

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ November 27, 2011



GOD CAME NEAR

“When You Can’t Forget the Past”

Matthew 1:1-17

This week kicks off Advent – the season when Christians the world over celebrate the birth of Christ. “Advent” means coming, so for the next four weeks we will focus on what it means that Christ came to us. He came to us in our sin and misery. He comes to us daily in our helplessness and need. And one day he will come again to set all things to right.

Each week we will talk about a struggle that is common to Christians and non-Christians alike. This week we will think about the problem of shame over past failures.

When you look at this week’s Scripture passage, you will probably wonder why Mike chose it for the first Sunday of Advent. You may even wonder why God put it in the Bible! But look again. The genealogy of Christ has a lot to say about human frailty and God’s grace. He came not for good people but for sinners.



KNOWING GOD

We begin celebrating Advent by looking at a passage of Scripture that many people don't bother to read. **It's Matthew 1:1-17.** This is a list of highlights from the genealogy of Jesus Christ. It traces Jesus' legal descent from Abraham (while the genealogy of Luke 3 traces Jesus' biological descent from Adam). Why do you think the Holy Spirit included this list of names in the Bible?

What does this passage of Scripture reveal about God?

The title "Christ" means anointed one, and harks back to the Old Testament promise of the Messiah. What did the Messiah come to earth to do?



GROWING TOGETHER

One of the struggles we deal with is shame about our past failures. How does the genealogy of Christ speak into that struggle?

Read Romans 8:1-4. Do you feel condemned by God for things you've done (or failed to do) in the past? If you were to preach the gospel to yourself, what would you say about those mistakes and sins?



SERVING OTHERS

If there's one lesson to be learned from this week's passage of Scripture, it is that there is always hope. Is there someone in your sphere of influence who needs hope? What might you do to be a messenger of hope to that person this week?



IN YOUR FAMILY...

Here are a few ideas to help your family remember and apply the Sunday sermon this week:

- Sing the Christmas carol "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Talk about ways God has been with you as a family this past year.
- "Adopt" a person or family that is new to our church or needs some kind of encouragement. What can you do this week that might give them hope?
- Pick out a few names in the genealogy of Christ and read their stories in the Old Testament.
- The genealogy of Christ proves that no one is beyond the reach of grace. Is there someone you know whom you've "written off" or given up on? Confess, and pray for that person together.

SERMON NOTES