

# Devotions

## **Staff Devotions 17 October 2017-**

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I want to share some Old Testament stories this morning of what I call “God coincidences”. Coincidences in inverted commas because they are not coincidences at all but the Divine plan of God in action.

These three are from the Old Testament and there are many more in the New.

Esther 2:21-23-<sup>21</sup> *One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king’s gate, two of the king’s eunuchs, Bigthana<sup>[a]</sup> and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king’s private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. <sup>22</sup> But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. <sup>23</sup> When an investigation was made and Mordecai’s story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in The Book of the History of King Xerxes’ Reign.*

An interesting story, involving capital punishment but here is the God ‘coincident’ in Chapter 6. It is some time later-Esther is already Queen.

*That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him.<sup>2</sup> In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king’s private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes.*

<sup>3</sup> *“What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?” the king asked.*

*His attendants replied, “Nothing has been done for him.”*

<sup>4</sup> *“Who is that in the outer court?” the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the pole he had prepared.*

<sup>5</sup> So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered. <sup>6</sup> So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" <sup>7</sup> So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, <sup>8</sup> he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden—one with a royal emblem on its head. <sup>9</sup> Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'"

<sup>10</sup> "Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!"

**The servant of King Xerxes just happened to be reading from the book of The History of King Xerxes Reign in order to put the King to sleep and he just happened to be awake at the part about Mordecai. And Haman who hates Mordecai and wants him dead just happens to be just outside the Kings bedroom at that very moment so Haman is forced to honour the man he hates—that he had been plotting to kill!! Mordecai is honoured, Haman is humbled!**

**Later we see that Haman who has sharpened a pole to impale Mordecai on, is himself impaled on that very pole!**

### **What a coincident!**

Here's another great "God coincident".

In 2 Kings 4-Elisha has taken over the ministry from Elijah and this beautiful story of a woman's faith and God's power is recorded

*One day Elisha went to the town of Shunem. A wealthy woman lived there, and she urged him to come to her home for a meal. After that, whenever he passed that way, he would stop there for something to eat.*

<sup>9</sup> She said to her husband, "I am sure this man who stops in from time to time is a holy man of God. <sup>10</sup> Let's build a small room for him on the roof and furnish it with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. Then he will have a place to stay whenever he comes by."

<sup>11</sup> One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to this upper room to rest. <sup>12</sup> He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman from Shunem I want to speak to her." When she appeared, <sup>13</sup> Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her, 'We appreciate the kind concern you have shown us. What can we do for you? Can we put in a good word for you to the king or to the commander of the army?'"

"No," she replied, "my family takes good care of me."

<sup>14</sup> Later Elisha asked Gehazi, "What can we do for her?"

Gehazi replied, "She doesn't have a son, and her husband is an old man."

<sup>15</sup> "Call her back again," Elisha told him. When the woman returned, Elisha said to her as she stood in the doorway, <sup>16</sup> "Next year at this time you will be holding a son in your arms!"

"No, my lord!" she cried. "O man of God, don't deceive me and get my hopes up like that."

<sup>17</sup> But sure enough, the woman soon became pregnant. And at that time the following year she had a son, just as Elisha had said.

<sup>18</sup> One day when her child was older, he went out to help his father, who was working with the harvesters. <sup>19</sup> Suddenly he cried out, "My head hurts! My head hurts!"

His father said to one of the servants, "Carry him home to his mother."

<sup>20</sup> So the servant took him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But around noontime he died. <sup>21</sup>

**The woman of Shunem travels to find Elisha the man of God. She insists that he come back with her to see her dead son. She believes that Elisha has the power of God to heal her boy and raise him back to life.**

**The story continues in verse 32...**

<sup>32</sup> When Elisha arrived, the child was indeed dead, lying there on the prophet's bed. <sup>33</sup> He went in alone and shut the door behind him and prayed to the LORD. <sup>34</sup> Then he lay down on the child's body, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands. And as he stretched out on him, the child's body began to grow warm again! <sup>35</sup> Elisha got up, walked back and forth across the room once, and then stretched himself out again on the child. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

<sup>36</sup> Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. "Call the child's mother!" he said. And when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son!" <sup>37</sup> She fell at his feet and bowed before him, overwhelmed with gratitude. Then she took her son in her arms and carried him downstairs.

What a lovely story! What a miracle! What an amazing woman! But the story is not over...

Here is the 'God coincident' 4 Chapters later in 2 Kings 8

*Elisha had told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, "Take your family and move to some other place, for the LORD has called for a famine on Israel that will last for seven years."* <sup>2</sup> So the woman did as the man of God instructed. She took her family and settled in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

<sup>3</sup> After the famine ended she returned from the land of the Philistines, and she went to see the king about getting back her house and land. <sup>4</sup> As she came in, the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. The king had just said, "Tell me some stories about the great things Elisha has done." <sup>5</sup> And Gehazi was telling the king about the time Elisha had brought a boy back to life. **At that very moment**, the mother of the boy walked in to make her appeal to the king about her house and land.

"Look, my lord the king!" Gehazi exclaimed. "Here is the woman now, and this is her son—the very one Elisha brought back to life!"

<sup>6</sup> "Is this true?" the king asked her. And she told him the story. So he directed one of his officials to see that everything she had lost was restored to her, including the value of any crops that had been harvested during her absence.

