

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(March 5, 2017)

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Sermon manuscript

**Sermon Series:** Jesus - for the Other

(Studies of Jesus)

**Yes. Jesus Love us...**

(selected passages from Matthew)

Study #1

### **Introduction: Hungering to know God's love for us...**

I invite you now to join me in an imagination experiment. Imagine that you are not living in 2017 San Antonio, but that you are a Jew living in Israel, in the city of Jerusalem, in the first century.

While you in this experimental mode, you reflect on the history of your nation. As you reflect, you feel a rush of pride.

Two thousand years earlier, God had chosen Abraham to be the father of a great nation (which turned out to be yours - Israel!). You reflect on the stirring stories of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

You remember your nation's miraculous rescue from Egypt by God's mighty arm. You remember the conquest and settling of the land of Canaan. You recall with deep satisfaction how God had established the great kingdom of Israel under David and his son, Solomon.

Then, with a lot less pride, you remember your nation's story from Solomon forward.

Israel rebelled against God. Your nation turned to idolatry. Injustice reigned.

Things went from great to bad to worse over the centuries until God delivered His people - your people! - over to exile in Babylon.

After seventy long years of captivity, God allowed your people to return to Palestine. But she was just a shell of her former self.

The Jews rebuilt the temple, but it couldn't hold a candle to the glorious temple of Solomon. They lived in the land, but they were slaves living under the rule of the Persians.

And you're living in Jerusalem, now. And now it's not Persia, but Rome that rules over you. The Roman military is everywhere. You pay taxes to Rome. You're not free to worship and to serve the Lord.

And then you remember God's promises.

The prophets had said that God would never utterly forsake Israel and that He loved Israel. There were words in the prophets about a glorious future, a renewed kingdom. God would send a Savior-King - Messiah - to rule and to reign.

Roman shackles will be thrown off. Your people will be free. God will be worshiped and served. God said that He would do all of this. He said He would never stop loving you, caring for you.

You have been hoping for some demonstration of this love all your life - but nothing. You desperately want evidence of God's care. You're looking for it. You long for it. You're hungry for it. It would mean so much to see it, but you don't see it...

I'm betting lots and lots of Jews thought those thoughts in the first century. And I think lots of people living in San Antonio in 2017 think those thoughts. We are hungry for evidence of God's love for us. We're desperate to know that He is for us.

I thought this past week about how much it has meant to me when the reality of God's love and care has broken through to me.

When I first placed my faith in Jesus, I remember being bowled over by the thought that there is a God AND that He loved me so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a Roman cross for me. He rose from the dead for me. I was stunned.

Over the years, there have been other times and seasons when God's love for me has been especially meaningful.

I think of times when He has brought me freedom from long-standing temptations to sin. He has showed His love by providing good friends to walk with.

What has always most deeply touched me has been God's touch of comfort or strength or direction or provision or renewal. These moments or seasons assure me that He is for me, that He loves me.

And this - God's loving touch - is what we all treasure and what we are all desperate for. I'm certain that you want to experience, for the first time or in a fresh way, God's great love. You hunger to know deep down that God is for you.

Well, I've got great news for you. We're going to gain assurance of all that this morning as we look at Jesus - and we're going to see something else, too.

*The very Jewish Gospel of Matthew...*

In fact, this morning I'm launching a series of studies that may provide you with a fresh look at Jesus - all from the vantage point of Matthew's gospel.

In the Bible, we have four separate tellings of the story of Jesus, each with its own unique emphasis.

- John's gospel is explicitly evangelistic, telling us over and over again to believe in Jesus for eternal life.
- Luke has a universal theme, showing that Jesus is for all people, everywhere.
- Mark is aimed at the non-Jewish and especially the Roman world.

Matthew's perspective is uniquely Jewish. More than the other three gospels, Matthew wrote with a Jewish audience in mind.

He uses more quotations from the Old Testament, refers more often to the Law of Moses, emphasizes fulfilled Jewish prophecy, and points to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah than the others.

Matthew was a Jew who wrote for his fellow Jews.<sup>1</sup> And I promise you that whether you are Jewish or not, what Matthew has to say about Jesus and about you will take you where you want to go in your journey with God.

I asked you go on an imagination journey with me at the beginning, putting yourself in the sandals of a first century Jew who was longing for evidence of God's love and care.

Let's put those sandals back on. Now, you are that first century Jew. And you haven't seen much to encourage you lately. God hasn't spoken through the prophets for four hundred years. Rome rules. The Jewish leadership is corrupt.

And then someone hands you the scroll of Matthew's gospel.

