

**Act 17:24** God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

**Act 17:25** Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

**Act 17:26** And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

**Act 17:27** That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

INTRODUCTION:

On the front porch of his little country store in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln and Berry, his partner, stood. Business was all gone, and Berry asked, "How much longer can we keep this going?" Lincoln answered, "It looks as if our business has just about winked out." Then he continued, "You know, I wouldn't mind so much if I could just do what I want to do. I want to study law. I wouldn't mind so much if we could sell everything we've got and pay all our bills and have just enough left over to buy one book— *Blackstone's Commentary on English Law*, but I guess I can't."

A strange-looking wagon was coming up the road. The driver angled it up close to the store porch, then looked at Lincoln and said, "I'm trying to move my family out west, and I'm out of money. I've got a good barrel here that I could sell for fifty cents." Abraham Lincoln's eyes went along the wagon and came to the wife looking at him pleadingly, face thin and emaciated. Lincoln ran his hand into his pocket and took out, according to him, "the last fifty cents I had" and said, "I reckon I could use a good barrel."

All day long the barrel sat on the porch of that store. Berry kept chiding Lincoln about it. Late in the evening Lincoln walked out and looked down into the barrel. He saw something in the bottom of it, papers that he hadn't noticed before. His long arms went down into the barrel and, as he fumbled around, he hit something solid. He pulled out a book and stood petrified: it was *Blackstone's Commentary on English Law*.

Lincoln later wrote, "I stood there holding the book and looking up toward the heavens. There came a deep impression on me that God had something for me to do and He was showing he now that I had to get ready for it. Why this miracle otherwise?"

God's wonderful works which happen daily are lightly esteemed, not because they are of no import but because they happen so constantly and without interruption. Man is used to the miracle that God rules the world and upholds all creation, and because things daily run their appointed course, it seems insignificant, and no man thinks it worth his while to meditate upon it and to regard it as God's wonderful work, and yet it is a greater wonder than that Christ fed five thousand men with five loaves and made wine from water.

This story illustrates the providence of God in the most simple but profound ways. Simple ways that can change the course of history!

But without seeking to see where God would have us change the course of history, there is a world in which each and every one of us lives and the God that takes an interest in changing the course of the world, takes the same interest in ours.

One of the sins that we often commit, is to imagine that God is not interested in the things that make up our own life. But if we could see the many things that God has planned and performed in our aily lives we would be astonished, but we often pass over them, believing that they are just the circumstances that inhabit the loves of everyone else on the planet but that is not true. There is something unique about us, something that the world cannot have and it's the ability to see. What do I mean by this? I mean that this God whom we worship has made certain people in this world alive again by an act of His Holy Spirit and what was lame can now walk, what was once outcast has now been embraced, what was once, once dead has been made alive, what wasonce blind had been made alive..... Being born again is what God calls it. And those who are born again can now see things that they could not see before because they were blind.

**Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

I want you to take note that Jesus does not say **Except a man be born again, he WILL NOT see the kingdom of God**, as if he will not see the gates of heaven one day. No, he speaks in the present tense as if it were something that can be done now, in the present. That means that the Kingdom of God is also present with us and around us and it not a matter of whether God is working in this world but simply a matter of having our eyes opened by Him in order to see it..... being born again is the only way to see it.

**Joh 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

The world cannot understand it, but those born of the Spirit are led by the influence of the Lord and they are able to see it working around them, if they would simply open their eyes.

The providence of God is something that is very important for us to understand. The God that is revealed in the pages of the Bible is NOT a god who lives only in some ethereal realm that cannot be known. He is the type of God who **is not far from every one of us**: And if this is true for the unsaved then He closer to you as a saved child of His, so close that He has chosen tolive within you. And because he is in you, he directs your life now from the inside out.

If there is any purpose for this series of sermons it would be to help you begin to take a closer look at your life, to open your eyes to the working of God around you, to look back at your life and glorify God for how He brought you to where you are right now. If you are saved ( and I pray that you are) today, then how was it that you got saved? Who was involved? Which scriptures impacted you?

Which book has Jesus given to you at the bottom of the barrel? What grace had God given you that He wants you to take in order to follow Him in the way? Are you faithful enough to reach into your pocket and spend that last 50c in order to do what He wants you to do?

