

God's Governing Providence

Series: God & Governance

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Please turn with me to Genesis 50. We are continuing our summer series looking at the topic of *God & Governance*, asking what role does the gospel have, not only for us in salvation, but what does it have to say about our role living and engaging in a particular time in history, in a particular place such that we live in. We could say this of any given church anywhere across the world, and they could ask the same question. But for us, what does it mean for the gospel to inform how we think about ourselves as living in the United States in the 21st century. We introduced the series several weeks ago from Romans 13. That's kind of our anchor text that's always in the backdrop. We might go back to it at different points, but it really is the foundational question that we're asking: What does it mean for Christians to submit to the authorities.

Last week Pastor Randy looked at 1 Samuel 8, looking at how Israel desired a king and [God] gave them one. But so far we've looked more at the question from the perspective of people interacting within government structures as something which is instituted by God, something that Romans 13 shows us. Today as we look at these verses in Genesis we're going to look at it from the advantage of God's own governance over us, over the world, over our circumstances. Today's passage looks at the story of Joseph in particular and what he understood to be the meaning of the events in his life and his time.

So follow along with me in your Bibles, on these screens, or your own screens. Genesis 50:15-26.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you."' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own. And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The word of the Lord. Let us pray together and ask God's help to understand and to apply his word to our lives. Father, we do give You praise for Your word. We're thankful that You feed us by it. You reveal Yourself, You show us truth, You shine light on our paths, You lead us and guide us and shepherd us all along the way, providing all of our needs—especially how these needs fulfill themselves in your Son,

Jesus. May we look to Him, may we look to Your word. May you forgive the teacher, would You help the teacher, as well. We're thankful for your Son, Jesus, and in His name we pray. Amen.

So I really enjoy back stories. One back story I find very interesting is how Billy Joel got an idea for one of his songs. Now, Billy Joel is a somewhat famous American singer and songwriter. And there was a point in the late 80's where he was celebrating his 40th birthday, and he was in the recording studio and he met a friend of Sean Lennon—Sean Lennon is a son of John Lennon. So they're all in the recording studio, and this friend had just turned 21, and Billy Joel heard him say this statement: "It's a terrible time to be 21." Billy Joel replied, saying, "Yeah, I remember when I was 21. I thought it was an awful time. We had Vietnam and, you know, drug problems and civil rights problems and everything seemed to be awful." The other man, the friend replied, "OK, yeah, yeah, but it's different for you. You were a kid in the 50's, and everybody knows that nothing happened in the 50's." Of course Billy Joel shot back, and he said, "Well, wait a minute. Have you not heard of the Korean War or the Suez Canal crisis?" And those things, that conversation became the framework for a song which you may have heard of. It starts this way: *Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnny Ray, South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe Dimaggio Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Studebaker, television, North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe. We didn't start the fire. It was always burning since the world's been turning. We didn't start the fire. No, we didn't light it, but we tried to fight it.*

I find the back story to the song fascinating for multiple reasons. It's a catchy tune, it's a really clever video. It actually makes the list of Top 50 Worst Songs, which is funny because it is popular and it's well known. And Billy Joel himself said he hated the melody, but he really liked the lyrics. But just as the song had a backstory, each of those events mentioned in the song has a backstory. They each have their own circumstances, their own connections, and networks of people involved. And they each had different outcomes and consequences. Now, Billy Joel released that song in 1989; the song starts in 1949 with Harry Truman. So, 40 years of his life. Just imagine if he were to write another song what he would include in that, from 1989 until now. It might even include the recent Brexit, U.K.'s recent vote to leave the European Union. And perhaps the song would even include the outcome of this year's presidential election.

