

Friday, August 18, 2017

With you

Zephaniah 1-3

The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."
Zephaniah 3:17

Zephaniah speaks of the Great Day of the LORD. This is a day yet to come. He prophesies to the Jews and Gentiles alike. There is a coming Day of the LORD. He will judge the earth. That judgment is described by Zephaniah. It will be a complete judgment, but there will be restoration and a remnant. There will always be a remnant because of the covenant of God. It is not considered that God will come to judge as often as it used to be. Because of God's gracious delay in coming, people have begun to believe that He will not come again. Even when the Church does think about God coming again, the awesomeness of the wrath that will be poured out is downplayed and marginalized. The complacent will be punished (1:12). God will be awesome to everyone when He comes to judge (2:11). All the nations will worship in awe. All people will respond to the love of God. Zephaniah reminds the people of God's love, even as He tells of His justice. That is one of the amazing things about God. His love is never removed from His justice. God is mighty to save. He is with us. He takes delight in us. He quiets us with His love. He rejoices over His own with singing. The implication of the poetic nature of this song of Zephaniah allows me to pause and consider the calm before the storm, the calm within the storm, and the eternal calm that will come after the storm. God saves. God loves. God quiets. God sings. All eternity will be filled with this song that He sings. There is yet a terrible day that is coming. I wait for Jesus to come again, knowing that it means the destruction Zephaniah describes, yet the truth of 3:17 holds me tightly.

O LORD, today may I hear the song that You are singing over me. I long for the day that I see You. I long for the day that all is made right. I long for the day that Jesus returns. Do not let me fall into complacency and move me to proclaim Your gospel. Amen.

Saturday, August 19, 2017

Careful thought

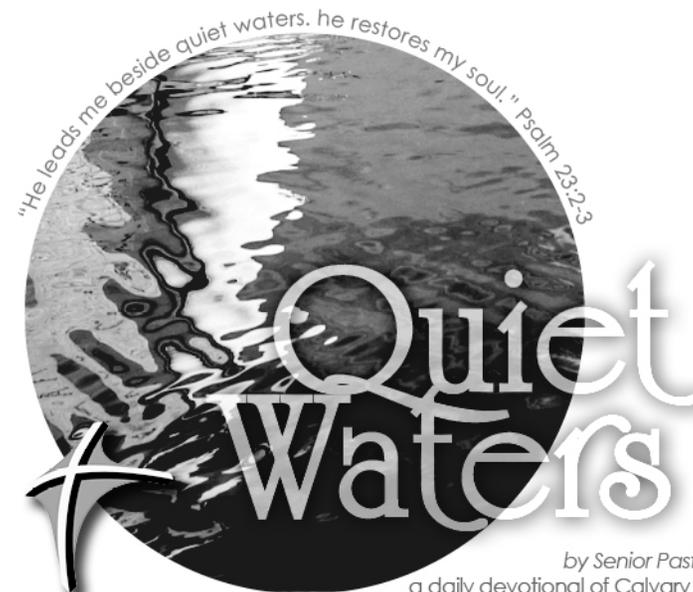
Haggai 1-2

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD'S house to be built.'" Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."
Haggai 1:2-7

Haggai is prophesying to the returning exiles. The fall of Jerusalem has come, as promised, and the temple has been destroyed. The people have been in captivity and now they have been allowed to return and have been told to rebuild the temple. They have even been given the material to rebuild, but they have become discouraged. In part, they are discouraged because of the opposition they face. But mostly, they have not put themselves to the task. They have turned their attention to their own needs above the needs of the Lord. The LORD calls them to give careful thought to the implications of their choices. Because they have ignored the work of the LORD, their crops are suffering and they are never satisfied. They stay thirsty and can never get warm. Their money never seems to be enough. God says, "Think about this carefully!" In God's economy, giving away is the way to get. Serving the LORD first allows oneself to best be served. Whenever I put my needs before the LORD's, I end up dissatisfied. I am always looking for more. This is a big problem in the culture in which I live. Very few people are putting the things of God above their own needs. As a follower of Christ, I must learn to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first! Then I will be satisfied with God's provision and His plan for my life. I will embrace the ministry He has for me above my own desires.

Dear God, help me consider carefully whether or not I have You as the center of my life. Help me consider carefully the way that I am pursuing my own needs and wants inappropriately ahead of You and Your plan for my life. Help me see where I can build Your kingdom! Amen.

