

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *The Full Picture of Christmas*, this sermon communicates that the events of Jesus' arrival on earth were part of the sovereign plan of God. Nothing about it was accidental. God's plan for Jesus would suggest that God has a plan for us too. The first step in fulfilling that plan is our redemption – the very thing that Jesus came to do.

Introduction: Accident. Coincidence. Happenstance. Fluke. These are terms we use to describe the positive and negative events of our lives. In one sense, thinking of our lives as a series of accidents gives us some comfort. We don't have to take responsibility for accidents. There was little or nothing we could do to prevent them. We don't have to understand coincidence. There is no meaning to what happens. Life just is. Take it as it comes.

But what if there is a plan? What if there is a God who is sovereign over the universe including your life? Accepting this would mean that nothing is accidental. God, through direct action or omniscient oversight is aware of and in control of all that occurs. And He is using life's events, large and small to accomplish His overall goals and bring about a positive end. Everything then has meaning, even the birth of one male child to an insignificant couple in the tiny town of Bethlehem.

1. **God planned the timing.** *"fullness of the time"*

Have you ever wondered why Jesus came to earth when He did? Sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden. Jesus could have come as Eve's first child. But He didn't. He waited several thousand years and was born to a different mother. Why? What made the timing of Jesus' birth the *right* time?

Historians and theologians have made suggestions. The Greek language was well-known and widely used which eased communication between people whose native tongues varied. Roman roads and the Roman peace made the transportation of goods, information and ideas much more profitable and frequent than in previous times. The current occupying force in Israel invented an effective means of torture called crucifixion – necessary to fulfill the prophecy concerning Jesus' means of death. While all these are true, are these what made the time right? You can ask the Father one day if you're still interested when you see Him.

Of greater significance for us is the realization that there *was* a right time. God had a plan for His Son. And God has a plan for His adopted sons too. Nothing happens by chance. We may never understand the event or its timing, but we know the God who planned it is good. So we trust, and we submit.

2. **God planned the person.** *"His Son made of a woman"*

Why Mary? What made God choose her as the one who would birth the Messiah? Mary wondered the same thing. There was nothing we know of that made her special. She was a virgin, but at that time in history, virgins weren't

hard to find. She and Joseph were both in King David's family line and had Bethlehem as their ancestral home. Surely there were others who met this criteria. But God's plan was to use Mary.

God has chosen to use you too. You are a part of His plan. I know. You wonder how or why God would include you in His grand orchestra. "I'm nothing special." You say it to yourself, and those around you echo it back into your ears. "Nothing special." Even in the verse we are considering, the Spirit highlights Mary's "unspecialness" by referring to her as just "a woman."

You don't have to be unique to be part of God's plan. You just have to be obedient. Being obedient makes you special. God is great, so you don't have to be. He can bring miracles from willing vessels. Let Him work through you.

3. **God planned the limitations.** *"made under the law"*

Jesus came as a human baby. He had to gain control of His bowels. Walking and talking were skills He learned. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. His parents did not always understand Him nor did they fully grasp the significant role He would play. He developed relationships and felt the sting of betrayal and loss. The law of death limited the amount of time He had to complete His mission.

Jesus came as a Jew. This put further limitations on Him. The Law, both the portion instituted by God and that which was added by the religious authorities, governed Jesus' world. Jesus' parents took Him to the temple to fulfill the requirements of the Law. The Pharisees often questioned Jesus' actions based on their perception of His adherence to the Law. And at the end of Jesus' life, they used the Law to condemn Him to death.

The Infinite One took on the limitations of His creation. He was made like us to identify with us in our weakness (Heb. 4:15). Whatever limitations you face, know that Jesus understands them and that He can use you regardless of them. God planned them for you. He will receive glory when you rise above them through His power.

4. **God planned the purpose.** *"to redeem them"*

God's actions are never haphazard, nor are they reckless. The Father did not send His Son to the earth to see what would happen. He knew the eventual outcome. His own people would reject Him and then kill Him. From the Father's eternal perspective, Jesus' sacrificial death was a given at the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Jesus stated His reason for being here – to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Rescue. That was the Father's planned purpose in sending Jesus. So when Isaiah prophesied a virgin birth, and a Wonderful Counselor, and a Suffering Servant, all these circumstances and roles came together in a Messiah. We were lost. We needed rescue. Only Jesus could give what we needed.

Conclusion: I know you have endured portions of your life where you believed no one was in control. Maybe you're going through one now. A car accident. A negative report from the doctor. Relationship turmoil. Job uncertainty. A financial mess. How could it all possibly fit together? It certainly doesn't appear that God is directing your life. And if He is, it would sure be nice if He would communicate the specifics of the plan to you.

Whenever you are tempted to wonder about the presence of God in the details, take another look at the life of Jesus. Trust that God's timing is always flawless. It might not be when you want, but it is ideal. Trust that you and the other people involved in your story are God's superb choice for the scene being played out. Trust that the

omnipotent God can use your limitations to bring about His glory. And trust that God has an eternal purpose for all that He brings or allows into your life.

God's perfect plan resulted in Jesus' death on the cross, but that wasn't the end of the story. Jesus triumphantly rose from the dead. And Jesus will return in glory. God's purpose is for you to stand perfect with Jesus. Will you yield to His purpose for your life?

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