**The woman from Shumen just happens to be at the Kings palace at the very moment. She just happens to walk in when Gehazi is in the middle of the story of the miracle of her son being brought back to life and because she happens to be there the King acts on her request and then she is able to have her land restored to her.**

Here is “God coincidence” number 3

In Ruth 2:1-3 *Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi’s husband, Elimelech.*

<sup>2</sup> *One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.”*

*Naomi replied, “All right, my daughter, go ahead.”* <sup>3</sup> *So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. **And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.***

**As it happens,** Ruth the widow just happens to be gathering grain in the field of Boaz the wealthy and influential man who is related to Naomi!! God orchestrates it so Ruth meets Boaz. Their marriage is a symbol of God’s redemption of his people and it is through Ruth and Boaz that the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, Jesus comes!

**As it happened, it so occurred, at that very moment.** These phrases are peppered throughout the bible. They show God at work behind the scenes shaping and orchestrating the minutiae of the lives of the characters in the Bible just as he is orchestrating the small details in our lives.

The New Testament is full of stories of God coincidences-Jesus, God in human form, arrives at a wedding just as the wine runs out in order to perform his first miracle, a storm comes up when Jesus is with the disciples on the Sea of Galilee and he shows God’s power by calming the storm, he is “too late” to heal Lazarus or Jairus’s daughter while they are alive so he has to raise them from the dead, With the apostles too there are God coincidences-the apostles just happening to come across a crippled man who needs their healing, a demon possessed slave girl or a blind man. Paul is shipwrecked and then bitten by a deadly snake when collecting firewood-so God’s power may be revealed and those on the Island of Malta with him can see God’s power and come to faith in God!

## **But what do God Coincidences tell us?**

At least three things;

1) **God is sovereign.** God is in control. He can control what a King reads and when, where you end up working or gathering grain, and who you meet along the way. The Bible is littered with stories of these God coincidences that show that God is sovereignly, divinely orchestrating what goes on in your life and my life, so that what He wants to happen will happen.

At the law firm I work for we have a number of client's who are Catholic or lapsed Catholic. They have been abused by the Catholic Church. They still believe that God is sovereign but they often see Him as a distant, even an angry God.

A lot of people in society today would have no trouble believing that God can send earthquakes, that he flooded the world in the time of Noah or that he allows the Asian Tsunami. Yes, they believe that God is all powerful-but they do not believe he is all loving!

But these stories so clearly show us from these God coincidences that:

2) **God is loving-** Why would a distant and angry God care which field Ruth works in or that the woman from Shunem get her land back or in that amazing miracle preceding it-that her precious son is brought back to life, or that Mordecai is honoured and Haman is the one who has to do it?

Why would God care about the small things in my life? God is the Creator of the universe would he really care about the small issues of my small life?

**In Luke 12:6 Jesus** says *"What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins<sup>[a]</sup>? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. <sup>7</sup>And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.*

God does care. God cares that wrongs are righted, people are restored, that relationships are mended. God loves us we are valuable to Him and

### **3) God wants to bring us good (so that we may bring Him glory)!!**

God is in control and he loves us. He cares about even the small areas of your life the seemingly insignificant things. He cares who you meet, what conversations you have today. He cares about your job and your family. Those little things and also the big things he orchestrates so that your life goes according to His plan. He lets troubles and suffering come too. Not because he isn't powerful or in control. Not because he doesn't love us or care for our pain but because he is shaping us for our good. To be more like Jesus. These God coincidences are designed to show us His glory.

I met a friend at the Pacifica cafe a few weeks back and she told me this story. She said that when she was young she had met this great guy I will call Steve, through mutual friends and they had gone out together once. He was such a lovely guy, a man of God and they got on amazingly well. Then he never called. Some weeks went by and she met up with a friend for coffee who she thought would understand as this friend fancied Steve's best friend. The two friends caught up for coffee near the beach and decided to go for a walk together on the beach. They were walking along and they were chatting about Steve (and his best friend) and considering reasons why Steve hadn't called. As they were walking along the beach two young men came into view walking towards them. They looked and it was Steve and his best friend!

My friend married Steve, and they have been married more than 20 years! God is in control-he knew they would both be at the beach-that Steve in typical male style had lost my friends number and in pre mobile days would have no chance of finding her. He placed them at the beach at that time and led them to be together serving him to this day.

I am sure we all have stories of "God coincidences" in our own lives. But we have to choose to see them. We can choose to ignore them or we can have a sceptical attitude! Or we can see them as the work of the Holy Spirit guiding and shaping our lives!

Last week a friend of mine from work was in a serious car accident. A truck driver had a heart attack and crossed the centre of the road at speed T-boning her car. The week before that friend had brought a new car (this car was now a write off!) The airbags in the new car saved her life! Coincidence? I think not! God knew that what would happen before she even got out of bed last Monday. Choosing to see God at work in our lives comes from a spirit of gratitude and a desire to be in relationship with a sovereign and loving God.

A God coincidence may have led to the job you have, the person you married the friends you've made, the church you go to.

God is in control, he loves us and orchestrates the small details of our lives to bring us good because he cares for us and because he wants us to use those "God coincidences" to grow in our relationship with Him so that we bring **Him Glory!**

*Devotions*