August 14-19, 2017



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, August 14 , 2017

Required

Micah 6-7

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

The nation of Israel has a certain and sure hope. Micah does not allow us to think any differently, especially when the end of chapter seven is read. Yet Israel does not cling to her God. She has turned from God and turned to other things, bringing sacrifices that are unworthy because they come from a heart that is not broken before Him. In the midst of this book comes a powerful verse. In a very brief statement, it becomes very clear what the LORD requires of each and every person. One cannot read the Bible without seeing God's love for justice, His never-ending mercy, and His desire for humility. These are each so perfectly displayed in Jesus the Messiah. When God became flesh, He demonstrated that this was the way man should live. This verse is one that has become very important for me. All too often, I find myself like the nation of Israel. I take advantage of the grace of God instead of living that grace out to others. Through Jesus, I am given a new life. That life is a life of doing what is right, living mercifully, and walking in humility, with a clear understanding that I am nothing without God. The joy comes in realizing that these things are required so that I may live in the abundance of life for which I have been designed. I must learn to settle for nothing less than that which is required of me, so that I may live in joy.

Dear God, please lead me in the path of justice and mercy, keeping me humble as I walk with You. I am so grateful for the new life You have given me that allows me to know the joy of walking in Your truth and in Your requirements. May You see this as an offering of love to You. May my life be an example because of this. Amen.

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

Guilty

Nahum 1-3

The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.

Nahum 1:2-3

Nahum brings a prophecy against Nineveh. Jonah had brought the prophecy that caused a heart of repentance; Nahum's message did not have the same result. Nineveh would indeed be judged and would fall, as described by Nahum. The city would be utterly destroyed and not rebuilt—even to this day. While Assyria had been God's chosen agent to bring discipline to the nation of Israel, it did not remove the culpability of the Assyrians for their lust for violence and genocide. They had been warned of the pending judgment that would come from the hand of God Himself against them. God does not change. It is clear from these verses that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is jealous for His own. He has a deep love for His nation and His people. He will avenge all who come against His people. It brings His wrath. God will not leave the guilty unpunished. Some people struggle with Jesus being the only way to heaven (John 14:6). Nahum 1:2-3 help bring clarity. All who are innocent will not be punished and will go to heaven, yet all have sinned. There is no one who is innocent of any wrong doing. A just and holy God must punish the guilty, therefore all must be punished. Yet God sent His own Son, Jesus, to take the wrath and punishment meant for you and me. Jesus was totally innocent. We each are totally guilty. God pours out His wrath toward our sin on His Son. The city of Nineveh would be punished, just as each person apart from Christ will be punished.

Dear God, thank You for Jesus. Apart from Your love and mercy, all I am left with is the righteous judgment I am due. I am in awe of You. Amen.

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

How long?

Habakkuk 1-2

How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

Habakkuk looks at the injustice all around him and asks God why He isn't doing something about it. He is not only looking at the other nations, he is looking at his own nation as well. Judah is far from God. Habakkuk looks at the injustices of the world and cries out to God. The injustices are rampant around Him. People are not following God—even those who claim to know Him. Those who do not know God are even more violent and destructive. Habakkuk realizes that nothing can be done to change the situation—apart from God—so he cries out to God, asking for the reason that God would delay. God tells Habakkuk to wait for it even though it may seem to be delayed. What God has determined to do will be done swiftly at the proper time (2:3). What is striking about Habakkuk is that he noticed the injustice. He saw the injustice as a need for God to move. He did not close his eyes to the injustices around him. Truthfully, this same cry for justice could be raised today. Injustice is rampant among us and we continue to see people turn away and not notice the injustices. The injustices come because of pride (2:4) and only faith in God alone will cause one to walk correctly. I must look for the injustices in the world, both from those who do not know God and from those who claim to know God, and cry out to God to move in power against the injustices. I must also be ready for when He wants to use me in that battle.

Dear God, what are the injustices that are around me? Do I notice them or am I so wrapped up in my needs and desires that I close my eyes and my mind to the great need? You know the world I live in Lord. You know the need for Your justice. How long, O Lord, will you tarry? Bring justice, Lord. Bring Your peace into this chaos. Show me the role that You have for me. Amen.

Thursday, August 17, 2017

Though

Habakkuk 3

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Habakkuk 3:17-19a

There is no doubt that Habakkuk loves the LORD. As the conversation between God and Habakkuk is read, one cannot help but think of the conversation between God and Job. Both of these men wrestled with the injustice around them and both turned to the LORD for the explanation. Both of the books that bear their names end with a declaration of trust, faith, and resolution. Habakkuk declares that His circumstances will not dictate what He chooses to believe or where he chooses to find his strength. He is choosing joy. He is choosing to rejoice in who he knows God to be—even when the things that are happening in his life may make it hard for him to see God. So many times, God's blessing is defined as "material provision." But what if there is no provision? Is God still good even when His goodness is not felt in the way that is considered best? Habakkuk declares a resounding, "YES!" God is sovereign. I can rest in the knowledge that He is in control of all there is. He is working His plan as He sees fit. I rejoice in the LORD.

O LORD, thank You that You have called me to repentance and that I have found the joy of forgiveness and Your presence in my life. You are sovereign and I know that all that happens in my life and in the world goes through You. Therefore I can trust that You are in it and that it is for Your best and Your plan. I choose to rejoice in You—no matter my circumstances! Amen.