**Luke 2 – June 1**

Let me start off today’s devotion by pointing out something that should be obvious to you after reading Luke 2: this particular Gospel has some long chapters. These chapters are filled with multiple stories. In a single chapter, Luke often covers the span of many years. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, though, there is always a common thread! We could take this many different directions (each narrative has its own themes), but today we will focus on the providence of God. Providence, loosely defined, is God’s act of governing the universe. Said differently, providence is the hand of God at work in the world. Providence is God’s sovereignty in action. Though providence is on display in even the most miniscule of events, it is perhaps most worship-inducing when it comes to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Go read Acts 4:27-28 to see what I mean!

Now, back to Luke 2, our text for the day. Let’s take a look at God’s providence at work in the life of Jesus. First of all, we have the birth of Christ. In case you forgot, Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. But Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth. How incredible, then, that God places in the heart of Caesar the desire to take a census of the entire Roman Empire. And he required that each man would return to his hometown. Therefore, Joseph and his pregnant wife, Mary, pack up and head to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born and wrapped in swaddling cloths (Luke 2:7). Luke next turns to the shepherds. Angels come to them singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14). We could do a few more devotions just on that line. But for today, let’s just admire the fact that God is in control of all of it. Joseph and Mary are relative nobodies (of course, we know how vital they are to the biblical story). Caesar, on the other hand, is probably the most important man in the world at the time. And God turns his heart like a stream (Prov. 21:1) in order to get these relative nobodies to the place they must be.

The chapter concludes with two short narratives after the birth of Christ. In the first, Simeon finally sees Jesus. Recall, Simeon was promised that he would see the Messiah before his death. I love his response in verses 29-32: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” This is clearly a reference to promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, that God would bless Israel that she may be a blessing to all nations. Notice Simeon’s comment: God’ salvation has been prepared. In verse 34 he reiterates: this child is appointed for the fall and rising of man.” The theme behind these verses, indeed, behind the entire biblical narrative, is that God is actively guiding it himself. This may be more philosophy than you bargained for today, but the term is primary causation. God is the first and primary cause of *all things*. He is the only being that is not contingent upon anything else. He exists in and of himself. That is not the case for anything else in the cosmos. Nothing happens without God’s permission, in a sense. Everything else is secondary. This is cause for great rejoicing. When something great happens, we obviously thank God for it and exult in his kindness. But when something bad happens, this doctrine is a bit tougher. But again, we should rejoice. If there are evil things happening outside of God’s control, they serve no purpose other than our suffering. But if God is in control of even evil things, then they are serving a purpose: they are doing something for our good (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 8:28).