

- I. Nothing by Chance; Sunday, December 7, 2014
(Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be
pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- A. "Good morning, church!"
- B. I'd like to start with a story from my youth
1. When I was young, about Xander's age now, I did a lot of bicycle riding through the neighborhood with my friends
 - a) Behind a row of homes across the street from us was an open, undeveloped field that had once been cleared many years in the past but upon which nothing had been yet built
 - (1) Imagine a field in Central Washington, east of the Cascades...
 - (2) [Expound]
 - b) After not much time of riding our bicycles around in this field, we developed a series of trails
 2. Although most of the time we'd ride around in the field on our bicycles, some days we'd just wander through it
 - a) During these times, I would occasionally find bits of metal under the brush
 - b) These were bits of parts left behind by whatever had been going on in the field from years before
 - c) Some of these bits had an obviously clear purpose
 - (1) Some were bolts or nuts; others were screws; and others were nails

- d) But some of the bits had no obvious purpose at all
 - (1) They just seemed to be unidentifiable bits of metal
- 3. For the longest time, I used to think these things were just random
 - a) (And to be honest, I didn't really think much of them at all)
 - b) Then one day, I picked up a piece to take a closer look (like I had done many times before)
 - c) And it dawned on me that someone somewhere designed this piece of metal
 - d) Designed it for a purpose
 - e) [Expound]
- 4. It was this philosophical realization that opened up my mind into wondering
 - a) Instead of noticing a piece of metal and passing by without much thought...
 - b) ...I know started to try to imagine what the purpose for the piece was
 - c) Every piece of metal I found in the field, no matter how obscure, had a purpose, had a design, had a reason to exist
 - d) My new-found philosophy didn't help me necessarily know what it's purpose was, but it certainly made me wonder about purpose

II. This philosophy of a purpose in everything extends far beyond that field I grew up playing in

A. Let's follow a logical progression for a moment

- 1. God is omniscient and omnipotent, all-knowing and all-powerful

- a) God has infinite power, infinite capability
 2. God created the universe, all its natural laws, and everything therein
 - a) God setup the heavens and the Earth
 - b) But unlike deists, we don't believe God setup the universe and then went on an indefinite vacation
 - c) God continues to be active in the universe
 3. God does not do things by chance or at random
 - a) Albert Einstein once said, "I for one do not believe God does not play dice with the universe."
 - b) He was talking about the beginnings of Quantum Mechanics, but I think the phrase works in the macro philosophical as well as the material
 4. Since God is all-powerful and infinite, everything formed by and later shaped by Him was and is done by His Will
 - a) Scripture repeats this often
 - b) In fact, even those things which are painful, that cause suffering, that are evil and hurtful, are explicitly allowed by God
 - c) God doesn't cause these bad things, but He must explicitly allow Satan the power and freedom to cause these things
- B. So therefore, we can I think reasonably believe that everything in the universe, no matter how small or insignificant, is the way it is for a reason
1. Most of the time we won't know the reason
 2. But we can know there's a reason

3. And often the knowing that there's a reason will cause us to wonder about the reason
 4. And in our wondering, we might reach out to God in prayer, seeing answers
- C. So you see, the awareness that everything in our world - everything, no matter how small or seemingly random - has a purpose can trigger a seeking of that purpose
- D. And so it naturally follows that when we seek after the understanding of the purpose of something - if we take that seeking to God in prayer - it results in the extension of our wisdom
1. There are really three types of examples of this:
 - a) First, there's practical, instructional lessons we can learn from seemingly random things that happen to us
 - b) Second, there are theological implications to understanding why God did certain things in certain ways
 - c) And third, there are personal, missional lessons we can learn

III. Let's look at an Advent/Christmas-related event from Scripture specifically and ask some questions as to why things happened the way they happened, seeking after that extension of wisdom

Luke 2:8-11

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

- A. Why did the heavenly hosts sing choruses before the shepherds in the fields by night?

1. Think about this: The first announcement of the birth of Christ Jesus was not given to the religious leaders in Jerusalem but to shepherds on a hillside
2. These were humble men who were faithful at their regular work
3. James Stewart wrote:

And is there not a world of meaning in the fact that it was very ordinary people, busy about very ordinary tasks, whose eyes first saw the glory of the coming of the Lord?

It means, first, that the place of duty, however humble, is the place of vision.

And it means, second, that it is the men who have kept to the deep, simple pieties of life and have not lost the child hear to whom the gates of the Kingdom most readily open

- B. There's also something else interesting I note about this passage

1. In virtually every other part of Scripture when an angel appears with a message, the angel attributes the message to God
 - a) "I come with a message from God"
 - b) "God has sent me to tell you something"
2. But here, there's not explicit proclamation the angels are bringing a message from God
3. Isn't that interesting?
4. Perhaps they are bringing a message from God, but in this one, they didn't explicitly mention the source
5. But could it also be that the angels appeared on their own, because they couldn't help but share the joyous message
6. They appear with a message of joy
 - a) "Good news of great joy", to be specific

7. So I wonder if the news of Christ was just so wonderful, so important, that it filled the angels with such joy that they could not help but share the news, praising God
- IV. Becoming and being a follower of Jesus Christ brings us into a life and lifestyle that is characterized by great joy
- A. Christmas is a season that reminds us of the good news (Gospel) that God sent Jesus
 - B. Christmas is a season that reminds us of the fact that we can and should have great joy as a response to the gift of Christ
 1. Why is this so?
 - a) Because we have no means to return to God except through Christ
 - b) But with Christ, we can have both salvation and a real, meaningful relationship with God right now
 - c) There is great power in that relationship
- V. This week, I want to encourage you as you spend time in reflection: consider that everything has a purpose
- A. God does nothing by accident or at random
 1. Therefore, you only exist because God specifically wanted you to exist
 2. You aren't random; God has a purpose for you, a part to play
 3. You are important
 - B. We all should be daily, daily developing a stronger relationship with God
 1. This relationship is not something we deserve or could earn
 2. But it's something God, through grace, is giving us anyway

3. And because of this relationship, we, like the angels, cannot help but rejoice

C. Amen