

December 11, 2011

When God Messes Up Your Plans

Luke 1:26-35

Rev. Jean Smith

When you think about it, Jesus' coming into the world messed up a lot of people's plans. In fact, it messed up just about everybody's plans. There were many people who hoped that their eldest son would be the Messiah. They were disappointed. There were the religious leaders who wanted a political leader, a king like David who would restore Israel to a world power. But Jesus didn't come as that kind of a Messiah. They were disappointed. There was Herod, who wanted to be the king of the Jews. He was certainly disappointed when the wise men came asking where the newborn king of the Jews could be found. That was very threatening for Herod and so he had all the male children under the age of two killed in an attempt to get rid of Jesus.

Jesus' coming into the world certainly messed up Mary and Joseph's plans. They weren't even married yet and here comes a baby into their lives. Mary was barely a teenager. All they wanted was to get married, and then have little Mary's and Joseph's and live a quiet Jewish life. The angel of the Lord came to Mary and said, **"Mary, there's something that's going to happen to you. You're going to get pregnant before you're married. Joseph is not going to be the father. God is going to be the father. And the baby you'll bear is going to be very unique. He is going to be just as much God as he is man. And He will save His people from their sins because He will be the Messiah."** (see Luke 1:26-35) Wow. That's a lot for a young lady and her fiancé' to take in. It sure threw a wrench in Mary and Joseph's plans to have a quiet little Jewish life together.

Has God ever messed up your plans? I could give you one example after another in my life, a list a mile long, of when God messed up my plans. Some of you have had your plans messed up too. Some of you have had your plans messed up by God over the past year. All of you have had your plans messed up in one way or another at some time in the past.

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A lot of things don't work out the way we plan them. The point is - things don't always go the way we think they should go. Sometimes God messes up our plans. Now I don't want you to get the impression that I think God causes bad things to happen. God is not the author of evil. If something terrible happens to you, you can be sure that God did not cause that to happen. It is true, though, that God allows terrible things to happen, but He is not the cause of them. God's will is that all people come to know Him and live lives of fulfillment and joy as they follow His will. That's why we are to seek God's will and pray for God's will in our lives. God's will is what is best for us. But God's will is not always obeyed. We have something called free will. We can choose to ignore God's will.

In fact, a lot of our plans get messed up because we mess them up. Our own stupidity messes up our plans a lot of the times. And we've all experienced times when other people's stupidly or evil intent have messed up our plans. Others don't always respond the way we want them to and it messed up our plans. They don't cooperate and it messes up our plans. But **sometimes God providentially messes up our plans.** Sometimes God sovereignty intervenes and changes the circumstances around us because He's got another plan in mind for us.

What do you do when God messes up your plans? How do you handle those situations that are out of your control?

The Bible tells us that there are three things we need to remember when God messes up our plans. Let's look at those three things.

FIRST, when God messes up your plans HE IS TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION. In the case of Mary and Joseph, God's plan was so fantastic, so one of a kind, so eternally significant, that God had to use supernatural means to convince them that it was really going to happen. They wouldn't have believed it otherwise. He sent an angel to tell Mary, **"You're going to be the mother of God and He's going to save His people from their sins."**

You don't need an angel to hear God's will. All you have to do is just listen to for God to speak. I have never seen an angel. I have never heard an angel speak. I don't need an angel. I can hear God speak to me all the time through impressions He lays on my heart or through ideas He puts in my head. Now when the devil gives you an idea or an impression it's called a temptation. When God gives you an idea or an impression, it's called an inspiration. God inspires us all the time by putting thoughts and ideas into our heads. It's just that we don't often realize it is God who is speaking to us. We don't often give Him the credit for helping us to have good ideas and good thoughts. And sometimes we are so bent on thinking negative thoughts that we can't hear God speaking good thoughts to us. We listen to God as if we had a bad case of ADD - attention deficit disorder. God calls us but all He gets is a busy signal. He can't get through to us because we're too busy with our own plans. So God has to rearrange our plans to get our attention. C. S. Lewis said, "God speaks to us in our pleasures, but He shouts to us in our problems and in our pain." So when God messes up your plans and brings pain and disappointment into your life, just maybe He's trying to get your attention because he's gotten a busy signal when he's tried to talk to you.