But what are the forces involved? He sweeps through 40 years of his life, 40 years of history. What are the forces involved? Is it merely political theory? Is it projection market economics? Is it psycho-behavioral science or even socio-geographic realities? Is it all by chance or fate, or is there something or someone orchestrating the events of our lives? Now these are basic and simple questions, and yet they're not answered easily or simplistically because it actually involves all of those things to one degree or another, doesn't it. I mean, I think we would agree to that. For every person directly involved or every person indirectly impacted, there is easily a take, a version, a way that that would be viewed and how everything might fit together. . . or not. You see, humans have an innate ability to find patterns. We see faces in clouds, we see hunters and bears in the night sky. And likewise we have a predisposition to find meaning in our circumstances. You know, some people like to watch the Orioles play, and they think it is just the outcome, the collective outcome of individual moments flung into existence with each pitch of the baseball. Does it have more to do with the player's skill or the manager's strategic leadership? Some people watch the news and they see the world burning. There's plenty to grieve and plenty to lament. Some want to let it burn, and others want to put the fire out. But is there something holding it all together? For some reason do all of our individual stories make up one grand story told by one grand master storyteller.

Of course the Bible answers with a resounding, Yes! We see that the God of the Bible reveals Himself in space and time, and He shows himself to be the very opposite of uninvolved, random chance or impersonal fate. And today's passage is just one example, one example of tons we could look at of how

God governs all things by His providence. You may use that word sometimes, maybe you've heard that word. There was a time in our own country where that word was used more regularly, even though it had different meanings and nuances. But there was a sense of providence: an expectation or a framework that God governs all things by his providence.

So today as we look at these verses, we're going to look at four things. Very briefly we're going to go through them, and they're printed in your bulletin. We're going to see *God's Providence in Circumstances*, *God's Providence in Relationships*, *God's Providence in Vocation*, *God's Purposes in His Providence*. (Switched it up there, did you catch that? Keeping you on your toes.)

So let's first look at *God's Providence in Circumstances*. Now this is a very broad survey. I'm going to spend a little bit more time here to kind of give us a framework and then dip into the other points. Our passage this morning is the end of the beginning. It's the first book of the Bible, it's Genesis. But it serves also as the back story for the Israelites. If you remember, the first audience of Genesis—and for the first five books of the Bible, for that matter—the first audience are the people who are congregating in a wilderness, because they have just left Egypt, and they're camping at the base of a mountain. That's where the first audience of this is. That's the place where they're told a story, and they're told a back story. And they're told of how they're going to be constituted together in a covenant as a people. The people of Israel understood itself in light of this covenantal relationship with the Lord, their Deliverer, their Redeemer, the person that rescued them out of bondage from Egypt. This God, who created all things from Genesis 1, has shown Himself to be their Redeemer in the Exodus. The covenant relationship was mediated, of course, by Moses. Their constitution was the Torah, the law of God. And in the covenant there were promises and purposes for their national identity. Israel never was meant to—and they worked really hard to not forget—how they began, how their people and their nation were inaugurated. The Lord showed grace and mercy by delivering them out of Egypt. Before He gave the first commandment He reminded them, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

So imagine yourself sitting among the crowds, camping—perhaps with your family. Yesterday you were a servant to the Egyptians, and now you are being told that you are a people, a nation. Of course you're going to ask questions. *What's the backstory here? How did we get to this place? Why are we in Egypt to begin with? How did we get from there to here?* And that's what the Book of Genesis is. It is a story telling them how they got at the base of that mountain. It's telling them where they came from, it's telling them who they are, who their ancestors are. And of course it's also telling about God's purpose, His provision, His....that word...*Providence*.

So before we take that quick overview from the passage and the surrounding context of Joseph's life as just one vignette of God's providence, let's define what is providence. You know, in a simple way it involves foreseeing, providing, giving consideration to in advance, But when it's connected to the work of God, providence is the divine activity of God where He maintains, He preserves, where He governs all things according to His perfect will and His good pleasure. It is the divine activity of God working and preserving that which is His creation. One of my favorite theologians said it this way: All things happen in time as God eternally knew they would. The final result and the ways and the means leading to it are established in God's providence. He goes on to say that historic Christianity confesses that all things exist, happen, and have their destiny in accordance with God's eternal knowledge. Proverbs 15:3. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.” Psalm 145:17. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. Paul shouts a doxology; he sings, he gives praise in Romans 11:33-36. “Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ ‘Or who has been given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For

from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen”

And so what is providence? Well, providence is that beautiful mystery. There are much wiser men, much more talented writers and thinkers than me who have spilt so much ink--and rightly so—over this topic, but it's holding two things in tension. God's providence is this mystery where the relationship between His divine sovereignty over all things, even over secondary causes as He sustains all things, and with that same providence he keeps the integrity of human agency and human responsibility. Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility working in tension. And that is where the mystery lies--how God permits all good things and permits even evil to occur within this providence, but that evil not being of Himself, the author or prover of that evil.

