

Life Group Notes

Sunday 4th October 2020

Speaker: Sean Green

Title: Luke: Providence of God

Passage: Luke 2: 1-7

Read Luke 2v1-7

Palestine and God's people are under the hobnailed sandals & the short sword of Imperial Rome. Caesar Augustus exerts his authority decreeing a census, he wants to know who he can tax. Joseph make the 70mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem with his pregnant fiancé. When they arrive, Bethlehem is heaving and there's no room for them. Mary gives birth amongst the animals, and places her firstborn son in a manger, the place where animals eat.

The Providence of God: God is continually involved in all created things, directing them to fulfil his purposes. The Place (Bethlehem), the timing (common language, Roman roads, Roman peace) are noteworthy: God sends light and hope at just right time. God uses civil authorities (Augustus and Quirinus), cultural moments (census) and people (Wagging tongues of Nazareth) to outwork His plans. Rom 8v28, Gen 50v20, Proverbs 16v9, Proverbs 21v1. We can presume upon the unceasing activity of the Creator God, guiding and governing all events, circumstances and people to its appointed goal for His glory.

Humility before glory: Note the way in which Christ was born: 'Glory' is not the first word that comes to mind. Oppressed people don't have glory, honour or power. BUT an invisible power (God's providence) is behind and over all human rulers. Jesus is born where no child should be born. In the kingdom of God, first comes humility, then comes glory. True greatness is not always visible greatness.

"When we by faith view the Son of God being made man and lying in a manger, our vanity, our ambition, and envy are checked. We cannot, with this object rightly before us, seek great things for ourselves or our children". Matthew Henry

No room: In some ways, we were like Joseph and Mary, oppressed by a tyrant (Sin), forced to go places that were overcrowded and where there was no room for Jesus. Nevertheless he found a way to come to us, and established himself in our lives. But, like the overcrowded hearts of Jerusalem, where there was no room for Jesus but on a cross, we too sometimes allow our hearts to become overcrowded with many other things such that Jesus is relegated to the margins of our lives.

Questions:

- How does the theology of the providence of God comfort you? Please share your stories of how God has used difficult/unusual/challenging circumstances for your good and His glory.
- As glory is a high value in the world that we occupy, how do we keep recalibrating our view that humility (invisible greatness) is highly valued and esteemed by God.
- What is provoked in you as you read and meditate on Matthew Henry's quote above?
- Are you aware that you have an overcrowded heart at the moment? Spend time praying as a group that the glory of Jesus would, by his Spirit, fill our hearts such that there wouldn't be space for other things.