God would rather we listen to Him the first time He speaks to us. In Psalm 81 God says over and over, ***"If my people would but listen to me...if they would only follow my ways..."*** God wants us to listen to Him when He speaks softly. If we do it will save us a lot of pain and suffering in the long run. We get ourselves into trouble when we don't follow what God tells us to do. Proverbs 16 says, ***"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."*** A lot of things in life look like the right thing to do but when you get to the end, it shows itself for what it is - a dead end, a disaster.

In the Bible there are many places where God says, ***"If you do this, you will be successful, you'll be rewarded, you'll find meaning. Life will be richly rewarding. But if you do these other things, it's going to cause misery, guilt, resentment and brokenness. It's going to cause anger and worry and all kinds of difficulties."***

God wants our attention. He wants us to listen to Him. He doesn't want us to be too busy or too preoccupied to hear Him speaking to us. He will do whatever He needs to do to get our attention.

SECOND, sometimes God messes up your plan because HE HAS A DIFFERENT PLAN FOR YOU, a better plan for you. The Bible says very clearly that every person was made for a purpose. You were made for a purpose. God designed you uniquely. He has a purpose for your life - something He wants you to do with your life to honor Him with your gifts and talents, your knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"I know what I am planning for you," says the Lord. "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future."* God says, *"My plans for you are good. I have plans to prosper you, not harm you."* (Jeremiah 29:11) So many people hold back from really giving their lives to Christ and seeking His will for their lives, because they're afraid that if they do they'll be miserable and it won't be any fun. But that's not at all what you will discover if you surrender your will to God and seek His plan for your life.

There are a couple things you ought to know about God's plan for your life. **First, God's plan is always bigger than your plan.** His perspective is bigger and He has a whole lot more power and resources at His disposal to make things happen for you than you do for yourself. **Second, God's plan is harder than your plan.** That's why so many people take the easy road even though it may end in disaster and disappointment. God wants you to grow up into a mature believer. He wants you to be a person of character and integrity. He wants you to take responsibility. It's the difficulties and challenges in life that force us to grow up and mature in our faith. If God removed all the problems in our lives, we wouldn't exercise our faith and we'd atrophy spiritually. We'd become spiritual invalids, just like our body becomes weak through lack of movement. God's plan is always bigger than your plan and God's plan is always harder but you are made stronger through it.

When you cooperate with God's plan for your life you receive **two benefits: significance and satisfaction** - two things that everybody desires. Nothing can substitute for these two things in your life. Not sex, or status, or success; not power, or fame or fortune or even family. All those things will leave you empty if you don't have a sense of significance and satisfaction that only God can give. Significance and satisfaction are yours when you discover God's plan for your life and then make the effort to live it out.

God says, **"I want you to get to know me and not just know about me. I want you to have a relationship with me and not just keep a set of rules that make you religious."** God says, **"I want you to know and discover and fulfill my purpose for your life - the reason I put you here on earth.** God says, **"I want you to develop your gifts and talents that I have given you.** God says, **"I want you to let me mold and shape you into the character and likeness of my Son, Jesus Christ."** That character is all we get to take with us into heaven.

Imagine standing before God one day after you die and God says to you, **"Here are your final entrance exam questions: #1 - What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? Did you make the effort to get to know Him? Did you put your faith in Him, and accept Him as your Lord and Savior? #2 - Did you discover the purpose for which you were created and did you strive to fulfill that purpose?"** That's it. That's all we'll be asked.

Can you imagine saying to God, "God, I know this sounds a little funny, but I was just too busy to get to know Jesus. And, well, I was just too busy fulfilling my own plans for my life that I never got around to fulfilling your plans for my life." Here's how I think God will respond, I think he's say, "What were you thinking? Do you think I put you on earth just to do your own thing? I put you on earth to seek me while I may be found, to discover my purpose for your life and to fulfill that purpose. Now it's too late. You'll have to take that door over there, marked eternal abyss. You won't have to worry about finding the time to get to know me there, because I won't be there."

