

Christmas sermon series:

Experience the Miracle of Christmas

The Miracle of the Method - Romans 11

Romans 11:33 (HCSB)

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Romans 11:33 (AMP)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable (inscrutable, unsearchable) are His judgments (His decisions)! And how untraceable (mysterious, undiscoverable) are His ways (His methods, His paths)!

Introduction

For the past two Sundays, we have been speaking on the Christmas series: Experience the Miracle of Christmas. The First Sunday we spoke on **The Miracle the Moment (God's Moment, God's timing)**, Last Sunday we spoke on **The Miracle of the Message (Jesus was the Message, Jesus was the WORD and is the WORD)**, and today we will speak on **The Miracle of the Method. The word method means** A means or manner of procedure, especially a regular and systematic way of accomplishing something. Orderly arrangement of parts or steps to accomplish an end.

I. God's methods transcend us

Part of the miracle of Christmas is the miracle of the method. God's methods are beyond our comprehension. Paul writes in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!" (HCSB). Paul begins this doxology of praise to God focusing on the greatness of God and on how absolutely wonderful He is. His riches, wisdom and knowledge are great beyond measure. His methods are beyond our understanding. Honestly, when you think about God's methods throughout history, but in particular in the Christmas story there was always a plan, a method, even if we didn't understand. The bible tells us in *Proverbs 3:5 (AMP)*

⁵ Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.

If we were writing the script for the redemption of mankind, we would certainly have written it differently than God. He chose to reveal Himself to us in the greatest, grandest possible way, in a way that we could understand. So He came into the world as a helpless, defenseless baby. God chose to be born to humble, poor parents. He wasn't born in a palace but in a stable. He was born to a young couple whose hearts were pure but whose held no worldly influence. They were plain, ordinary, obscure individuals. Yet they were the ones God chose to be the parents of Jesus.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways. This is the LORD's declaration. For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." God's methods are different than our methods.

We shouldn't be surprised at God's methods. He chose Abraham to leave his home and travel to the place of promise. He chose Joseph, the next to youngest son of Jacob, to become the savior of his family. He chose Israel, the least significant nation, to be His special people. He chose David, the shepherd boy, and not any of his older brothers to become the king of Israel. He chose Bethlehem, a small, insignificant spot on the landscape of Israel, to be the birthplace for His Son.

Do you see the pattern being revealed? Over and over and over again, God chose plain, ordinary people through whom He could do His extraordinary work. How impossible it is for us to understand God's decisions and methods!

Luke records in his account of Christ's birth that Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to register for the census. While there the time came for the baby to be born. She wrapped her son in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. A manger is a feeding trough for animals. They stayed in a barn. That's not even a Motel 6! Joseph, being the good husband he was, probably tried to clean the trough out and put some clean straw in it, and move the manure away from the place where they were going to rest. But it was still a barn.

II. God's methods include us

To celebrate the occasion, angels announced the news of Christ's birth but to whom do they go and share this wonderful and wondrous news? That's right - shepherds! Not kings and queens, not even the religious or military leaders. God choose to make this grand announcement to simple shepherds fulfilling their responsibilities to care for their flocks. The more you think about, it the more incredible the whole story becomes! It's almost unbelievable. Part of the miracle of Christmas is the miracle of the method. God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things!

Think about this miracle of the method for just a minute. Following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared first to a group of women! Enough said. He didn't show up at the Temple and boast before the Sanhedrin and the religious leaders, "I told you so!" From a human perspective, we would write the script so that Jesus rises from the dead and then returns to Jerusalem to prove that He was right.

But God's plan was different. Following His resurrection, Jesus revealed Himself to His followers and gave them the responsibility to go and make disciples of all the world, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything He had commanded them. To that small band of followers, Jesus entrusted the Good News of salvation. Think about the magnitude of what Jesus did. The salvation of the world rested in the hands of these few followers - simple, ordinary people. How impossible it is for us to understand His decisions and methods!

Paul commented on this miracle of the method - that God uses ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary - work when he wrote:

"Brothers, consider your calling: Not many are wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world - what is viewed as nothing - to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one can boast in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-29, HCSB).

God's methods haven't changed. He still uses ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary work! Our abilities are not as important as our attitude and availability. God has entrusted to us the Good News of salvation. It's good for us that God can use even the simplest of vessels to accomplish great things.

III. God's methods sanctify us

But there is another aspect to this miracle of the method that we need to understand. God is at work in our lives in ways that we do not and cannot fully comprehend. In the same way that we would have written the script differently concerning the redemption of mankind, we would write the script differently for our sanctification. Once we begin that spiritual journey through faith in Christ, we would ever be growing in our love and devotion to Him. We would never have any problems. Life would be heavenly bliss until the day we finally arrive at our eternal home.

But we experience problems, pains, and pressures. We experience struggles and sickness. We experience temptations and failures. We take one step forward in our spiritual growth and follow it with three steps back. There are victories and celebrations accompanied by defeats and despair. This is not the way we would have it.

I can't answer all your questions as to why some things have happened in your life. But I can tell you that when going through circumstances we don't understand we are not left to despair. We can trust that God is at work in our lives for our good. We must choose to believe that God is working to shape us and mold us so that we become more like Jesus. This requires us to believe what He has promised us in ***Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose."***

Even when the angel appeared to Mary to tell her she would be the mother of God's Son, there was no way she could have predicted all that revelation would mean for her. Joseph had no idea what would be involved when he obediently responded to the angel's message not to divorce Mary but to take her as his wife. Joseph and Mary endured shame, accusation, embarrassment, and ridicule. But they also experienced the miracle of seeing God become flesh right before their eyes. They saw God! The cost of obediently following God's plan was worth it for the prize of drawing near to God.

God is at work in our lives to produce a beautiful tapestry. From our perspective here on earth we only see the back of the embroidery. But the front reveals a beautiful picture. We are looking at the underneath side and don't understand why it looks so ugly, why it seems so confusing. It is impossible for us to understand all the different knots and colors and seemingly random directions our lives have taken.

But one day, we will finally be able to see from the top side this tapestry God has been weaving of us. We will then be able to see how the seasons of pain brought some rich, vibrant colors to our tapestry. We will see the fullness and richness of the design reflected in the seasons of joy and celebration. We will see the depth of character revealed through the times of testing and trusting. Therefore, we must continue to trust that He is at work and that He is working for our good!

Continue to trust God, even though you don't understand how He is at work in your life. Continue to follow Him and your life will be richly blessed! The miracle of the method is that God uses ordinary people like you and me to accomplish extraordinary things for the sake of His kingdom. The miracle of the method is also that God is at work in our lives in ways that we do not understand. Therefore we must choose to trust what we know to be true because of what He has revealed through His Son. We must choose to believe that God is working in us and through us for our good and His glory. He is at work weaving a beautiful tapestry that will one day be revealed for all to see.

Prayer

God of the universe, heavenly Father, oh how wonderful you are. How great are your riches, wisdom, and knowledge. But we would also confess that it is impossible for us to completely understand your methods. Your ways are not our ways, nor are your thoughts our thoughts. Forgive us for trying to fit you into a neat, little box. We confess that many times we feel frustrated and confused by the things that happen in our lives. Help us to

remember that you love us and are at work in our lives for our good and your glory. Help us to continue to trust you even when we don't understand how you are working.

Lord, you have chosen to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things for your kingdom. Please use me. I ask you Lord to please take my life and use me in whatever way you decide to extend your kingdom here on earth. Thank you for the confidence you have placed in me by entrusting to me the responsibility of sharing the Good News of salvation with those around me. Thank you for loving me through all you do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.