

COINCIDENT OR GOD-INCIDENT?

My sister Patty and her husband moved out to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia this summer to be closer to most of their family who live there. They let us know a month ago that they would be coming to Brantford around December 10th to attend her brother-in-law's 75th birthday party. We arranged to go out for dinner with them on Monday, December 13th. One of Patty's children still lives in Brantford. When I asked her if they had seen him since they arrived, she told me how they had to take him to the hospital when they saw him because he was so gravely ill. Patty talked to her son on the phone prior to arriving in Brantford and everything seemed okay with him. That night we had supper with Patty, she shared how earlier that day they had talked to the doctor and how he said the next 48 hours would be very critical for her son. He was experiencing a blood infection that was affecting his heart.

When my sister shared this with us it was very evident to me that it was no coincidence that God arranged for them to come back to Brantford at this time. They had no idea when they boarded a flight to come here that their son was dealing with such a serious health issue. They thought they were coming to Brantford to spend a few days here before Christmas to celebrate a 75th birthday and visit with their son and a few other family members and friends. Some would say it was a fortunate coincidence that they were here when their son came down with this serious blood infection. I knew it was a God-incident that they were back in Brantford at this exact time. This is what God does to show us that He is sovereign, in complete control, and cares for us so dearly.

Here we are just a few short days away from Christmas. Our focus at church on Christmas Eve is the gift of Jesus lying in the manger in Bethlehem. This is just one of so many stories in Scripture that remind us there are no coincidences when it comes to God. It had been foretold by the prophet Micah that the birthplace of the Messiah would be Bethlehem. God chose Mary to be the one who would give birth to the Saviour of the world.

Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit and as the time of the birth drew near there was one problem. Mary and Joseph were not living in Bethlehem at the time. God had to find a way to get Mary to Bethlehem in time so she could give birth there. It just so happened that the Roman emperor Augustus issued a decree at that time about a census to be taken. This census required everyone to return to their ancestral towns to register. Because Joseph was a descendant of David, he had to go to Bethlehem, the ancestral home of the former king of Israel. The timing was perfect even though Joseph and Mary might not have thought so. To make

the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem while Mary was so late into her pregnancy would not have seemed ideal to them. Whether Mary and Joseph realized it at the time or not, it was no coincidence that this census was ordered when it was. It was what I call a "God-incident". God led Mary and Joseph to be in Bethlehem at that exact time in order to fulfill the promise He made that the Saviour would be born there.

Something that God wants us to learn and see from stories like this is how there are no coincidences when it comes to Him. Examples like this are meant to remind us that God is all-knowing, He is in complete control, He cares for us immensely, and He will put us in the right place at the right time. Mary and Joseph were in the right place at the right time when they needed to be. My sister and her husband were led by God to be in the right place at the right time last week to be here while their son was so gravely ill. Hopefully stories like Mary and Joseph's, and my sister Patty's, will be a source of inspiration for us as we journey into this Christmas and New Year. We find inspiration in the truth we can count on our all-knowing God to guide us to be in the right places at the right times.

It is not always for the most pleasant things that God will do this for us, however. It was not pleasant for Mary to have to give birth so far away from home, and to have to do so in a manger rather than an inn. It was not pleasant for my sister to have to deal with seeing her son in hospital in critical condition. However, this is exactly where my sister needed to be. If she had not been in Brantford to visit her son when she did, the situation might have been far worse. The reason why I say this is my sister is a retired nurse. She knew right away when she saw her son that something was wrong and took him to the hospital immediately. That may not have happened if it had not been for this "God-incident." Thankfully, she was here to be able to get her son into the hospital to get the care that he needed. Who would we thank if this was coincidence? We know who we should thank because this was a "God-incident".

As we journey into Christmas and 2022 may we do so knowing nothing has changed when it comes to God. Because He is all-knowing and all-powerful, we can count on Him to lead us to be in the right places at the right times that we need to be. With this assurance, may we carry faith and hope into this Christmas season and new year that God is in complete control and loves us so dearly to do this for us.

Keep safe and God bless

Pastor Dean