FINALLY, when God messes up your plans **HE WANTS YOU TO TRUST HIM**. Can you imagine the faith that it took for Joseph to go ahead with his marriage to Mary rather than quietly abandoning her for being pregnant and not by him? Can you imagine the faith it took for Mary to agree to allow God to use her as the means by which he would send his Son into the world? God's plan was so big and so hard and so different from the plan they had for their own lives, that all they could do was trust him. All they could do was trust God. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11, verse 6 that, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" Nothing else matters if you don't have faith. Nothing else matters if you don't trust God to work out the details of your life and your salvation. When God messes up your plans, he's trying to get you to trust him.

Some of you have had a very difficult year this past year. Some of you have shared with me the difficulties you've gone through. Some of you have had family members and loved ones go through terrible things this past year and you had to be there to help them through it. Life has a way of shaking the very foundation of our lives. It takes a strong spiritual base to weather the storms of life.

Where do you get that strong spiritual BASE? Let me suggest to you four things that make up a strong spiritual BASE using the letters B-A-S-E to help you remember. **B is for believe** - Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and that He was raised to life again. **A is for accept** - Accept God's undeserved and unmerited grace and forgiveness for your sins. **S is for switch** - Switch to God's plan for your life rather than your own. **E is for express** - Express your desire for Christ to be the one who directs your life. Express that to God and express that to others who can help you and encourage you in your walk with God.

A Simple Prayer to BASE your life on Jesus Christ

Dear God, I believe you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins so I can be forgiven. I am sorry for my sins and I want to live the rest of my life the way you want me to live. Please put Your Spirit in my life to direct me. Amen

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December 11, 2011

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Rev. Jean Smith

When you think about it, Jesus' coming into the world messed up a lot of people's plans. In fact, it messed up just about everybody's plans. There were many people who hoped that their eldest son would be the Messiah. They were disappointed. There were the religious leaders who wanted a political leader, a king like David who would restore Israel to a world power. But Jesus didn't come as that kind of a Messiah. They were disappointed. There was Herod, who wanted to be the king of the Jews. He was certainly disappointed when the wise men came asking where the newborn king of the Jews could be found. That was very threatening for Herod and so he had all the male children under the age of two killed in an attempt to get rid of Jesus.

Jesus' coming into the world certainly messed up Mary and Joseph's plans. They weren't even married yet and here comes a baby into their lives. Mary was barely a teenager. All they wanted was to get married, and then have little Mary's and Joseph's and live a quiet Jewish life. The angel of the Lord came to Mary and said, **"Mary, there's something that's going to happen to you. You're going to get pregnant before you're married. Joseph is not going to be the father. God is going to be the father. And the baby you'll bear is going to be very unique. He is going to be just as much God as he is man. And He will save His people from their sins because He will be the Messiah."** (see Luke 1:26-35) Wow. That's a lot for a young lady and her fiancé' to take in. It sure threw a wrench in Mary and Joseph's plans to have a quiet little Jewish life together.

Has God ever messed up your plans? I could give you one example after another in my life, a list a mile long, of when God messed up my plans. Some of you have had your plans messed up too. Some of you have had your plans messed up by God over the past year. All of you have had your plans messed up in one way or another at some time in the past.

I read a story about a woman who took her little boy to see Santa at the downtown Macy's store. When she went to lift her son on to Santa's lap she recognized that Santa was her ex-husband who hadn't paid his child support in two years. She didn't let on that she recognized him. And here's why. Three hours later she came back with a court injunction and slapped it down on his knee and he wasn't going, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" any more. That certainly messed up his plans.

