

God in Our Common Life

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes God's constant presence and guidance in our everyday lives, urging us to recognize and respond to divine opportunities for service and connection with others.

Scripture: Matthew 10:29

Topics: "God's Presence in Daily Life", "Divine Providence"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that God is intricately involved in the small events of our daily lives, often without our conscious awareness. He illustrates how divine providence guides our decisions and encounters, suggesting that every meeting and experience is part of God's plan. Miller uses biblical examples, such as the story of Elisha and Philip, to demonstrate that God orchestrates our paths for a greater purpose. He encourages believers to recognize the sacredness of their everyday interactions and to respond to divine opportunities with love and service. Ultimately, Miller reassures us that God is present in every aspect of our lives, even in our struggles and challenges.

Transcript

We sometimes forget that God has anything to do with the small events of our every-day lives. Men seem to be living a life of their own, without reference to God, without being influenced by him, without receiving help from him. They are not conscious of God. They go on working out their own schemes, following their own judgment, deciding questions for themselves, and seem rarely to become aware that there is any divine intervention in their lives. Yet nothing is truer, than that God is always moving in our lives, in every life, in the smallest affairs of each life. He may not audibly speak to us, telling us what to do. He may not seem to break into our plans, setting them aside when they are not wise or good. Yet he guides us in making our choices and decisions, and then cooperates with us in carrying them out, influencing us oftentimes when we know it not.

We decide to take a journey, going by a certain route; then God leads us so that our route is changed and we are led some other way. Perhaps in our journey we come upon one who needs us, and we do him some kindness, and all life for us or for him is different ever afterward. All of life is full of God. The teachings of Christ make this very clear. He tells us that our heavenly Father feeds the birds. Two sparrows, he says, are sold for a penny, they are of so little worth, yet God does not forget even one of them. "You are of more value than many sparrows," and therefore God's care for you is many times more constant and more interested and tender.

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." This does not need to mean that God actually counts our hairs and knows if one falls from our head and is lost. It means that he is interested in all the most minute events and circumstances of our lives. Nothing that concerns us is too small to be considered by him. He is near us in everything, helping, using, directing.

There is a beautiful Old Testament story which gives us a glimpse of the reality of the unseen world that always surrounds us. The servant of Elisha rose early, and, looking out at the window, saw a huge army surrounding the city. He was greatly alarmed, and cried, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" The prophet's answer was, "Fear not; for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened, and he had a vision of a world he had not seen before. "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha!"

This was not a mere dream, nor a picture shown to this young man to quiet his dread. It was a glimpse of a reality which always exists. If we could see the things of the invisible world, we would discover that every life is surrounded by divine protection as actual and invincible as that which was about the prophet that morning. If we could see things as they are--we would find that every life is divinely guarded, and every step divinely ordered. This is what we call "divine providence". About every godly life, angels encamp. In God we live and move and have our being. "God is on the field--when he is most invisible."

Not only is God with us in intimate companionship--but he works with us. We think we have done something good or beautiful, when really God has done it through us or working with us. A man was driving a pair of fine horses one day in the country. His little son sat beside him and held the lines in his hands. The boy was very proud at his achievement in driving. He had not noticed, however, that in back of his hands--his father's were also on the lines. In turning a curve in the road the little fellow felt one of the lines firmly drawn through his hand. He now saw how it was. Looking into his father's face, he said, "I thought I was driving, father--but I am not!" Just so, we think we are driving, that we are doing certain things--when we are not! God's hands are in back of ours.

We have an illustration of this divine activity in the affairs of the world, in the book of Acts, in the story of Philip's being sent to the desert. He was preaching in the city of Samaria with great power and success. Then suddenly he was directed by the Spirit to leave this work and go out alone on a desert road. He did not know where he was going, or why. Nobody lived in the desert. What could the Master want him to do out there? Yet he asked no questions. The narrative describes a beautiful heroism of faith in four words, "He arose and went." For a time he journeyed on obediently, without learning what the Lord wanted with him in that lonely place.

At length he saw a chariot driving across the desert. Impelled by an irresistible impulse, he ran toward the chariot. As he drew near, he saw a man sitting in it, reading a book. The man in the chariot wore the dress of a person of high rank. The man on foot felt an impulse to speak to the nobleman riding. So he opened conversation and asked him if he understood what he was reading. Perhaps he saw a troubled or perplexed look on the face of the traveler. It came out presently that the man in the chariot was greatly in need of a spiritual guide. It was a striking coincidence, that here was the very man the nobleman needed to teach him the meaning of the Scripture that he could not understand. Philip sat beside him and explained to him the words he was reading, showing him a revealing of Christ in them.

