



**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School**  
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A Stephen Ministry Congregation  
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**Advent 3**

**December 19, 2018**

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**“Jesus is the Son of Azor”**

*(Matthew 1:13-14)*

Rev. David K. Groth

*“Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud” (Matt. 1:13-14).*

**Every day, everywhere, by everyone...  
sharing the grace of the Good Shepherd.**

**Collect:** Lord Jesus Christ, so govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your glorious return, we may persevere in both faith and holiness of living; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

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The book of Matthew starts, of course, with the genealogy of Jesus, tracing his ancestry all the way back to Abraham. It's not a comprehensive genealogy nor was it intended to be. But it does include 42 generations. Their ranks include patriarchs and kings, prostitutes and foreigners, adulterers and murderers. Many of the names we know, for example Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Ruth and Bathsheba. But then towards the end of the genealogy, we come across a series of names that will make you scratch your head. Who were these people? I have no idea. I can hardly pronounce their names, much less come up with anything meaningful to say about them. They're in the genealogy of Jesus, but otherwise they've fallen off the radar into total obscurity. Nothing about their lives has been recorded. Especially toward the end of the genealogy, we don't see any royalty anymore. The ancestors of Jesus were disappearing into the ranks of ordinary people—craftsmen, shopkeepers, farmers.

“Eliakim was the father of Azor and Azor the father of Zadok.” Just for kicks, I looked up Azor on the internet. Turns out Azor is a blood pressure medicine, whose side effects include dizziness and lightheadedness. If you're on Azor you should take care to get out of bed or a chair slowly. That wasn't helpful, so I refined the search: “Azor in the Bible”. Turns out this is the only time Azor shows up in the Bible. In Hebrew, his name means “Helper.” That's all I've got on him. No words of Azor are ever quoted in Scripture. No actions or deeds of his are recorded. My guess is if Azor had done something really important, we would know something about him.

I wonder who he was, what he did, what he looked like, where he lived. Was he a good man or a scoundrel? Did he have a good sense of humor or was he rather grim and

stoic? Was a faithful or indifferent? Was he a farmer, a shop keeper, a soldier? Surely, he had no idea his name would actually turn up in the genealogy of the world's Savior! His name just pops up . . . once.

So why is he even listed? What might it tell us? First this: though Azor has been lost to us, he wasn't lost to God. Azor was important to God. God kept track of his life, even if nobody else did. God cared intensely about Azor, even numbering the very hairs on his head.

How about you and me? A thousand years from now, what will the history books say of you and me? Even in this digital age, my guess is there won't be much of anything on us, mostly because there won't be anything about us that people a thousand years from now will find interesting. So we might be tempted to think our lives are not really that important. We are not world famous. We will not be long remembered after we're gone. We live average, ordinary lives. And therefore like Azor, we will mostly be lost to human history.

However, we will not be lost to God. God cares intensely about you, even as he cared intensely about Azor. God has the hairs on *your* head numbered. God knows when you sit and when you rise. He knows what you're going to say before you say it. He knows your needs and your fears. He knows what makes you happy and what makes you sad. He loves you and does not want to lose you to sin or death. And so God sent his son Jesus, so each of us would have a Savior who would die not just for *his* family, *his* ancestors, not just for *his* friends, not just for his contemporaries, not just for the notable people of his day, but for ordinary people, for the Azors of our day. That is, he died for you and me. No one is left out. His death and resurrection are for all people. No one is forgotten.

Again, I point to a favorite verse from Isaiah. "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will never forget you"! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Is. 49:15).

What else can we learn from Azor's presence in this genealogy? Clearly, God had plans for Azor and used Azor as part of his greater plan of salvation. Azor likely had no idea God was using him in this way . . . no idea that he was important.

Often, God uses people in his plan of salvation without their awareness or permission. At this time of the year, for example, I'm thinking of the ancient promise that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the City of David. Trouble is, Joseph and Mary live up there in Nazareth. What to do? No trouble for God. At just the right time he puts a little seed of an idea into the brain of Caesar Augustus, that it would be a good idea to take a census so that he could more efficiently tax his people. This would, in turn, increase revenues. Of course, it would take a while to organize the structure of this census. And it would be important that everyone return to the place of their birth. But once the order is given, this census sends Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. They arrive just in time for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, in fulfillment of that Old Testament prophecy. Can't you see God working quietly, secretly behind the scenes?

Of course, Caesar Augustus had no idea God had put him up to this. He thought it was his own grand idea. In fact, at the end of his life, Augustus wrote down a list of his proudest accomplishments. This same census mentioned in Luke 2 made the list. Indeed, taking an accurate census today is a massive undertaking. Doing it 2000 years ago in the days before computers, phones, or even cheap reams of paper, it was quite an accomplishment.

So Caesar was pretty proud of this census, and would probably have been peeved if later on someone informed him the census was God's idea, God's doing. Emperors don't like being manipulated. They like being the manipulators, the movers and the shakers! Moreover, this particular emperor, Caesar Augustus, was the first in a long line of Roman emperors to demand his subjects revere him as God!

He wouldn't like it at all, then, to learn that the King of kings and Lord of lords was just born in Bethlehem because of the census, which he thought was his own idea, his own accomplishment. But Augustus died happily in 14 AD having no idea that God had been pulling the strings all along. His famous last words were, "Have I played the part well? Then applaud as I exit." He should at least have shared the applause with Almighty God, but that wasn't his style.

The point is, Azor had no idea he was playing an important role in salvation history. Caesar was also clueless. And you and I don't know what plans God has for us, how God might use us, how important to others our work, our lives might end up being. But you can trust that God does have a plan for you. "I know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jer. 29:11). You can trust if you allow him, he'll use you in his kingdom and for his purposes. And even if you don't allow him, he might still use you!

Everybody plays a role, and it's all important. Remember? Just as our body parts have to work together to complete the whole person, so does the body of Christ. Each and every one of us plays a part in the plan; all are important; none are superfluous or unnecessary. You might be tempted to think you could make do without a big toe, but have you ever tried to walk without your big toe. Have you ever tried to write without your thumb? Have you ever tried to put a strong grip on something without your pinkie finger? Every one of us is important to him. He has a plan for every one of us.

One last thing: You and I will never make it into the Bible by name. We may never have our lives chronicled anywhere else for that matter. And yet God sent his Son Jesus for us, to rescue us and make us part of His family. In baptism he adopted you as his own child. You're not an ancestor. You're an heir, heir of God, co-heir with Christ. You matter to God.

Your name isn't in the Bible, but because you trust in

Jesus, your name *has* been written in the Lamb's book of life. It's the list of those who will inherit eternal life. Frankly, I'd rather know my name is there than have it in the genealogy of Jesus.

Did Azor make the list in the Lamb's book of life? Though he was an ancestor to Jesus, was Azor also a child of God through faith and an heir? No idea. But you can be sure that because you are baptized, and because you believe in Jesus as your Savior, your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and that's better by far. Thanks be to God!  
Amen.



**Christmas & New Year's Eve Services:**

**CHRISTMAS EVE (Office closed)**

**4:00 p.m.**

**Communion Service**

**9:00 p.m.**

**Candlelight Service**

**CHRISTMAS DAY (Office Closed)**

**9:00 a.m. Service**

**NEW YEAR'S EVE (Office open 8 am to Noon)**

**7:00 p.m. Service**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY (Office Closed)**

**No Service**