A lot of things don't work out the way we plan them. The point is - things don't always go the way we think they should go. Sometimes God messes up our plans. Now I don't want you to get the impression that I think God causes bad things to happen. God is not the author of evil. If something terrible happens to you, you can be sure that God did not cause that to happen. It is true, though, that God allows terrible things to happen, but He is not the cause of them. God's will is that all people come to know Him and live lives of fulfillment and joy as they follow His will. That's why we are to seek God's will and pray for God's will in our lives. God's will is what is best for us. But God's will is not always obeyed. We have something called free will. We can choose to ignore God's will.

In fact, a lot of our plans get messed up because we mess them up. Our own stupidity messes up our plans a lot of the times. And we've all experienced times when other people's stupidly or evil intent have messed up our plans. Others don't always respond the way we want them to and it messed up our plans. They don't cooperate and it messes up our plans. But **sometimes God providentially messes up our plans.** Sometimes God sovereignty intervenes and changes the circumstances around us because He's got another plan in mind for us.

What do you do when God messes up your plans? How do you handle those situations that are out of your control?

The Bible tells us that there are three things we need to remember when God messes up our plans. Let's look at those three things.

FIRST, when God messes up your plans HE IS TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION. In the case of Mary and Joseph, God's plan was so fantastic, so one of a kind, so eternally significant, that God had to use supernatural means to convince them that it was really going to happen. They wouldn't have believed it otherwise. He sent an angel to tell Mary, **"You're going to be the mother of God and He's going to save His people from their sins."**

You don't need an angel to hear God's will. All you have to do is just listen to for God to speak. I have never seen an angel. I have never heard an angel speak. I don't need an angel. I can hear God speak to me all the time through impressions He lays on my heart or through ideas He puts in my head. Now when the devil gives you an idea or an impression it's called a temptation. When God gives you an idea or an impression, it's called an inspiration. God inspires us all the time by putting thoughts and ideas into our heads. It's just that we don't often realize it is God who is speaking to us. We don't often give Him the credit for helping us to have good ideas and good thoughts. And sometimes we are so bent on thinking negative thoughts that we can't hear God speaking good thoughts to us. We listen to God as if we had a bad case of ADD - attention deficit disorder. God calls us but all He gets is a busy signal. He can't get through to us because we're too busy with our own plans. So God has to rearrange our plans to get our attention. C. S. Lewis said, "God speaks to us in our pleasures, but He shouts to us in our problems and in our pain." So when God messes up your plans and brings pain and disappointment into your life, just maybe He's trying to get your attention because he's gotten a busy signal when he's tried to talk to you.

God would rather we listen to Him the first time He speaks to us. In Psalm 81 God says over and over, ***"If my people would but listen to me...if they would only follow my ways..."*** God wants us to listen to Him when He speaks softly. If we do it will save us a lot of pain and suffering in the long run. We get ourselves into trouble when we don't follow what God tells us to do. Proverbs 16 says, ***"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."*** A lot of things in life look like the right thing to do but when you get to the end, it shows itself for what it is - a dead end, a disaster.

In the Bible there are many places where God says, **"If you do this, you will be successful, you'll be rewarded, you'll find meaning. Life will be richly rewarding. But if you do these other things, it's going to cause misery, guilt, resentment and brokenness. It's going to cause anger and worry and all kinds of difficulties."**

God wants our attention. He wants us to listen to Him. He doesn't want us to be too busy or too preoccupied to hear Him speaking to us. He will do whatever He needs to do to get our attention.

SECOND, sometimes God messes up your plan because HE HAS A DIFFERENT PLAN FOR YOU, a better plan for you. The Bible says very clearly that every person was made for a purpose. You were made for a purpose. God designed you uniquely. He has a purpose for your life - something He wants you to do with your life to honor Him with your gifts and talents, your knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 29:11 says, *"I know what I am planning for you," says the Lord. "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future."* God says, *"My plans for you are good. I have plans to prosper you, not harm you."* (Jeremiah 29:11) So many people hold back from really giving their lives to Christ and seeking His will for their lives, because they're afraid that if they do they'll be miserable and it won't be any fun. But that's not at all what you will discover if you surrender your will to God and seek His plan for your life.