The meeting of the two men out there in the desert was not accidental. It had all been divinely arranged for. We plainly see the providence in this particular instance. Usually we do not see God so plainly in our

life's experiences--but he is always in each one--as really as he was in this case. We are continually in the midst of divine providences. We go out on some simple journey, never thinking that it may have a meaning besides and beyond our own little business or pleasure, that God has a definite purpose in it. Presently we meet someone, perhaps a stranger, and discover that the meeting has not been an accidental one. We have been sent to this person on a sacred errand. He needs us--there is something God wants us to do for him. There are no accidental meetings of people. God arranges that certain people shall cross our path at a definite moment. They are discouraged, and we can put a little cheer into their hearts. They are carrying a heavy burden--we cannot lift away the burden, for it is God's gift, and it would rob them of blessing and good to relieve them of it--but we may put new strength into their hearts, and thus make them more able to go on with their loads.

We are told just before the narrative of the woman at the well, that Jesus "must needs pass through Samaria." Wearied with his journey, he sat down to rest by the well. This was the human part. It seemed accidental. Then a woman came to the well to draw water. This was God sending one who sorely needed help to him, who was not too weary to show a kindness which meant everlasting life to a sinful soul.

This is the meaning of every happening that comes into our lives. There is "no chance". In the parable of the good Samaritan we are told of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, who was attacked by robbers that stripped him, beat him, and left him by the roadside half dead. The record says, "By chance a certain priest was going down that way." "By chance," that is, by coincidence, at the same time, just when he was needed. God sent the priest. It was all arranged and timed--that he should be at the place just when the man had been left by the roadside bleeding, almost dead. The timely coming that way of the priest at the very moment of need, we call, more devoutly, a providence.

People tell you how, often, just in the nick of time, something happened which saved them from impending danger of which they did not know. They say it was providential. This is what the word chance means in this parable. "Providentially a certain priest was going down that way just then." We are continually sent, providentially, that we may be at the place of need at the moment of need. It is not an accident that you are thrown some day with a man who is in trouble, needing help. Did you give the help God had planned and arranged to have you there at that moment to give?

It was not chance that brought Jesus to the well of Jacob that day, just before the woman came to draw water. God guided that meeting. It was providential, we would say. That is the divine side of the meaning of the words, "He must needs pass through Samaria." And Jesus did not fail God--he did not pass by on the other side. He was weary, so weary that he could not go any farther--but sat down to rest while his disciples went on to the town to buy some food. He might have said that he was too tired to talk to this woman when she came down to get water. That is what some people say, some Christian people, too, when, providentially, a human need, a sorrow, a heart-hunger, meets them. "I am too tired. I am worn out. I do not feel well enough to do anything!" or, "I have put on my house-coat and my slippers, and I cannot go out again tonight." But we never should fail God when providentially, he brings some piece of love's duty to our hand. No matter how weary we are, we should arise and do the work, give the relief, comfort the sorrowful, care for the orphan, visit the sick man, be a friend to the lonely one, care for the soul of the man for whom nobody else is caring.

Life is full of God. He is always coming to us. On our lightest days he faces us continually with some new task for our hands. We meet people as strangers, perhaps riding with them for a few miles on a railway train, or down town on the trolley car, and the opportunity is given to say a word whose influence may

change a life, showing the face of Christ to one who knew him not, revealing a thought of comfort which makes a sorrowing heart stronger to go on with its load of grief. Even chance meetings are providential opportunities, arranged by God himself, for helping his children.

We do not begin to know how holy all our life is, how full of God. Perhaps the person you are sitting with and talking to--needs the words you have ready on your lips to speak. They are words of life, eternal life, which you do not get time to speak, because there are so many idle words that insist on being spoken.

You may never see your friend again, and therefore your parting, though but until tomorrow, as you suppose, should be kindly and affectionate, fit for a last parting. You do not know that it may not be the last!

God is in every experience of life. If sickness comes, you "must needs" pass through it. It is not accidental. It is not to be an empty experience. The time in the sick-room, is not meant to be lost time. There will be duties, there will be lessons to learn, there will be blessings to receive. If sorrow comes, you "must needs" pass through it. It will not be an easy way--but the "must needs" will make it sacred, God's way, and if you pass through it reverently, trustingly, with acquiescence, the way will be bright with God's presence. If it should be the way of death, you must needs walk in it, and the "must needs" will make it the divinely chosen way for you, a way shining with love and joy.

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