As you open up that scroll and read the first lines, your heart jumps, because what Matthew has written speaks exactly to what you have been hoping for.

### **Matthew Unveils Jesus' Heart for the Jews**

#### **FROM the Jews, From the Start**

*Genealogically speaking*

A pregnant preamble (v. 1)

***[1] The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham***

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<sup>1</sup> New Testament Introduction, Donald Guthrie, Inter Varsity Press, p. 25.

Immediately you know that this is for you. This is the record of the lineage of someone in your family. He is Jewish. His name is Jewish: Jesus (in Hebrew, “Yeshua”).

Matthew has identified this Jesus as the long-expected Messiah. His family tree can be traced all the way back to David, the great king of Israel, and as far back as Abraham, the father of the Jewish race.

Today, despite the growing popularity of [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), tracing our genealogy is still not high on many of our lists of fun things to do.

But genealogies play a big part in Old Testament history. Often, when wrapping up or beginning a narrative about some important person, a genealogy is included to let you, the reader, know the where this or that hero has come from.

Well, this genealogy of Jesus reads like an Old Testament “Who’s Who”.

### An Old Testament “Who’s Who”

All of the patriarchs are there: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. All the kings who ever sat on the throne in Jerusalem are there.<sup>2</sup>

Now, there are two genealogical records of Jesus in the Gospels. And Matthew’s is very different from the other one, found in Luke.

Luke starts with Jesus and works backward all the way to Adam, highlighting the universal relevance of Jesus to all people everywhere. Matthew mainly pays attention to Jesus’ Jewish roots.

He also pays attention to Jesus’ fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. Three times, Matthew clarifies that Jesus is the Messiah.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew’s genealogy divides the generations from Abraham to Jesus into three groups of fourteen, making it easy to memorize. A very Jewish thing to do.

### A prophecy fulfilled (vv. 1, 16, 17)

***[1] The record of the genealogy of Jesus the MESSIAH, the son of David, the son of Abraham:***

***[16] Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the MESSIAH.***

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

And remember. The Messiah was the Savior-King all Jews had been hoping for. They dreamed of the arrival of the Messiah who would bring deliverance, forgiveness, and restoration. This is Jesus.

Having read the genealogy, you are at ease. Whoever this Jesus is, He is one of your people. He’s a Jew. More than that, He’s the One you’ve pinned your hopes on for salvation.

The Jewishness of Matthew’s gospel is further confirmed as you read of His birth. With a twist or two (☺), it is a very Jewish story.

### *The birth of Jesus (1:18-25)*

The story presumes a very official betrothal period, which was the norm in first century Judaism. Joseph, Mary’s husband-to-be, is described as a “**righteous**” man (v. 19). Joseph kept Moses’ Law.

An angel spoke to Joseph in a dream and referred to Joseph as “**son of David.**” That is to say that Joseph was in the royal line of the Jewish kings. And then, the angel told Joseph what Mary’s Son’s life mission would be.

***[21] “She (i.e. - Mary, Joseph’s betrothed/fiancé) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” [22] Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:***  
***[23] “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.”***

Reading this, two items stand out to you.

First, that this Jesus (Hebrew “Yeshua” = Savior) will save His people (i.e. the Jews!) from their sins. That would be welcomed news, indeed.

Second, the angel’s report that Mary’s Child will be what the prophet Isaiah called “immanu-el” (God with us) means that Jesus will bring deliverance - you’re thinking political deliverance! - to Israel.<sup>3</sup>

You’re pumped. This is all what you have dreamed of your whole life, now come true in Jesus!

And you keep reading. After Jesus is born very important people visit him. And this episode, too, drips with Jewishness.

*The visit of the magi (2:1-12)*

***[1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem...***

These magi are the wise men from our Christmas stories. The magi came from the land of Persia (present-day Iran) where they were part court magicians, part astronomer/astrologers, and part political power brokers.

While searching the night time skies, they had seen a star indicating the birth of a Jewish king and had traveled for months from Persia to Palestine to pay this new king - Jesus - homage.

They met with the reigning king, Herod (who was NOT even a Jew and who had been INSTALLED by Caesar) and asked, ***[2] “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”***

Herod was deeply troubled at the news of a “born” king, since the “born” king will always replace the “installed” king. In answer to a

question he shouldn’t have had to ask, his advisors - Jewish priests and scribes - told King Herod where the Messiah would be born.

***[5] They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:***

***[6] ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’”<sup>4</sup>***

So, Herod sent the magi on their way to Bethlehem, a very short distance from Jerusalem. When they arrived, they found Jesus, now a toddler, in a home in Bethlehem with His mother, Mary. Here’s the scene at the house.