There are a couple things you ought to know about God's plan for your life. **First, God's plan is always bigger than your plan.** His perspective is bigger and He has a whole lot more power and resources at His disposal to make things happen for you than you do for yourself. **Second, God's plan is harder than your plan.** That's why so many people take the easy road even though it may end in disaster and disappointment. God wants you to grow up into a mature believer. He wants you to be a person of character and integrity. He wants you to take responsibility. It's the difficulties and challenges in life that force us to grow up and mature in our faith. If God removed all the problems in our lives, we wouldn't exercise our faith and we'd atrophy spiritually. We'd become spiritual invalids, just like our body becomes weak through lack of movement. God's plan is always bigger than your plan and God's plan is always harder but you are made stronger through it.

When you cooperate with God's plan for your life you receive **two benefits: significance and satisfaction** - two things that everybody desires. Nothing can substitute for these two things in your life. Not sex, or status, or success; not power, or fame or fortune or even family. All those things will leave you empty if you don't have a sense of significance and satisfaction that only God can give. Significance and satisfaction are yours when you discover God's plan for your life and then make the effort to live it out.

God says, **"I want you to get to know me and not just know about me. I want you to have a relationship with me and not just keep a set of rules that make you religious."** God says, **"I want you to know and discover and fulfill my purpose for your life - the reason I put you here on earth.** God says, **"I want you to develop your gifts and talents that I have given you.** God says, **"I want you to let me mold and shape you into the character and likeness of my Son, Jesus Christ."** That character is all we get to take with us into heaven.

Imagine standing before God one day after you die and God says to you, **"Here are your final entrance exam questions: #1 - What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? Did you make the effort to get to know Him? Did you put your faith in Him, and accept Him as your Lord and Savior? #2 - Did you discover the purpose for which you were created and did you strive to fulfill that purpose?"** That's it. That's all we'll be asked.

Can you imagine saying to God, "God, I know this sounds a little funny, but I was just too busy to get to know Jesus. And, well, I was just too busy fulfilling my own plans for my life that I never got around to fulfilling your plans for my life." Here's how I think God will respond, I think he's say, "What were you thinking? Do you think I put you on earth just to do your own thing? I put you on earth to seek me while I may be found, to discover my purpose for your life and to fulfill that purpose. Now it's too late. You'll have to take that door over there, marked eternal abyss. You won't have to worry about finding the time to get to know me there, because I won't be there."

FINALLY, when God messes up your plans **HE WANTS YOU TO TRUST HIM**. Can you imagine the faith that it took for Joseph to go ahead with his marriage to Mary rather than quietly abandoning her for being pregnant and not by him? Can you imagine the faith it took for Mary to agree to allow God to use her as the means by which he would send his Son into the world? God's plan was so big and so hard and so different from the plan they had for their own lives, that all they could do was trust him. All they could do was trust God. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11, verse 6 that, "*...Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" Nothing else matters if you don't have faith. Nothing else matters if you don't trust God to work out the details of your life and your salvation. When God messes up your plans, he's trying to get you to trust him.

Some of you have had a very difficult year this past year. Some of you have shared with me the difficulties you've gone through. Some of you have had family members and loved ones go through terrible things this past year and you had to be there to help them through it. Life has a way of shaking the very foundation of our lives. It takes a strong spiritual base to weather the storms of life.

Where do you get that strong spiritual BASE? Let me suggest to you four things that make up a strong spiritual BASE using the letters B-A-S-E to help you remember. **B is for believe** - Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and that He was raised to life again. **A is for accept** - Accept God's undeserved and unmerited grace and forgiveness for your sins. **S is for switch** - Switch to God's plan for your life rather than your own. **E is for express** - Express your desire for Christ to be the one who directs your life. Express that to God and express that to others who can help you and encourage you in your walk with God.

A Simple Prayer to BASE your life on Jesus Christ

Dear God, I believe you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins so I can be forgiven. I am sorry for my sins and I want to live the rest of my life the way you want me to live. Please put Your Spirit in my life to direct me. Amen