things to us on this Christmas Day.

### **The God of Messes**

For starters, we need to see God as the God of messes. This is the God who doesn't give up when we make a mess of things. The God who specializes in working through messes to bring about his good plan. In some case, as in Mary's, he seems to stir up our life so that it feels messy for a time, but later we see the good that he is orchestrating.

We could look at the life of every person in Matthew's genealogy and find a mess of some sort. But the fact that women are included at all in this list is important itself. In the ancient world, women did not rank in genealogies. Men were listed but not women. Women were property of men for the most part and didn't have status on their own. So aside from the messy lives of the women in Matthew's genealogy, the fact that they are even listed is a sign of God's care for messes and his ability to make good out of what we humans mess up. God counts woman equally worthy of salvation, alongside of men and equally worthy of being used in his service. So God comes in Christ to redeem the messy world.

A pregnant unmarried woman, whose fiancé has nothing to do with her pregnancy, appears very messy. That's not ideal in our own world but it was scandalous in Mary's day.

However, God is at work. Mary's role in the coming of Jesus does underscore the role of women in God's redemptive plan. In addition, it helps us see that God can use us all. Mary seems to have been a virtuous young lady, even a woman of faith. Nonetheless, she was still sinful and in need of God's redeeming grace.

It pleased God to use this woman to help undo the curse of sin that the first woman Eve helped bring into the world. Mary became the bearer of God, her womb grew the Holy Spirit conceived Son of God who was also the son of David through the human lineage of Joseph and probably of Mary too. Mary, a fellow daughter of Eve, who was in need of redemption, was assigned a highly important and noble role in God's plan for salvation for the world. God used her. Moreover, the messy, scandalous circumstances she found herself in was an important part of God coming to save us from our sin.

The messes in our life might not seem as significant as the scandal Mary and Joseph found themselves in. But maybe they seem even less scandalous to you. But whether it's a mess ordained by God or a mess we've made ourselves,

we worship Jesus—we celebrate the birth of Jesus today—because he came to enter into our messy world. God could not leave his messy world in sin. So he came to us.

### **Jesus Came for Messes**

Yes, secondly, then, Mary's bearing the Christ child reminds us that Jesus came for messes. Jesus came from a line of people who had a lot of messes. Some of their own making and some inflicted on them. But it's all trouble and sorrow in whatever way it comes to us.

In Matthew's account of Jesus' coming, he wants to make clear to his mostly Jewish audience that the Messiah—Jesus—has come for all kinds of people, regardless of our backstories. We've seen that in the past four Advent sermons. Yes, Jesus came for the messy Jewish nation, represented by Tamar and the messed up family of Judah. He came for sin-filled, Gentile Canaanites like Rahab the prostitute in Jericho. He came for women and widows and Gentile Moabites like Ruth. He came for women like Jewish Bathsheba and men like her upright Hittite husband, Uriah, who faithfully served King David and was one more sign to the Jews that Gentiles have long been included in the covenant people.

Indeed, Jew or Gentile, Jesus came for those who are abused and those who are takers, hurters and killers. He came for sinners and those sinned against. He came for brown, black or white, for men and women and boys and girls, regardless of the human identifiers we might use today. Ultimately, Jesus has come because we're all trapped and hurting because of sin.

You know your own mess better than me. You know it better than most other people. You know the stuff you've been hiding from others as well as the stuff you wish others had never found out about you. You know what pains you and what shames you. **And, friends, the good news on Christmas Day is that Jesus knows it all too!** And that's why he came!! You might feel like you're better than some of the people in the genealogy of Jesus or you might feel worse than them.

Let me just assure you this morning that nothing is too much for Jesus to forgive, for Jesus to heal, for Jesus to use for his purposes. You are not unredeemable. Your pain will serve his purposes. Your sin is forgivable. God so loved the world that he sent his Son through the womb of Mary to become sin for us, to redeem us and all of our messiness.

Perhaps we've so much glamourized Mary that we hardly can see the scandal all around her. God took Mary's ugly situation and the seed of faith she had and used her. None is quite so blessed as Mary to bear the Son of God, the Messiah. But that blessing was still an act of God's choice and grace to her as it was for Tamar, Ruth, Rahab and Bathsheba. Jesus came so that our lives can be redeemed and used for divine purposes, no matter where we come from, no matter

what we've done, no matter what's been done to hurt us. Jesus came for messes like mine and like yours.

### **Come with Your Mess**

So dear people, on this Christmas day, come with your mess to Jesus. God's grace in Jesus calls for our response. Believing in Mary's Son, the long-awaited son of David, the King of kings, the Messiah is the answer to all life's issues. You won't scare him away with your "messes." You and I are the reason he came. We've all got messes.

Dr. Hank Hannegraff says, "the genealogy of Jesus did not end when Jacob begot Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. Rather, it continues on through all of those who were adopted into the family of God." That's you and me, friends.

As our Messiah, Jesus not only takes on our human nature, but he also comes—as God in the flesh—to take our messiness upon himself. Our messiness includes our sin and all the results of that. It includes our broken bodies and sickness, our broken relationships, our broken finances, the broken environment, our broken hearts and, yes, even death. The book of Hebrews talks about Jesus as our mediator, the one who reconnects us to God. Plus he's the one who suffers with us, understands and sympathizes with us in our weakness. Friends, he took on our weaknesses as well as our sin. And because of that he can use us for greater things than we might even dare to imagine.

So come to Jesus, dear people. Submit your pain and your past to Jesus. Remember **what** his mother did. When the angel appeared to Mary, her response is an indication of her faith. She said to the angel, 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true'" (Luke 1:38, NLT). Mary, I would say, had a clear sense that God could use her messy situation for his purposes. According to Luke 1:48 she sang out: "For God took notice of **his** lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed" (NLT).

The world considered Mary's life messy. But God took her faith and **fulfilled** his planned to use her life, regardless of the messiness it involved. As a result of God's work, she was blessed! Back in the beginning, God brought order and beauty out of chaos. And he's still doing that today. Thanks to Mary's Son Jesus our Saviour, we are assured of good things being brought together from the messes of our lives as we surrender our lives to God's care.

Matthew 1 shows us Jesus is not ashamed to share messy stories of his family members because they are wonderful stories of his redeeming work!

If anyone knows the power of redemption through a messy life, it is Jesus. Descended from the glories of heaven through the womb of Mary and born into a lowly, smelly stable, forced to flee for his life to Egypt as an infant already, called to live among sinful people his whole life, despised, rejected, abandoned, betrayed,

crucified, died and buried! What a mess to those looking from the outside. Yet, up from the grave he arose! He arose to defeat death and sin and is able to redeem every mess we offer to him.

So maybe ask yourself how God might use the messiness of your life to further his plans and purposes. Submit or surrender this all to Jesus. Thanks to Jesus' coming, you can believe in him and be assured that no mess is too big or unredeemable.

I started out the sermon with a poem that ends speaking more to pastors about the Christmas services. It ends,

This year when things don't go as planned,  
(because we all know that every year something happens!),  
look for God in the unexpected.  
This year when the child acts up,  
the musician gets sick,  
the reader goes off script,  
the tech glitches,  
a light bulb burns out —  
look around to see  
Emmanuel, God with us.

Likewise in our lives, remember, dear boys and girls, remember parents and other adults, remember grandparents and elderly friends, Jesus is with us. The messes of life are redeemed through him, the son of David, son of Mary and Son of God.

Come, let us adore him! Not just today, but every day. Offer your life to him—messes and all. Then be assured that your mess too will serve the divine purposes of our Saviour and King, Mary's child, Jesus who came to be with us in them all!