

MOVING MOUNTAINS

Yesterday I had an experience, which convinced me that God answers prayer. He showed me that He lives in the details, in the moment by moment fabric of our seldom exciting, often dusty lives, yet rarely safe lives. He is not simply the force which urged the universe into existence, or an observer who sits idly by as the fate of the world unfolds in front of Him. He is intimately involved with each of our lives and wants us to know that. He also wants us to talk to Him about these details. He may always know what we need and where hidden dangers lie, and could easily make all the adjustments necessary to smooth out the bumps, but he would rather we discuss them with Him. Apparently, He wants a real relationship with us, a theme which we are constantly being advised of by pastors and evangelists. But we seldom learn from the rote advise of others, we need to see the principal in action. I could probably go on for pages regarding the construction of theological opinions and Biblical references, but that would just further my point about not taking sound advice. So, the story tells far more than the theories.

Recently I have been busy with a construction project on the family property. Years ago, my father had installed a mobile home across the creek from the main house in order to provide living quarters for a tenant or caretaker. Just as the large farmhouse and acreage has been in my family for several generations, the tenants in the mobile home have also spanned generations, with the current tenant being the grandson, along with his wife, of the first tenant. Things in this part of the world seem to develop long, interconnected histories. But as the years passed, the old mobile home finally wore out, and we decided to replace it with a new unit. This would insure that our tenant, now a close family friend and occasional caretaker for my mother, would stay for some time to come.

My brother and I conferred on the scope of the project and agreed on what should be accomplished as an end product. He, being the world hopping corporate executive, then jumped on the company's rapid conveyance (a private jet) and left me behind to complete the task. Those of you who have tackled even a moderate construction project will have no problem foreseeing what I didn't. The job quickly reached grand proportions as I discovered that nearly all of the services, electrical, water, and septic, would need to be replaced or upgraded. The last several weeks have involved tractors, excavators, contractors, road construction, building permits, environmental permits, releases from some obscure tribe of native Americans, and weather. Yet the required changes have been accomplished on time, and the project is nearing completion.

Finally, yesterday the new modular unit (newspeak for mobile home) arrived for installation, along with a crew of eight. This process required at least 8 people, as they not only were the labor for the leveling and footing installation, they also served as the flag men to stop or slow the procession of logging trucks on the main road. As I discussed the intricacies of the operation with the foreman I noticed that he was the only one on the crew that was under 65 years old, which concerned me some. Had I known this beforehand I probably would have also ordered an EMT crew and an ambulance. It was no small chore for them to guide the driver as he backed this 65 foot long monster off the highway as traffic waited, and then attempt to direct him as he continued to back it up 400 feet of relatively steep, tree lined, country driveway. At this point the task became progressively harder. The back of the new unit wanted to dig into the driveway and the foreman was constantly adjusting the hydraulic tongue on the truck to compensate for angle. To complicate this, one side of the driveway was bordered by a steep uphill bank, while the other side had an immediate drop off. Losing one tire over this drop off would be disastrous and being too close to the other side would risk tearing off some of the siding. The driveway had been checked for accessibility by measuring drop angle and width, but now that the new mobile home was on it, the planned clearances seemed much tighter than expected.

Now here is where God got involved. I sat on a stack of plywood slightly uphill from this impending disaster, as an observer. The crew knew what they were doing, and it was my job for the moment to stay out of the way. As I watched, I felt the distinct urge to pray. Nothing specific, just a slight nudge from God, "hey, talk to me about this." So, I offered a short prayer "Lord, please look after the safety of these men and help us finish this without an accident." Contrary to instruction, rare for me, I walked down for a closer look, noticing that the rear frame had begun to dig into the gravel driveway and the left three tires under the unit were on the exact

edge of the drop off. The crew itself was busy placing metal mats and boards under the tires in order to get the frame lift they needed in the rear. In addition, the tires on the single axle truck(tractor) itself were beginning to spin in the loose gravel. I concluded that they were going to need more than just this in order to finish the task and avoid disaster, but I also knew that they didn't need another person to stand around with them while they scratched their heads in consternation.

But God had planned for this very contingency several weeks ago. The contractor I hired to excavate and install a new septic system had been delayed somewhat due to material deliveries. He should have been finished a week ago, but instead would finish later this week. Consequently, he left some of his equipment on site, including a large 4-wheel drive tractor with a shovel and backhoe, parked uphill from where the mobile unit was perched. And, just as everything began to look really risky, the contractor's son, who was also the primary equipment operator, came waltzing up the road with a couple lengths of pipe he was dropping off to complete the job. He wasn't supposed to be on the site at that time, but here he was. We asked if he would be able to assist with the problem and pull this thing up the hill with his tractor. A little coaxing, some whining on his part, and a little more coaxing, and he fired it up. By this time the unit was thoroughly stuck, and it couldn't be moved forward or backward with just the truck tractor. But it wasn't the least bit of work for the large tractor. Ten minutes and 60 feet of chain later and the unit was in place. A little tug from an oversized piece of equipment was all that was needed. A disaster was avoided, thank you Lord.

Now if you're still just thinking that this was circumstance as opposed to providence, let me break it down. Obviously, all construction jobs involve some risk of injury, and it is the responsibility of conscientious contractors to minimize risk. Nevertheless, some risk always remains, and despite the best human planning, accidents occur. In a world of over 6 billion human inhabitants, God was watching over these 8 men, and probably me too, on an otherwise ordinary day. He had foreseen the risk of this operation and had planned for it by deliberately delaying another job in order to have a needed piece of equipment on the site. By the time things got out of hand the moving crew could not have brought in any more equipment, as the mobile unit completely blocked any access to its uphill side. God began His intervention before the beginning of the project, and His timing was impeccable. He knew every potential for disaster in this case and He made the appropriate corrections. There were details that he meddled with which I will never know. The real "Aha" here is that He wanted me to know this and He wanted me to pray for His intervention.

Despite the obvious in the story, this isn't primarily about God's providential planning. It's about prayer, talking to God about the ordinary in our lives, and the idea that He wants us to ask Him about stuff that He is in the process of fixing even as we ask. When I was sitting on that stack of plywood watching this event unfold, I simply felt an urge to pray, to ask God to do what He was planning to do. He simply said, "talk to me about this." He wanted me to know that He was about to intervene in a disaster with or without my help, but He wanted me to ask Him to do it. This God of ours, the One who created the Universe and sustains the equilibrium and balance of trillions of galaxies, the One who creates and destroys worlds and who can make all that exists cease to exist, is also the same one who wants to walk hand in hand with each one of us. Ecclesiastes 3:1 states ***To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.*** And in 3:11 it states ***He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, without which man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.***

Seasons, purposes, times, events. From the largest to the smallest, God has every event planned for a purpose, and He wants each of us to find Him in the daily fabric of our lives, to see His purpose in the smallest details. Nothing escapes His attention and He wants us to not only know that, but to talk to Him about it. I am naked and humbled before this amazing God. My head is bowed by the knowledge that He wanted me to simply ask Him to intervene in something He had already planned to intervene in. Lord, bless us all that we would see you and invite you into the ordinary events of our ordinary lives.