So we'll explore Joseph's circumstances more as we go along, but just briefly we gather from our passage this morning that Joseph has been in Egypt. His father Jacob, who is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham, has died. And Joseph's brothers are confessing their wrongs, their transgressions, their evil that they have done against Joseph, hoping that they will experience forgiveness and a restored relationship with him. So just broadly, as you think about providence, what are your circumstances? What's going on in your life, even as you come in to this space this morning, as you think about tomorrow. I do it. I know you're doing it right now, too. *What do I have to do tomorrow?* What are your circumstances? And with that and with the beautiful reality of God's kindness and His providence, I invite you to a place where you are living in that tension, recognizing God's sovereignty, recognizing your responsibility, living there, following Him, trusting Him. And to see that in His providence He's guiding you, He's leading you, He's shaping you, He's drawing nearer to you, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, He's sustaining you in the midst of all your circumstances.

Abraham Lincoln once said. . . He had some interesting thoughts on providence. But one particular quote reads this way: “Friends, I agree with you in Providence, but I believe in the providence of the most men, the largest purse, and the longest cannon.” In some ways that's true, right? That's how outcomes are won. Maybe the more powerful one, the more numerous, the more wealthy, maybe? Sometimes it works that way, right? But the quote reveals something about us. We like to think the outcome is in our own hands. So the question is, is it in our own hands, or is it not? And if we're living in the reality of God's providence, it's completely in God's hands, and He's given us an opportunity to live in freedom. Now, there's complications in that freedom, of what that means, but there is this beautiful reality of God's divine activity, His sovereignty in the world, His sovereignty in your lives. And yet He invites you to live and to act and to decide and to exercise agency in your life. And so we get a different story in the Scriptures than Abraham Lincoln's quote of what Providence is, in Whose hands we are in the care of. So we don't always know what God is doing in any given moment, but we can know that God is over all of our circumstances, and He is working in them. So the question to you today—as a legitimate question, if you've never thought about it before, but also just a question as a reminder: Do you acknowledge God's providence in your life? Do you acknowledge His right over you, and are you trusting Him to be good and kind in it, providing all you need.

Number 2: *God's Providence in Relationships*. So we just finished the last few verses of the entire book of Genesis, and if you're familiar with the book, the structure is a story of beginnings. That's how it begins: “In the beginning...” Genesis 1:1. But the rest of the book is a very beautiful, dysfunctional family. It's generations of people who are both exercising faith to God's promises and also really messing it up. And we see God's faithfulness despite them. So we can see, especially Jacob, as this is the culmination of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Jacob's sons—and in particular his son Joseph. We see a family tree with all the good, the bad, and the ugly that comes with our families. Joseph is Jacob's son, and Jacob, if you remember, had twelve sons. He had six from Leah, two from Leah's servant Zilpah, two from Rachel, and two from Rachel's servant Bilhah. So like I said, a dysfunctional

family tree.

