



GOD IS ALWAYS WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES

Bluebloods, a television series that I have enjoyed for 14 years, sadly came to an end last week. As it neared the finish line, the network aired a retrospective special about the series, including interviews with the tightly knit cast and interesting tidbits about how all the pieces came together.

It included clips of filming scenes in the recurring weekly settings: the Police Commissioner's office, the NYPD squad rooms, the streets of New York City, and most importantly, the family dining room where the whole Reagan clan gathered for Sunday dinner in every episode. Each clip revealed the sizable production team, normally working off-camera, that made each scene interesting, authentic, and cohesive as directed.

In these remaining days of Advent, I think about the spiritual team that is always operating behind the scenes to make life interesting, authentic, and cohesive as God directs it, developing each person as a character in his divine drama and driving the story faithfully toward its sovereignly determined end, complete with plot twists.

God is always at work off-camera, orchestrating things in ways we cannot imagine or see. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the story of Jesus' birth, which we joyfully commemorate next week.

It had been expected for thousands of years, through at least 300 prophecies recorded in the Bible's Old Testament. All the while, God was shaping history and circumstances behind the scenes, until the predetermined "fullness of time" came for Jesus to step bodily onto the stage (Galatians 4:4).

And yet, when the long-awaited Messiah came, there was no musical crescendo or camera close-up. His birth itself was virtually off-camera, as far as the world was concerned. He was born to Mary, a young Hebrew peasant from an insignificant village. She obediently accepted God's high calling (Luke 1:38), but drew no attention to herself.

Her divinely conceived son was born in a cave or stable, humbly slipping into human history unnoticed (Luke 2:1-7). His birth was the turning point of history, and yet the world was oblivious to this stunning evidence of God's relentless, loving activity.

The Bible has many other stories of God working in ways people could not see at the time. No one could see God listening to the desperate prayers of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, yet God heard and answered them by grooming Moses to lead them to freedom (Exodus 2,3).

After they were miraculously delivered, Moses praised God, saying "Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

Seven hundred years later, God assured his people through the prophet Isaiah that He was indeed at work behind the scenes on their behalf: "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:19).

The prophet Habakkuk also recorded God's assurance of his unceasing activity, though his people were blind to it: "Look among the nations and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told" (Habakkuk 1:5; see also Acts 13:41).

And Jesus himself reprised this theme when He told Peter, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand" (John 13:7).

We may be tempted to think that God is idle in our own times, as we look at all the strife and evil in the world. But God says, "I am doing" – using the present tense, in all eras (Revelation 21:5). His angels and followers are continually on missions for him, as He directs his divine drama behind the scenes, ever moving it to its glorious conclusion (e.g., Psalm 103:20; Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 21-22).

As we contemplate the reality of the infant Jesus lying in the manger, we can be confident that our loving and all-powerful God is still at work today, "awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders." Watch, expectantly, and be amazed!