

There's Something to Think About Ep. 12 Zephaniah: God's Great Promises

Christmas is just two days away. The prophet Zephaniah reminds us why it is essential that we figure out for ourselves the significance of the season: God sent a Savior to save us from our sin. God makes two great promises through the prophet Zephaniah. The first is that He will judge all the nations of the earth for rejecting Him. The second is that He will gather for Himself a remnant from whom He will remove His judgment and over whom He will rejoice with singing. These two promises reveal the holiness and justice of God as well as His mercy, sovereignty, and compassion. At one point in Zephaniah's message he describes the attitude of the nations toward God. He describes them as self-indulgent and arrogant. They say, in regard to their conduct, "The LORD will not do good, nor will He do ill."

What they mean is that they count God as irrelevant, unconcerned, impotent, and absent. According to them, God isn't going to take any action against their rebellion because God isn't any different than they are, ignoring His own covenant and not caring. They could not be more wrong. And neither can those in our world today who think that because God has not brought misery into their lives that He is simply ignoring them, if He even exists at all.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Apparently, God is paying attention! Humanity's sinful rejection of their Creator is not lost on Him. A dreadful day is coming when His justice will fill the earth like a flood that sweeps away the sin and filth that infect the world. The Bible reminds us that delayed judgment does not mean God is ignorant or unconcerned, but that in His love and mercy and compassion, He gives us opportunity to repent and find our way back to Him. Our response to the first promise in Zephaniah of divine judgment ought to be faith-filled repentance, a committed turning away from our own self-interest and a devoted return to God.

It is those who repent and turn to God who receive the fulfillment of the second promise God makes through Zephaniah.

Zephaniah 3:16-20 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and

gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.

God promises to be a mighty Savior, to rejoice with singing, to exult over those who come to Him, who put their faith in Him, who trust Him with their lives and worship Him with faith and obedience. He will change their shame into praise. He will restore their fortunes before their eyes. God will act in abundant gladness and joy toward those who commit themselves to Him. These are the two promises of God: to bring justice upon unrighteousness and to expand glory on faithfulness. And He sets before all of us the simple choice of which promise we will receive. Those who seek refuge in the name of the LORD, none shall make them afraid. Those who reject the mercy of God, they have much to fear.

Jesus, the babe laid in a manger, the man nailed to the cross, the Son of God raised from the dead, he is the evidence of God's willingness to make a way for us to come to Him, to find forgiveness of sin, to receive the promise of joy. He is the living proof that God will keep every promise, of judgment and of joy, that He ever made. Put your faith in Jesus, turn to God, and secure His promise of joy in your life.

Until next time, there's something to think about.