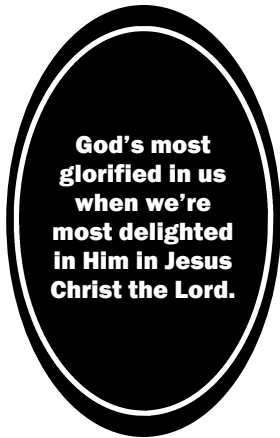


**Bellefield
Presbyterian Church**

4001 5th Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213



Preaching Today
Pastor R. Geoffrey Brown,
M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D.

Responding to God's Word This 2nd Advent Week...

1. Ask God how He wants you this week to spread this vision of His reign over human history and all individual lives in Jesus Christ. To whom can you bring this hope? What can you do? Ask God, pray to Him. He will lead and bring something or someone to mind. Trust Him this week.
2. Confess your sin to God today at home on your knees if you have despaired thinking He's not involved in your life; confess to Him if you thought your sin had nullified His use of you.
3. Join God's reign over history by working this week for neighborhood improvements, community compassion, school participation, etc.
4. Recommit yourself in prayer to persevering in hope in your life under these genealogical truths that God has given us today in His holy Word. Believe that He is your Divine Train Engineer.
5. Connect this week with someone who has been an ancestor in your faith tree & thank them.
6. Reflect in prayer today on being grafted into God's Christmas Tree of Life by Jesus Christ.

Hope #4: We Are Ever in God's Flow

Matthew 1:17
"So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations & from David to the deportation to Babylon 14 generations, & from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ 14 generations."

There are basically 3 views of history, *cyclical*, *nihilistic*, and *linear*. God's view is clearly *linear*. History started at a point, and it is moving in a line to-

ward a conclusion. God has launched the arrow of history according to His sovereign design. And God is maintaining the flight and flow of that arrow. It will reach its target at the second coming of Christ. And that time is certainly known already and already perfectly set according to God's clock. **As is also your life of discipleship as belonging to God the Fa-**

ther in Jesus Christ the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Your individual life in Christ is part of God's divine design in His sovereign linear flow of history. His greater whole is made up of all us parts. So never despair. Never give up. Your individual life is part of God's having grafted you into His Tree of Life for the glory of His Son. Your flow is His. God knows exactly where He's taking you & us.



2008 Christmas Sermon Series in 5 Parts entitled—
Getting to Bethlehem & Beyond:

5 Advent Vantage Points on 21st Century Discipleship

**#1 Today: "Grafted into Christ's Glory"—
*Branches in God's Christmas Tree of Life***

Mt. 1:1-17
Here in *Matthew* is what appears at first glance as a boring genealogy. But the old time prospectors had a phrase:

There's gold in them thar hills! Just so, there's gold in them thar names in that thar genealogy. A stirring message of

hope in Jesus hides here ready to be mined. It's the ore that tells us how we get to Bethlehem, even how we got there in

the first place. This is a golden hope filled genealogy. & we need hope at this time of year. We can get sad. Some can even wonder if life will ever take on sunshine again. And then there's the wider world scene. It's scary....



His family tree reaches to us.

Does Anyone Have His Hand on the Train Throttle?

Drive by shootings, drug problems, divorce rates rising, some schools deteriorating, na-

tional debt astounding, economy shrinking, disasters striking, & if that's not enough, it's

finals week! So with all this going on, what are we doing looking at a genealogy? It's **God's Word...**

*Sermon Moves at a Glance—
Bethlehem & Beyond: Vantage Point #1
How We Get to Bethlehem & Beyond: The Sovereign Reign of God Over Our Lives for Christ's Greater Glory*

1. God controls the flow;
2. God flows in our flaws;
3. God flows in our now; and
4. We are in God's flow today & tomorrow.



Hope #1: God Controls the Flow

Matthew 1:17
“So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations & from David to the deportation to Babylon 14 generations, & from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ 14 generations.”

This is a genealogy, but it is not boring. This is astounding—that Jesus’ birth is the consummation of 3 groups of 14. It’s astounding because way back in

3 Sets of 14
Speak of God’s
sovereign hand.

Genesis, God said to Abraham, “I’m going to give you a son, & that son will have a son, & that son will have another, until someday far down the line of the sons, the Savior of the world will be born.” Now Matthew’s gospel is written to Jewish



God leads all the way.

Christians. And 7 or any multiple of 7 symbolized perfection for the Jewish mind. Also, the number 3 did the same thing. So 14 generations is a multiple of 7, and you have 3 sets of 14. Matthew’s point is that under God’s control, the history leading up to the birth of Jesus has been flawlessly planned with mathematical precision. **God controls it all.**

Hope #2: God Flows in Our Flaws

Matthew 1:6b
“And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah”
Not only does God control the flow of human history, but

He actually chooses and uses flawed human beings as He carries history toward His goal. And if you are to have the

Advent discipleship hope God wants you to have this Christmas, then you should and



His timing colors all.



Hope #2: God Flows in Our Flaws— (continued)

must love this truth: **God’s Christmas family tree is full of questionable characters.** Jesus’ lineage is anything but a roll call for the institute of halos and harps. It begins with Abraham who

lied like Pinocchio. Then there’s Jacob, slicker than a Las Vegas card shark. Then Uriah is mentioned with David—what a sad happen-



Frosty, don’t lose your head.

ing. & Rahab was a prostitute. But the last name on the list is **Jesus!** God says, **I am in control; My plan flows even through human flaws.**

Hope #3: God Flows in Our Now

Mt. 1:16
“And Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.”

The train may seem out of control. You may have actually sighted *Dead Man’s Curve* straight ahead in your life. But the Word of God, the genealogy of Jesus, wants you to know that the

“The train may seem out of control...”

Engineer has not abandoned the train of your life. In the pain or despair of life, you may not be able to see your heavenly Father, but He sees you. Remember this genealogy. God is still purposefully moving human history forward, just as He moved it forward through 3 sets

of 14 generations of OT happenings. God makes sense out of nonsense. God hits good licks from crooked sticks like you and me. History may look like a trillion piece jigsaw puzzle, but the truth is, God is working out His sovereign purpose in all of human history despite the Hitlers, the Sadam Husseins, the US economy, *et al.*



Never give up hope.