Last time I preached this message, I shared some of the things that the Lord had given us by His special providence. They included;

- 1. The child of God is before His presence at all times.**
- 2. He keeps them and guards their lives.**
- 3. He provided us His Word (the Bible)**

Today, I would like to share with you a few more things that He has given us by special providence.

## 1. THE PROVISION OF SALVATION

**Rom 6:22** But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

**Rom 6:23** For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Long before Adam and Eve ever sinned and the Lucifer fell along with a third of the angels, God had already made provision for the salvation of mankind through His only begotten Son.

This He chose to do by bestowing it as a gift rather than something to be earned. In this way he was able to demonstrate his loving grace, His justice by judging His only Son on the cross, and his wisdom throughout all ages. The scriptures teach us something very important about this plan of God.

**1Pe 1:18** Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

**1Pe 1:19** But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

**1Pe 1:20** Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

The lamb of God has been revealed in the person we know as Jesus Christ, the manifestation of the Son of God. Why a lamb? There were no lambs before the foundation of the world, there was no Old testament in place with its sacrifices, no priesthood, or Moses to receive the Ten commandments, no Egypt to keep the Jews captive till God rescued them with His mighty hand, no tabernacles or temples and so on.

For God to set up His only Son as the sacrifice for the sin of mankind, all of these things and millions more had to come to pass make it come to pass and achieve it's purpose..... yet providence made it happen.

What does this mean for you?

Well it means that somehow, if you are here today rejoicing in the salvation which you received as a gift from God through Jesus Christ, then God also knew that you would receive it, he knew your name, your circumstances, your heart. And He also knew all of this BEFORE the foundation of the earth... before the first atom came into being. Before there was time, God knew you and how He would get you to here....

But His plan of salvation was not just the work of His Son on a cross, it was an effort also of the third person of the Trinity. Remember, it was the work of the Spirit of God that was present in creation, in the writing of the scriptures which was a work over some 1500 years and no doubt its preservation was also a work of the Holy Spirit, it was the Spirit who would lead Jesus in His own life and throughout His ministry.

**Luk 4:1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,**

**And now, this same Spirit who worked in creation, who wrote the Bible and led Jesus every step of the way while on earth, now has been given by a special act of providence to you as God's child.**

## **2. GOD GIVES HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO HIS CHILDREN**

**1Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.**

**1Co 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

**1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.**

Now there are four important points to understand:

- a. We have received the Holy Spirit Who now lives within us – the world does not have Him.  
In contrast there
- b. His presence within us provides us the ability to be able to “know the things that are freely given to us of God”.... This is exactly what I have been speaking to you about – seeing the kingdom of God is about really understanding what God has given you and appreciating it.
- c. He teaches us God's wisdom and helps us to further understand spiritual things or more of the way God's Kingdom operates.
- d. The people of the world do not have Him therefore cannot understand spiritual things and it is foolishness for us to believe that they somehow should.

In addition to these works of the Holy Spirit in our lives, God's provision of His Spirit is essential in bringing God's church together.

**1Co 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.**

**1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.**

The water baptism we perform is a physical representation of what has happened to us in the Spirit. The Spirit of God has created a new body and brought each of us into it. Now there have been Christians from Pentecost until now and Christians in every country on this earth.

No think about that for the moment, when you received the Holy Spirit, the moment you got saved, he determined which church in which country you would become a part of. For though there's a universal church, God has determined Christians to become part of, to worship and serve within.

You are not here by accident, it is no coincidence but planned and if you are saved and believe that this is where God wants you to be then, I have something else to share with you about God's

providence for you.

### **3. GOD HAS GIVEN US THE CHURCH AND THOSE WITHIN IT**

**God gave us the church and those within it**

**Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;**

**Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:**

**Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**

**The people who minister in this church are God's provision to you. To help you to grow, to mature in the faith and learn to serve God Himself. The goal of ministers and every mature person in the church should be that:**

**Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**

There must be effort in order to achieve this, our desire must be to grow together. The church is indeed God's provision for you, for without it you and I would be on our own and we would not grow.

But one of the greatest lessons that you can learn in this life we now have, is that YOU are a provision of God to the rest of the church. Traffic does not only flow one way and the most miserable Christians around are those always seeking to get and gain from others, to extract as much as they can from others in the church when their goal should never have been to get but to give. For it's in giving that we find immense blessing.

For it's giving that is at the heart of God's providence for mankind and for us His children. Some children unfortunately never learn this and never fulfil their mission in life, their calling from the Lord. This is a sad story but more and more common in the church today.

