

December 14, 2025

"To Bring the Reign of God" – Bobby Warrenburg

Matthew 1:1-17

1. The Pattern of the Kingdom

The sermon highlights how Jesus's genealogy breaks every convention. What surprising highlights does it have?

- Five women are mentioned (unheard of in ancient genealogies)
- Outsiders are made insiders (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth - all non-Israelites)
- Scandalous stories are foregrounded, not hidden
- The weak, the broken, the sinful are woven into the messianic line

Why would Matthew deliberately include these "embarrassing" details instead of hiding them? What does this tell us about how God builds his kingdom?

The sermon says this kingdom is "radically exclusive" (only through Jesus) yet "radically inclusive" (open to all who come with nothing but need). How do you hold these two truths together?

2. Unity and Diversity

The opening illustration about *Pluribus* raises the tension between oneness and manyness:

- We long for unity but fear losing our individuality
- Organic systems (like bodies, teams) show unity *through* diversity, not despite it
- Each part becomes more fully itself when serving the whole

Where do you see this tension between unity and diversity playing out today - in our culture, our church, your own life?

Think of a time when participating in something larger than yourself actually enhanced who you are (like the tooth being more "toothy" when biting at the body's direction). What was that like?

3. Hope in Long Stories

The genealogy spans roughly 2,000 years from Abraham to Jesus - filled with failure, scandal, exile, and despair. Yet we read it without anxiety because we know how it ends.

The sermon asks: "Why weren't you scared when Jim read the genealogy?" How does knowing the end of the story change how we experience the middle of the story - both in Scripture and in our own lives?

Where are you in a "middle of the story" moment right now - where you can't see how God could possibly redeem things? How does this genealogy speak hope into that?

4. Hope as Gift

Emily Dickinson's poem: Hope is "a thing with feathers" that:

- Perches on the soul (comes from outside)
- Sings without words (we don't fully understand it)
- Never asks for crumbs (given by grace, not earned)
- Is sweetest in the storm

How is biblical hope different from optimism or wishful thinking? Why does the sermon emphasize that hope comes from *outside* rather than emerging from within us?

"Hope changes the one who hopes into what is hoped for." What are you hoping for? How might that hope be already transforming you?

5. Humble Justice

God introduces himself as "father of the fatherless, defender of widows and orphans." This isn't just nice - it's his *name*, his identity.

The sermon suggests if we're not defending orphans and widows, we're not revealing this God. What does that look like practically in our context on the North Shore?

How do we become a community where "outsiders are made insiders, sinners are reconciled to God, the lost are found, the broken are healed, and no-names receive the beautiful name of God"?

6. If you were writing your own spiritual genealogy, what "messy" parts would you be tempted to hide? How does this genealogy give you permission to be honest about your brokenness?

7. The sermon says we enter this kingdom "with absolutely nothing that we contributed... simply on the basis of mercy and love and the bestowal of grace." Do you truly believe that? Where do you still try to earn your place?

8. What "long story" are you in the middle of? How long are you willing to wait for God's redemption?

Closing Reflection:

Here is the full Puritan prayer Bobby quoted from at the end of the sermon

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.
Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.
Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine;
let me find Thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty,
Thy glory in my valley.

Which of the paradoxes in this prayer do you most need to embrace right now?