And we see that dysfunction played out. Joseph and Benjamin were the two sons from Rachel, and Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife. And Joseph—and even to a degree Benjamin, but particularly Joseph—was his favorite son. So out of Joseph's privileged pride he gloated to his other brothers about a dream he once had that showed his brothers kneeling before him, bowing to him, paying homage to him, showing that he would rule over them. Of course that made them mad. It would make me mad. *Who do you think you are? You're the little pipsqueak. You're my little brother. There's no way that's going to happen. These are figments of your of your own making. These are your dreams.* But out of his brothers' hatred and jealousy. . . It wasn't just a dismissal, it really did get to them. And they plotted, they conspired to get rid of him. Now they initially planned to kill him, but the oldest, Rueben, convinced them to just throw him in a pit. Reuben went away and then the other brothers convinced him to say, OK, let's not kill him, but let's sell him. So they sold him into slavery to some Ishmaelites. And if you remember the genealogy, Ishmael is one of Abraham's sons. So they sold him to a cousin. They sold one of their brothers to another person, another group of people. And they went and sold Joseph to an Egyptian, to the house of Potiphar. But that's not all the story, right? Because they go back and they. . . Rueben goes back to the pit to find the brother missing, and he's enraged, and then they're like, *Oh no, now we've got to cover it up.* So they take his coat of many colors, the coat that his father gave him, and they killed a goat, and they bloodied the coat, took it to their father and said, *Joseph's dead. An animal devoured him.* This grieved Jacob very much. So we see Joseph exercising pride, arrogance, but likewise we see him experiencing a great injustice. And later in the story we see how he experiences false accusation, he experiences time in jail, he experiences a promotion to the house of Pharaoh where he eventually oversaw the food supply and distribution chain during a period of abundance that prepared them for a time of famine.

This is the story of Jacob. Dysfunction or secrecy. There's favoritism. There's pride. There's anger. There's jealousy. There's sorrow. All of this is swarming throughout the pages of this book, and the passage we're reading is the culmination of this story. And it's at the end of all of this that Joseph can say in verses 19 and 20...look with me... "But Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive...'" So how did we get from a little prideful, arrogant pipsqueak to this mature, wise, forgiving, loving brother who is seeking reconciliation? And I submit that it is by God's grace and it's by His providence, it's by His goodness to Joseph. And ultimately we see this is part of God's plan. Joseph is experiencing God's sustaining care of him in the midst of his circumstances and through his relationships.

So I asked you what are your circumstances, and then I ask you what are your relationships? Where do you see God's providence in your story? We each have one. Sometimes we share it, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we hold grudges. Sometimes we seek reconciliation sooner than later. The temptation is to make sense out of what makes no sense, and sometimes we get that right and sometimes we get that wrong. Because we long for clarity and closure we sometimes trip up the process, let us say that. We either go too quick and pretend that everything's OK, or we don't do it at all and we just close our heart off to what God has for us. The temptation is to minimize the evil or put on a fresh coat of spirituality, just a veneer, a lacquer on top, making the outside wood look clean and look bright and shiny, all the while the wood underneath is being eaten away by worms. Likewise, the temptation is react quickly. Joseph had every right to be angry, to be hurt, to be wounded, to be bitter, to be resentful of all those years lost, sold, isolated away from his family, falsely accused, put in prison. All these things would give anybody at least the justification to be angry, to seek vengeance. And of course the temptation is also to act in ways we think things should go, because we like to think things are in our hands. So we like to think that we can control the outcomes, we like to forecast the future—though the

irony of that is we always do it in the ways that work to our own advantage.

Brothers and sisters, God is involved and He's active. He cares for you, He cares for me in our relationships. My family and those I come in contact with over the course of my lifetime are all important divine appointments in God's providence. It's His providence to me that He cares for me through other people, and likewise it's a way that God providentially cares for you as He brings people in your life. This is how God works in our relationships.

And likewise, another level of our relationships, another context for a relationship is *God's Providence in Vocation*. Joseph goes from being the favored son and the hated brother to the house steward. He excels at his job with Potiphar in his house. Genesis 39:2 says "The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man...His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had." [v. 2-4] It wasn't too long after that that he was put in prison, and Joseph again excelled in the role that he was given while in prison. After his time in prison the Lord again providentially provided Joseph an opportunity to serve Pharaoh, the king of Egypt himself, setting him up over his house.

We recognize our place in the story, and the story involves us, but it but it's never about us. It's important to get. We need to recognize that we have a place in the story, but the story is never about us. So whether we have a position that the world may deem highly esteemed, valuable, or honorable, or if we have a position that the world deems undesirable and lowly, we are to place our trust in God where we are, for however long he might seem fit. Our work is for His glory and the good of those around us. So how do you use your position, your sphere that you live in, your vocation. That could be an actual job; it could be just how you conduct your household, your vocation. How do you live out in the world that is reflective of God's grace in your life, but then also the good that you are seeking to participate in the lives of those around you.

