THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

December 1 & 2 '07

"Unwrapping The Christmas Story"Series

Stories that never made it to the stage…

This Week's Message: **"R-rated Grannies"**

Pastor Mark Burch

2 Corinthians 5:19 "…God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against the."
Psalm 103:12 "…As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

As familiar as we have become with the basic elements of the Christmas story, there are also a number of "stories behind the story" that have never made the big screen…radically inclusive and/or exclusive stories taking place in the shadows. Each one carries major implications for how we approach this story, and how we approach the Christ.

This weekend we're going to pull back the veil with Matthew as he makes some startling revelations about Jesus' family tree. Breaking with tradition, Matthew chooses to include some highly questionable characters in his list of Jesus' ancestors, and in doing so, I believe he opens the door wide for some of us to walk through….crazy family trees and all!

These are some "grandma stories" you'll never see in a children's Christmas pagent!

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

History (Making it Personal)

1. Take a few moments to talk about your favorite Christmas memory… what was the best Christmas you've ever had?
2. Did your family growing up have and crazy traditions you kept every year? What were they? Have you continued them into your adult Christmas'?
3. Did you ever have a Christmas that got "totally ruined" by un-expected crisis or party-crashers? As you look back on that Christmas now – how do you feel about it?

Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

4. Take some time to scan through Matthew 1:1-6 and take note of the great-grandmothers of Jesus: Then take the time to read up just a bit on each one of them.
5. Tamar – Genesis 38
6. Rahab – Joshua 2; 6:22-25 Hebrews 11:31 & James 2:25
7. Ruth – scan through all four chapters if not familiar with the story – take note of 1:16; 2:1-8; 3:9-11; & 49-12.
8. "Mrs. Uriah" – 2 Samuel 11
9. Talk for a few moments about the implications for ministry today – how would we respond to each of these four women (and the men in their lives) if they showed up in church today?
10. Talk about reconciliation – read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and Psalm 103:8-14. In light of these texts, how significant do you feel these "grandma stories" are? Who do you think Matthew chose to highlight them?
11. If Jesus "family tree" could include such questionable characters, what hope does it give to you and me?

Taking It Home (Application)

12. This week would be a good time to take a little longer time talking about the implications of the story….
13. How should this story change our attitude toward the skeletons in our own closets? Why do we find it hard to believe God could accept us and forgive us?
14. What implications do you see for the ministries of WPC as we step into a community and into individual and family lives that have been ravaged by sin?
15. Spend some time in prayer for the people in your group, and the people attending our church who have some r-rated stories in their background – pray that they will embrace the forgiveness and healing Jesus offers.
16. Spend some time in prayer for all the people with r-rated backgrounds who will be walking through the Living Nativity story – but find it hard to believe that they could ever be welcomed inside the church. Pray that they will sense and experience the compassion of Christ through His people.