***[11] After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.***

Jesus received the worship that only the Jewish Messiah should receive.

So, you’re hooked on Jesus’ story. You had wanted assurance of God’s love and involvement and care for your people. You’ve gotten it. God sent the very Jewish Jesus.

And, as you continue reading in Matthew you find more and more about His deep involvement with your people.

## **TO the Jews, From the Start**

*First message - to Jews (chapter 4)*

The first message He ever preached was to the Jews, given in a Jewish synagogue, in His hometown of Nazareth.

*Most famous message - to Jews (chapters 5-7)*

<sup>3</sup> This is what the prophecy of Isaiah 7 was all about.

<sup>4</sup> Micah 5:2. Bethlehem was the hometown of King David.

His most famous message was given to Jews. There is a very Jewish “feel” to the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>5</sup>

*First mission for the all-Jew apostolate - to the Jews only!*

When it came time to choose those who would be His apostles, He chose all Jews. (We’ll look at the apostles in some detail next Sunday.) And when He sent them on their first “mission”, it was a home assignment.

***[10:5]...“Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; [6] but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.***

*Jesus’ many, many interactions with Jews*

As you continue reading through the rest of Matthew’s gospel, you find Him repeatedly dealing with, helping, healing, serving, and teaching Jews.

- He cleansed a Jewish leper (8:1-4).
- When the friends of a Jew who suffered paralysis lowered him down through the roof right in front of Jesus, Jesus forgave the man’s sins and then healed him. (9:1-8)
- He healed a mature Jewish woman of a disease and then raised a young Jewish girl from the dead. (9:18-31)
- He fed five thousand Jews with a few small fish and loaves of bread by the Sea of Galilee. (14:13-21).

And on and on we could go.<sup>6</sup> Jesus loved the Jews. He was for them.

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<sup>5</sup> Jesus told His audience that if they were persecuted for following Him, that’s how the Jewish prophets were treated. He promised that He came to fulfill Moses’ Law. He called them to a higher standard of holiness than that of the Jewish scribes and the Pharisees. He quoted the Law repeatedly. (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 35, 38, 43) He gave examples from everyday Jewish life. He mentioned the glory of Solomon’s clothing. He summarized the Law and the prophets with the Golden Rule.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 14 - He healed many in the Jewish town of Gennesaret. Chapter 17 - He showed His obedience to all things Jewish by paying the poll-tax.

And if you had been a Jew living in the days of Jesus, searching for assurance of God’s love and care for you and for your people, you would have read Matthew and been thoroughly convinced.

You would have shouted a very Jewish “*Hallelujah!*” (from the Hebrew verb “hallel”) God has poured out His love on His people.

Today, it’s possible that you’re Jewish, but it’s more likely that you’re not. I’m not. But, all of us who have trusted in Jesus are God’s people today. What was true for that first century Jew reading Matthew is just as true for us, now.

God is for us. We are His people and He has lavished His love on us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never doubt it. Revel in it. Let it percolate through your soul. Shout a loud Gentile “*Hallelujah!*” for it.

Now, back to that first-century Jew we’ve been channeling.

Putting yourself back in his or her sandals, you probably thoroughly enjoyed reading Matthew’s gospel. It has become your new favorite book. In fact, you enjoyed it so much that you have decided to read it again.

As you read Matthew’s words again, you would have noticed a few things you might not have noticed on the first run-through. This time, you’re surprised - shocked, really - by the reach of the very Jewish Jesus.

### **Mathew Unveils Jesus’ Heart for the Other**

#### **Early Hints of Jesus for “the Other”**

##### *Genealogical anomalies (chapter 1)*

In that Jewish genealogy that starts with Abraham and runs through all the great kings, there are some Gentile outliers.

The fifteen verses that are filled with Jewish names also include a couple of verses, early in the listing, that shout, “Not Jewish!”

**[3] Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by TAMAR...[5] Salmon was the father of Boaz by RAHAB, Boaz was the father of Obed by RUTH, and Obed the father of Jesse.**

Tamar, the mother of Perez and Zerah, was not Jewish. She was a Canaanite woman.<sup>7</sup>

Salmon married a prostitute from Jericho named Rahab. And Boaz’ wife, Ruth, who was grandmother to King David, was a member of the despised Moabite race.

You would be stunned that the Messiah’s line was littered with Gentile mothers. How had you missed that before?

*The PAGAN magi’s visit (chapter 2)*

Then it would have dawned on you that while it is true that the magi came from Persia seeking to worship the born king of the Jews, they themselves were Gentiles, NOT Jews.

