SERMON NOTES — December 18, 2022

Theme: genealogies help us to frame our stories. Examples: ancestry.com and 23andme.com. Pastor Paul's story of a family tree with many Lutheran pastors. One of the books this past year that has made a big impact on Pastor Paul: *Fortune*, by Lisa Sharon Harper, a beautifully written account of her family's history in America, beginning as enslaved people from Africa in the 1600's. It's a story of suffering and oppression but one also of the hope of redemption for the nation we love, a story of growing freedom with the potential for more true freedom if we can frame our story more truthfully.

I believe that Matthew aims to tell such a story for his nation of Israel, one of redemption from their sins (1:21) in order to find true freedom. He begins by framing the story of Jesus' birth and life with a genealogy very much worth looking at:

Matthew 1:1-7, 16-17

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. [2]Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3]and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah **by Tamar**, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, [4]and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5]and Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**, and Boaz the father of Obed **by Ruth**, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6]and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon **by the wife of Uriah** (Bathsheba), [7]and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, . . . [16]and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of **Mary**, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

[17]So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

The Four Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus

Tamar — her story in Genesis 38. Judah, the namesake of Judea and the "Jews," has a son Er, who dies before begetting a child and leaving a widow — Tamar! In a sordid tale, Judah sleeps with a veiled Tamar, thinking her to be a prostitute, and begets twins, Perez and Zerah — Perez being in the line of Jesus, the Messiah

Rahab — her story is in Joshua 2:1-3 and 6:17-25. She's a Canaanite prostitute who hid Israelite spies in her home in Jericho, and so was spared when Joshua and the Israelites destroyed it. Matthew goes beyond the Old Testament by placing Rahab in the line of the Messiah as the wife of Salmon and mother of Boaz.

Ruth — her story comprises the Book of Ruth. She was a Moabite woman who stood by her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi, when all the men in their family died. Naomi urged Ruth to seduce Boaz, and she bore him a son, Obed, the grandfather of King David.

Bathsheba ("the wife of Uriah") — the story of King David's affair with her, and David's plot to get rid of Uriah, her husband, is in 2 Samuel 11. Bathsheba is the mother Solomon, who was the other greatest king of Israel and in the line of Jesus the Messiah.

So how does **Mary** fit in with these four women of Matthew's genealogy? They all give birth in out-of-the ordinary circumstances; two of them are foreigners. Matthew begins: "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit...."

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I believe that as we prepare for this Christmas, we are uniquely under the threat of White Supremacist groups who are planning political violence. How does our story of Christmas, the birth of the Savior of the world, the Prince of Peace — how does that genealogy and birth frame our story? Our story as a nation? Our story as a congregation which bears the name of the Messiah's birthplace? Our stories as followers of the Messiah who came and let himself be branded as an outsider in order to save us from those sins and lead us into true freedom? Amen.