This error is not only common but has even led to a corruption of the scriptures, the doctrines of demons that somehow God promised wealth, health and prosperity in this world.

God does not each us to be the consumers of the Kingdom of God, but in all of God's giving, he demonstrates that to give is more blessed than to receive. Giving of one's self is God's theme for He is always giving and He wants us to be the same as Him.

**GOD GAVE HIMSELF MIN JESUS CHRIST**

**Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

We are all familiar with this verse, that Jesus loves me and gave Himself for me. We know that Jesus Christ was given as a gift to mankind, this is the message of Christmas

**Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

But there is something else that we must not forget.

**2Co 5:18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;**

**2Co 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.**

Did you hear those words, have they sunk into your heart .... God was IN Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

### **GOD'S GREATEST PROVISION FOR MANKIND IS HIMSELF**

I gave you an illustration at the beginning of the sermon that showed the miracle that led to Abraham Lincoln becoming a lawyer which would lead him into politics and eventually to become the President of the United States and eradicate slavery in the US.

God's greatest gift is the gift of Himself. Why would I say this? Because when someone is offended by another, the normal thing to do is turn away and not allow that person to hurt them again. When a crime is committed against someone, the victim of the crime does not normally want to get to know the criminal better.

When a perfectly holy being creates a being in his own image, designed to be noble, holy, righteous, with the ability to comprehend truth, to be creative and to be able to experience love and show love, hope and disappointment, is then betrayed and abandoned by His own creation not once or twice but over and over and over in the history of mankind, what type of God just keeps on giving?

Because the bible says that God is love and at the very heart of loving is to give and give, even when you are hurt by those you give to. But the truth is that God wants us to give ourselves to Him

### **GOD HAS GIVEN US HIMSELF FULLY AND HE SIMPLY WANTS US TO GIVE OURSELVES TO HIM**

Include the story of Christophe Robin and the loss that the father felt when he thought that he had lost his son in the war. He also had huge regrets for not spending time with his son when just before the war was about to start, his son told him that he did not want all the publicity and fame that came with being the real Christopher robin, but that he simply wanted his father.

All his son really wanted was to be loved and have a loving relationship with his parents.

How small our minds become when we are caught up chasing the world and the things that we think will give us pleasure, and fortune and fame and neglect the one who really loves us and simply wants us to have a loving relationship with Him.

Do you have this special bond with the lover of your soul?

You cannot replace time spent with Jesus with anything else. Let me close with one more story of God providence and please see yourself in this story if you can.

K Hughes, *Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome*, Tyndale, 1988, p. 69.

### **Ira Sankey (Moody's Song Leader)**

It was Christmas Eve 1875 and Ira Sankey was traveling on a Delaware River steamboat when he was recognized by some of the passengers. His picture had been in the newspaper because he was the song leader for the famous evangelist D. L. Moody. They asked him to sing one of his own hymns, but Sankey demurred, saying that he preferred to sing William B. Bradbury's hymn, "Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us."

As he sang, one of the stanzas began, "We are Thine; do Thou befriend us. Be the Guardian of our way." When he finished, a man stepped from the shadows and asked, "Did you ever serve in the Union Army?" "Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, "in the spring of 1860."

Can you remember if you were doing picket duty on a bright, moonlit night in 1862?"

"Yes," Mr. Sankey answered, very much surprised.

"So did I, but I was serving in the Confederate army. When I saw you standing at your post, I thought to myself, 'That fellow will never get away alive.' I raised my musket and took aim. I was standing in the shadow, completely concealed, while the full light of the moon was falling upon you. At that instant, just as a moment ago, you raised your eyes to heaven and began to sing... 'Let him sing his song to the end,' I said to myself, 'I can shoot him afterwards.' He's my victim at all events, and my bullet cannot miss him.'

But the song you sang then was the song you sang just now. I heard the words perfectly: 'We are Thine; do Thou befriend us. Be the Guardian of our way.' Those words stirred up many memories. I began to think of my childhood and my God-fearing mother. She had many times sung that song to me. When you had finished your song, it was impossible for me to take aim again. I thought, 'The Lord who is able to save that man from certain death must surely be great and mighty.' And my arm of its own accord dropped limp at my side."

Have you opened up your eyes to God's provision for you? Come to Him now and trust Him fully.