It is a wonderful story. But they, not Jews, had seen the star announcing the birth of the Messiah. They alone, not the scribes and certainly not King Herod, went to Bethlehem to worship the Messiah. God protected them, the non-Jews, by warning them in a dream to escape the madness of Herod who wanted to kill them.

*That first message, once more (chapter 4)*

And so, you keep on reading, coming to Jesus’ baptism and His wilderness temptations. You land back at that sermon He gave to Jewish people in a Jewish synagogue in a Jewish village.

This time, though, you notice something Jesus said you had missed the first time through.

**[4:15] “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES [16] “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned.”**

There, in His first public message, Jesus spoke not only of reaching out to Israel, but to what was referred to as “greater Galilee”, a region that stretched north to Tyre and Sidon where non-Jews lived.<sup>8</sup>

He cared about those who lived outside of the Promised Land. And you missed this the first time through, too, but Jesus went to the places where non-Jews were.

### **Jesus’ Desperate Love for the Other**

*Gadarene demoniacs (8:28-34)*

Once, after stilling a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27), He and His disciples landed Peter’s boat “**the other side.**”

As soon as they got out of the boat, two men who were possessed by a legion of demons met them.

The demons within the men were terrified at what Jesus - the Son of God! - might do to them.

**[29] And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”**

They then begged Jesus to cast them out of the men and into a herd of swine that was grazing nearby. And (maybe surprisingly) Jesus did exactly what they requested, cast the demons out of the men and sent them into the pigs.

<sup>7</sup> She was pregnant by her father-in-law, Judah. It’s a really ugly story that you can read at Genesis 38.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Alford commentary on the New Testament.

**[32]...And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.**

But the request of the unclean spirits tells us that the two men were Gentiles and that Jesus was in a Gentile territory known as the Decapolis, for only in Gentile lands would you find a herd of swine.

That's Jesus, in Gentile territory. On another occasion, He went north, into the district of Tyre and Sidon, and was approached by a woman whose daughter was in desperate need.

*A Syro-Phoenician woman (15:21-28)*

He was approached by a Canaanite woman - a Gentile. This distraught mother cried out to Jesus, **[22] "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."**

Very uncharacteristically, Jesus ignored her. She persisted. Surprisingly, Jesus flatly refused her. She kept asking, seeking, knocking. He turned her down again.

So, she begged. And then (and it is pretty obvious that He had intended to help her all along), Jesus told this non-Jewish woman that she had what He had been looking for in Israel, among the Jews, and had NOT found.

**[28]... "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.**

You keep reading and watch as Jesus left that region, traveled south and around the Sea of Galilee, and wound up in the same region - the Decapolis - where He had earlier cast demons out of two men.

This time He was met by a large crowd hungry for His teaching and for His healing touch.

*The feeding of the 4,000 (15:32-38)*

Matthew tells us that He stayed out in the wilderness with this crowd for three days. And **[31]...the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing.**

These were non-Jews and they **[31b] glorified the God of Israel** for what Jesus was doing for them.

And then Jesus did for this crowd of several thousand *GENTILES* exactly what He had done with another crowd, a *JEWISH* crowd, multiplying the small amount of fish and loaves on hand to satisfy them all.<sup>9</sup>

And you now see that Jesus' reach extended to Palestine *and* to the Decapolis. He came to seek and to save lost Jews *and* lost non-Jews. God's love and care extends to us *and* to them.<sup>10</sup>

And what our imagination experiment proved to our first-century Jewish friend transfers seamlessly to 2017.

### **Conclusion:**

Yes. As the song says, Jesus loves me. Jesus loves us. And, He loves them.

Jesus loves whatever is your "us." "Us" is the group we identify with. It's our tribe.

Your "us" may be related to sports teams and hobbies, or to favorite opinions and favorite authors. Your "us" may relate to language, politics, race, nationality, or social standing.

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<sup>9</sup> Plus seven full baskets of leftovers.

<sup>10</sup> For those with eyes to see, it had been obvious from the start. **[Matthew 4:24] The news about Him spread throughout all SYRIA...[25] Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the DECAPOLIS and Jerusalem and Judea and from BEYOND THE JORDAN.**

We're all part of a bunch of "uses." There's nothing wrong with that.

To the extent that we have been captured by enormity and the depth of Jesus' love, we will take His love to our "them", whoever that "them" might be.

You may have "them" (or "themS") in your mind's eye right now. Those who oppose you. Those who disagree with you. Those who threaten you. Those who are simply different than you.

Jesus loves that "them." Will you?

Who is the "them" you will seek to serve in Jesus' Name this week? With what "them" will you share His love?