You see, that's the nature of the covenantal relationship that we see all the way back in the beginning. It's heightened and emphasized and drawn attention to in Genesis 12 with Abraham, that Abraham would be blessed so that he would be a blessing. And that essence of how God is working in the world gets repeated to Isaac and to Jacob, and now Jacob in his old age, before he dies, gets to see his sons and his descendants. And he is beginning to see in his own life God's promises coming to fruition: to be blessed by God not to just hoard blessing, to accumulate that which God gives, but so that it can be used to be a blessing to others.

So in our workplaces we can be truth tellers, we can be advocates for others. Through our vocation we can provide for our families. And as we cultivate and practice our faith in Jesus Christ, the gospel has direct impact on why we do what we do and how we do it. So we come into this space on a Sunday morning, and we give praises to God, and we worship him as we should. But what we do in here, as we are fed by Him, immediately has implications for tomorrow and for your week, for your projects that you that you have on your plate, for the dreams that you have, the desires. I just believe that those coincide providentially in how God gifts you and shapes you to be in this world, to live out your vocation. So as you do that, as you acknowledge God's providence in your life, do you see how He's sustaining you and caring for you in a way that is for your good. But you can't just stay there. You have to see His goodness that is beyond you, that He works through you for the flourishing of those around you.

And lastly, *God's Purposes in His Providence*. I've mentioned Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, now Joseph. The identity of Israel and the continuity with those men, which are often called the patriarchs—this includes Joseph. It includes this relationship between the promises of God, that there would be descendants, that

there would be land, that there would be a people. And all these things have been moving slowly along through the ebb and flow of life, the ups and downs. New life with new children, with the death of others. This is life. And when we read Genesis we just get summaries of it. That's one reason why I love Genesis so much. I spend or I have spent quite a bit of time using Genesis a lot in my own practice, my counseling practice before getting here, because it's family and it's time. Just the verses we read is the culmination of. . . we don't know how long. It could have been fifteen years, twenty years. We know that Joseph gets married. He has children in Egypt. We know that Jacob recognizes his children as inheritors of the covenant, recipients of God's blessing. And so we see this cycle of families, and that takes time. And all the while God cares for them. And so we have to put that in the bigger picture of God's purpose, His mission, His redemptive purposes.

So that's the whole reason for Abraham. Those who profess Christ—as we read from Galatians today—we are included, we're engrafted into that covenant, to the people of God. We are made the people of God because of faith in Christ. Do you see yourself in that story, or do you only see your story in your own living memory? Do you see your salvation is beautiful? It's wonderful. Praise the Lord. But your salvation has a back story that is . . . long in coming. And we see in these men faith—not in their own abilities, because they were messed up. They lied. They connived. Jacob's name, himself, means 'swindler.' They're not good people, guys. And yet God in His grace says I'm going to make you a people, and I'm going to bless the world through you. And we see the covenant transpire and continue generation after generation. And so if you're one of the Israelites at the base of the mountain you're getting a sense of how we got here, and now what. What do we do now.

And that's the story of the people of God. That's the story of Scripture, and it culminates in the beautiful reality of Jesus's life and His death and His resurrection. You see, as the covenant had a mediator—Moses, for instance, then it was David as he was king, and then in God's promises even then as they lived in the land, there was to be an heir of David's throne that would live forever, One even greater than David. And this is the story that is marching on through history as we profess our faith, as we look to Jesus as our Savior, as our Redeemer, as our King. And all along we see God's providential care of his people.

