



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

# LifeGroup

May 28, 2024

Matthew 3:13-17

## Community

### FAMILY PORTRAIT: SERIES OVERVIEW

Matthew paints a “family portrait” of a community deeply rooted in its ancestral beliefs and scriptures. However, due to the fulfillment of that scriptural heritage by Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God, Matthew expands the family portrait to include new communities that had been previously excluded from the family. This is the tension that grips Matthew, and still grips us today. This tension calls us to live into a number of questions. Why this family? Who is in this family? How does one become a part of the family? What’s my role in this family? What is this family’s purpose? The Matthean family portrait calls us to actively live out our family’s story from generation to generation.

### WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

Jesus’ family tree begins with Abraham, continues through history and culminates in his resurrection and ascension. Through baptism we are adopted into God’s family, and we take our place in the family tree.

### WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

Get up out of their seats, roll up their sleeves, and step into the transforming mission of being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today.

### ICEBREAKER

Take a minute and try to fill in your family tree. You can place yourself anywhere on the tree you choose. *(Have each person share briefly what has shaped his or her family tree.)* Who is the most notable of all your relatives? Who is the most notorious?

### INTRODUCTION

Today we begin a new series called “Family Portrait.” The very first thing we encounter is the genealogy of Jesus, a very long list of names that begins with Abraham. As we work through the list we encounter some names we know: Jacob, David, and Joseph, to name a few.

Three sets of 14 generations form Jesus’ family tree. Today we’ll discover how we are part of this family tree through baptism.

### PRAY TOGETHER

God, in baptism you adopt us into your family, and graft us into the family tree, in order that we would live in covenant relationship with you. You name us, claim us, and call us into mission. Baptism is your word of grace and mercy to us. Baptism is your word of forgiveness and promise to us. We are joined to a new family of faith, and now we live out your call in mission to the world. Amen.

## Content

The passage for this week focuses on the last verses of a larger section beginning in Matthew 3:1. We are introduced to John, who says he is preparing the way for another whose sandals he is not worthy to carry. The section ends with the voice of God expressing love for his son.

There are two significant movements here. The first is a good look at the one who prepares the way for Jesus. Despite John’s attempt to deflect attention away from himself, Matthew certainly pens a compelling picture of this man in the desert, this wild and woolly prophet. The prophetic voice has been silent for 400 years, and now this!

Ask people to describe Peter, James, or any of the disciples and responses could be sketchy. But ask someone to describe John the Baptist and, chances are, they will give you details about what he wore, what he ate, and his general demeanor. He leaves a lasting impression!

The second movement is the voice of God identifying the one John prepares for as the “Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.”

*(Read Matthew 3:13-17 together).*

### DISCUSSION

Is there a baptism experience that was extremely meaningful to you? Why? For you, is baptism connected or disconnected from daily life? Why is that?

How would you describe the visual appearance and demeanor of John the Baptist? Why do you think we know so much about his appearance, and not much about the appearance of the other disciples?

Why do you think Jesus’ baptism is tied to the beginning of his public ministry?

## THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS: THE FAMILY TREE

Look back at Matthew 1 and identify the names you recognize.

**Abraham to David:** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nashon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

**David to Captivity:** David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah.

**Release to Christ:** Jeconiah, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph, Jesus Christ. (*Excerpt from lifeofchrist.com.*)

What is the significance of the three groups of 14 generations? Scholars say that several names have been omitted from the list. Is that important to you? What can we learn from understanding Jesus' family tree?

## GOING DEEPER

Matthew 3 opens with these words: "In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea ..." Matthew makes a leap from Jesus' infancy right up to his adulthood – a span of about 25 years. Matthew 1-2 is what's known as the "infancy narrative," which sets up chapter 3. In chapter 3, the "preparing one" (John) steps aside as the "Coming One" (Jesus) is baptized, beginning his trajectory to the cross and empty tomb. It all begins with baptism.

## DISCUSSION

Though baptism is a mystery, what do you think is happening in this sacrament?

Why do you think Jesus needed to be baptized? For the forgiveness of sin? No. John seems to understand this as he faces Jesus and, in verse 14, says, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" It's not in the Greek, but you can almost hear John saying, "You've got to be kidding me!"

But Jesus persists. He says that this baptism will "fulfill all righteousness" in the sense that God's saving activity, which was prophesied throughout the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament), is now being fulfilled with the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It will be brought to completion in his death on the cross. It all begins with baptism.

"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

(*Michael J. Wilkins. The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew. Zondervan.*)

Jesus comes up, the Spirit comes down. There is a significant movement here where Jesus, after identifying with us in the waters of baptism, comes up out of the water. The heavens open. God descends and meets him right there. As a prelude to the tearing of

the temple curtain at the Jesus' death, the heavens are opened as Jesus is reborn. As God met Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, God meets us in the waters of baptism. It all begins with baptism.

## DISCUSSION

How do you think God meets us in our baptism?

## Application

If you're not baptized, would you like to be? If it all begins in baptism, where is "it" all headed?

God wants us, as a response to our baptism, to get up out of our seats, roll up our sleeves and step into the transforming mission of being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. List some specific ways we can do this in the coming week.

This week, let every time you encounter water (taking a drink or a shower, cooking, turning on the faucet, sitting by a stream, listening to the ocean, driving in the rain, etc.) be a reminder of your baptism and nudge you deeper into the transforming mission of the day.

## PRAY TOGETHER

Lord God, show us how we can roll up our sleeves and get involved in your mission to transform the world. We want to be part of the redemption of all things that began at your resurrection. Open our eyes to the many needs around us. Help us to listen for the voices of those who cry out in injustice and inequity. Teach us how to respond with your love and mercy. Amen.

## ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND REFLECTION

### *Strength in Scripture*

#### Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit and met with three significant temptations that are common to us: not trusting God for our daily needs, personal acclaim, and worldly power. He meets each temptation with the phrase, "it is written ..." and then refers to scripture for his strength. What temptations are nipping at your heels? What scripture passages help you the most in times of temptation? What passages in your reading this week have strengthened you?

Matthew 3:13-17 NLT Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. (14) But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" (15) But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. (16) After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. (17) And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."