

A Random Christmas | Notes - Luke 1:1-4, 26-38; Ephesians 1:11

Adapted from North Pointe Ministries

We have an insatiable desire to find meaning and purpose in even the most random events in life. We long for a meta-narrative: a comprehensive explanation of history and experience. If we can find it, we feel there's a purpose to everything—that this story is going somewhere.

When tragedy strikes, we ask why. We want to find purpose in pain. We want our suffering to connect to something purposeful. We naturally assume there is a purpose. We say, "Everything happens for a reason." "I don't believe in coincidence." "You just haven't met the right person yet." "I guess it wasn't meant to be." When Christians connect dots in these random events we often call it a "God thing."

The Christmas story is a reminder that the thing in us that wants the dots to connect is not to be ignored. The world isn't as random as we might think. There really is a story. And more importantly, there's a divine story.

Luke 1:26-33 (NLT) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, 27 to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. 28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

On occasion, God dropped directly into the lives of men and women to push the flywheel of his plan.

It's like God showed up in history and said, "*No. Don't you understand? This isn't about the plans of man. This is about the will of God. Every one of those kingdoms and empires came and went by my declaration. When you look at the details and the history, you may not see my hand. But understand: **life is not random.** I am the God of purpose, and everything happens because of my will.*"

But for the most part, our days seem to be made up of mostly random events.

Mary doesn't hear from the angel again. And things get back to random, only worse. Now she's pregnant and riding a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem (about 80 miles). Doesn't that sound like a fun journey to take when you are nine months pregnant? Where is the angel now?

Everybody's is staring 'cause she's showing but she can't tell them her story. When Miss "*Favored of God*" finally arrives, there is nowhere to stay. She and Joseph end up having their baby in a barn.

Then they learn that Herod wants to kill their child. So, it's back on the donkey for another 200-mile hike to Egypt. Later, she gets the worse news imaginable. Herod slaughtered every boy two years and under in Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity. How could she not feel responsible?

On which branch of the "purpose tree" was Mary supposed to hang all of that?

And, what was she supposed to do with the rest of her child's story? The day this woman who was "favored-of-God" would listen as her miracle child is beaten, mocked, and crucified. At that moment, it was just another senseless Roman execution. It was just one more random act of violence in a world filled with it. Jesus was a nobody and would be remembered by no one except for a broken-hearted Galilean mother.

We know the end of that story, but she did not. We can clearly see that there was nothing random about this story at all. This story clearly reveals a powerful lesson about Faith.

Faith doesn't move God. Faith moves us to trust God when he doesn't seem to be moving.

Faith is to respond to the seemingly random events of life as if they are part of the perfect plan of God.

Paul put it in theological terms when he wrote:

Ephesians 1:11 (NLT) Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and *he makes everything work out according to his plan.*

Mary put it in very personal terms when she said to the angel:

Luke 1:38 (NLT) Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. *May everything you have said about me come true.*" And then the angel left her.

We want to know where to hang everything on the tree. We want to know the order and the relationship. But, it is not our responsibility to know where. Our responsibility is to believe that everything has a place on the tree, whether we know where it goes or not.

If we could see it all as coming from God's hands, we could respond in a way that allows God to create purpose from randomness.

We were created to look for purpose.

Sometimes we find it. Sometimes we don't. Sometimes we find it immediately. Sometimes we find it eventually. Christmas reminds us that life is not as random as it seems. There is a story taking place, a divine story. And if we choose, we can participate. ***"I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."*** (Luke 1:38)

Talk about It

- *What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.*
- *What is your most cherished family Christmas tradition and why is it special to you?*
- *Read **Luke 1:1-4**. Do you think of the story of Christ's birth as a fairy tale or an "orderly account" based on the testimony of eyewitnesses? Explain.*
- *Is it easy or difficult for you to believe that everything in life happens for a purpose and according to God's will? Why?*
- *Talk about a time when a season of tragedy or suffering caused you to wonder if life had purpose and meaning.*
- *Read **Luke 1:38**. Can you imagine praying a similar prayer? What's stopping you?*
- *Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?*