So how do we trust God when we feel like we are losing something, or when we feel hemmed in by all sides. Fear is debilitating. Fear is . . . You do crazy things when you're afraid. We see Joseph's brothers afraid. You see, there was a partial reconciliation a few chapters earlier. They didn't initially know who Joseph was, and then Joseph revealed to them, and everybody was excited. It was let bygones be bygones. There was rejoicing. Jacob had a new son that he thought had been dead. So all the pain of those decades, however long it took, was now rejoicing. And yet now here they are sorrowful again because Jacob is dead, and now the brothers aren't so sure. *Now that Jacob's dead will Joseph treat us the same? Does he really believe that we're sorry? Does he really forgive us? Will he exercise vengeance on us for what we did to him?* So they come to him and they confess. That's what's beautiful about this passage, they confess. They use three out of the four words in the Hebrew that kind of encapsulate the totality of all that is wrong in the world. They talk about . . . [let's see, I lost my place]. This is verse 16: Please forgive the transgression—that's the first word—sin and evil. The only word that is left out is *iniquities*, which is often used in the prophets, for instance. They're fully owning up to what they did to Joseph. And Joseph, he gives them comfort. He says who am I? Am I in the place of God? He recognizes his place. He's learned. From that prideful, arrogant little boy, he's now a grown man, and he's experienced God's grace and His forgiveness, and in that he can now forgive his brothers.

Something that I like to say about this passage, in particular, is that Joseph knows his Bible, and Joseph can quote Romans 8:28. He can say that "All things work for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." And you see, the reason why I say that is because that verse is

incredibly beautiful and it's powerful and it's true, but we throw it around, and we often say it too soon. Joseph can only say this at the end of the story after he's gone through pain, after he's gone through the suffering. And in the midst of that pain and in the midst of that suffering, that's where he experienced God's goodness, he experienced God's grace. And in receiving God's grace he can then say, *I forgive you*. Hebrews 11:20-22 says this about Jacob or Isaac or even Abraham, too, but I'm not going to read all that. But Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones."

We didn't start the fire. It was always burning since the world's been turning. We didn't start the fire. The other choruses continue, and they say, But when we are gone it will still burn on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on. To some degree that's true, but to another degree it's incomplete. You see, God invites us into what He's doing. He provides and He sustains as He fulfills all that He promises. It involves being honest about the state of affairs, but it does not involve retreating into an enclave of pessimism or fear or sorrow or even nostalgia. Rather we are to live in the present, rooted—rooted and established firmly in God's promises, experiencing His sustaining grace today and being fixed on the hope we have in the work of redemption that He's carrying out. We have the same hope that Joseph did. He didn't see it. He didn't have it. He had the promise. He was looking forward to that day. He knew that he might die, but it was always to the next generation and on and on and on until that time when there is someone who comes and is able to put the fire out. We can look to God in Christ, who providentially cares for us. With faith in Christ we don't have to succumb to fear. We aren't tempted to usurp our circumstances or our relationships or our vocation in order to bring about the outcomes that we think are best. Nor do we abdicate, nor do we retreat from our place in our circumstances, as if we have no role to play, because of evil, the world can be so much worse. It really can. I think in some ways we're exhausted and fatigued by the news cycle and the sheer numbers and volumes of information we have access to, but really the world can be worse. But because of God's sustaining grace in His providence the world is not as bad as it could be, and this is our hope.

This is the hope that has been from the very beginning in Genesis, but it's fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It's fulfilled in His life, it's fulfilled in His death on the cross, and it is inaugurated with His resurrection that there is this foretaste and this glimpse that there will come a final day when it will be better than it was ever intended to be. Do you have a picture of what that might look like? Do you have a hope of what that might look like? Whatever evil we may intend ourselves or outside of ourselves, God means for the good to bring about the redemption of all things and provide all our needs in Christ. This is our hope. This is our good news. For us—our salvation—for your salvation, for those who are considering the claims of who Jesus is and what the gospel is, this is the good news of the gospel: That God is real, and He shows up. He shows up in space and time, and He is sovereignly governing all things. Do you believe it? Do you trust Him? Do you know Him to be good? I pray that you will.

Let's pray together. Father, we give You praise, and we give You thanks for Your providence. In some ways it is this distant term that we can even throw around. And to be fair and to be honest, God, we can misuse it. We can say that it is this random chance, this distant force that is outside of anything. And yet You come near to us, and You show us how You are personable and You are present. So we pray, Father, encourage us. Make us more faithful, make us more courageous, make us more loving, make us more hopeful. May we look to your Son, the culmination of all things, and maybe these things come to pass in our life. May we have the hope that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph had for that day when You make all things new. We look to You, Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Amen.