



Sunday, December 9, 2018
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Luke 2:1-7

Someone wise once said that the Bible is like a diamond—it is multifaceted, and each face draws us in with its beauty. If that is true of the entire Bible, then it is most definitely true of the story of Jesus. Here, in the story of Jesus' birth, so many threads come together. But one looming thread that traces itself back to the book of Job (among others) is the mystery of God's providence. The Old Testament affirms that God is at work in every aspect of human history, but sometimes that truth escapes us as we read each individual story.

In the story of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, we see many different facets of God's providence at work. Not only was He sovereign over the timing and circumstances of Mary's pregnancy, but He had been at work in the global political landscape for centuries orchestrating this one event. The Jews had been displaced and returned to different parts of the Promised Land. Herod's family had seized control in that region. Rome had seized control over most of the world. So, Mary and Joseph's residence, the command for a census, the persecution of Herod, were all things that were under God's direct control, and through it all, He accomplished the salvation of His people.

Context

This is one of the more famous passages that is read around Christmas time. Right before this passage is Zechariah's prophecy, talking about how the child will accomplish the salvation of His people and the forgiveness of their sins. Anyone who has heard Linus tell the story knows how it continues afterward. After Mary and Joseph had settled in at Bethlehem, an angel appeared to the nearby shepherds and told them of the glorious birth of the promised child. So, already from the first moments, God was drawing people to Himself through Jesus the anointed King.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Luke 2:1-7

“The Right Place at the Right Time”

- I. The Decree of a Heathen King (1-5)
 - a. The Edict (1-2)
 - b. The Impact
- II. The Birth of a Holy King (6-7)
 - a. 1st Arrival – to the city
 - b. 2nd Arrival – of the child

“Ye fearful Saints, fresh courage take;
the clouds you so much dread
are big with mercy and shall break
in blessings on your head

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

- William Cowper, “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (1774)

“We believe that this good God, after He created all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to His holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without His orderly arrangement.”

- Excerpt from the Belgic Confession statement on Providence

Discuss

- 1) Why is the Christian doctrine of providence better than worldly views about luck or chance?

- 2) Do you tend to view the events and relationships in your life as being brought about by God's providence? Why or why not?

- 3) How easy or difficult is it for you to trust God's promises to you when His providence appears to be working against you?

- 4) How does the birth of Jesus strengthen our confidence in God's promises?

- 5) Read Psalm 119:137-144. Can you say the same things the psalmist does? Why or why not?