



My Beloved Ones,

As we prepare for the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, the readings of the Sunday before the Feast call us to reflect on the history of our salvation, and how all are called to take part.

In his letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul writes that those who kept God's covenant with Abraham, "...looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God." (*Hebrews 11:9*) St. Paul describes those great prophets and kings, who "...through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice... stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war..." (*Hebrews 11:33-34*). However, also writes about those who "...were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life." (*Hebrews 11:36*) This Epistle reminds us that Our Lord is the fulfillment of the hopes of all those who waited, from Abraham to Samson, from Samuel to David; and that in order to fulfill those hopes, God wished to demonstrate His Grace towards a fallen world.

The Gospel of the Sunday before Christ's Nativity is very interesting one, as well as complex. In it, the Evangelist Matthew discusses the genealogy of our Lord. This is the reading begins, "*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...*" (*Matthew 1:2*) From there, the list grows—from the foundation of the Covenant, to the deportation into Babylon—before finally ending with God's Messiah: "*...Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*" (*Matthew 1:15-16*) Two thousand years later, many who are not as familiar with the Scriptures might say that the passage is confusing. Obviously, the Evangelist seeks to connect the Old and New Testaments, but the Evangelist is also saying something about God's mercy.

Within his genealogy, Matthew includes four women of the Old Testament who were by no means perfect. We are told that "*...Judah [was] the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar...*" (*Matthew 1:3*) but what Matthew leaves unsaid is that Tamar was Judah's own daughter-in-law. Of course, better known to most is the fact that "*...David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...*" (*Matthew 1:6*) after God's anointed King sent Uriah into battle to be killed, to have Bathsheba for himself. The point Matthew raises, is not to dwell upon their sins, but to demonstrate that God loves us so, that He uses us in ways we do not expect, to perform His Will. So, as we prepare to gather with family, let us rest in the fact that God knows our weaknesses. After all, He brought his Son forth from descendants who were less than Godly too.

Therefore, may the coming Nativity season offer us opportunities to demonstrate the same kind of love, compassion, and forgiveness to our loved ones. Though God's forgiveness is perfect and endless, if we can show even a part of that to others, then we will truly feel His peace, now and always.

+ALEXIOS
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