

Sermon Series: The Minor Prophets

Sermon title: Book of Nahum

Scripture reading: Nahum 1:1-7

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Turn in your Bibles to the book of NAHUM. I'll give you plenty of time to find it. I am guessing that there would be many of us who have never read this book unless you've read through the whole Bible. The easiest way to find it is to find Matthew and turn back 6 books.

Last week, we were in the book of Jonah. The most famous of the Minor Prophets. Today, Nahum, one of the least known...and for good reason. It's a hard book.

Let's pray, cause we definitely need it.

As we begin, let me give us a few reminders about the Minor Prophets in general.

1. **The Minor Prophets are not to be skipped over.** They are God's word and there's something here for us. Something for us to see about God. Something for us to see about us.
2. **The time period** of the prophets in the Old Testament **is pretty small.** It's a period of about 300 years. From 8th century to 5th century BC.

3. The prophets were *reminders more than they were foretellers* of the future. **They reminded Israel of the old covenant** (where they were to be faithful to God), **while pointing them to the new covenant and Christ.** (where God would put the law in their hearts)
4. Be careful trying to apply the meanings of their prophecies to our time today. **Most of their prophecies were of their near future.** We probably assume, I think, that these strange books are about later times like the end of the world. There is some of that, but not mostly.

We talked about Jonah last week. Jonah and Nahum are 2 sides of the same coin. Jonah was 100 years earlier than Nahum. Both were speaking out against Nineveh. Only 2 books in the Bible that end in a question...Jonah and Nahum. Jonah was sent by God to preach repentance to Nineveh. And they listened. They believed God and turned from their evil. Remember? Jonah was mad at God for being merciful.

Nahum is a different story. It's 100 years later. The days of Nineveh's repentance is long gone. The other side of the coin is here. Nahum preaches judgement against Nineveh. There's no repentance this time! Only wrath!

We don't know anything about Nahum the man. It says he's an Elkoshite. That term or place itself is not well

known. Tradition says that Nahum may have been from Galilee...in the area of **Capernaum**.

Because Caper-na-um means....Nahum's village in Hebrew. This is debated. It really doesn't matter much though.

So, let me begin by giving you a summary of what Nahum is about. I am not going to go through all of the gory details of what Nahum says is going to happen to Nineveh. In Nahum, we see aspects of God's character and that's what I want to focus on.

Nineveh (basically modern day Mosul), was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians ruled for a long time between the rivers. This great well-watered area between the Tigris and Euphrates was prime real estate.

And the Assyrians were ruthless in conquering and slaughtering those around them.

The last verse in Nahum says, **“For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?”** (Nahum 3:19)

That pretty much describes it in one sentence.

They had repented 100 years earlier. But now, because of their evil, judgement has come. Time is up!

From about Nahum chapter 1:8 thru chapter 3, the end of the book, you can read the details of their destruction on your own.

**So, Jonah was about the repentance of Nineveh.
Nahum is about the destruction of Nineveh.**

Nahum has a vision. It's like he's seeing the scenes flash before his eyes of battles and the downfall of Nineveh.

But it's chapter 1 verses 1-7 that I want to focus on. For we see something about God that is perplexing and not at all popular to talk about today.

I'll read verses 1-7.

An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

**2 The Lord is a jealous and avenging God;
the Lord is avenging and wrathful;
the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries
and keeps wrath for his enemies.**

**3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power,
and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.
His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.**

**4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry;
he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither;
the bloom of Lebanon withers.**

**5 The mountains quake before him;
the hills melt; the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who dwell in it.**

**6 Who can stand before his indignation?
Who can endure the heat of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.**

**7 The Lord is good,
a stronghold in the day of trouble;
he knows those who take refuge in him.**

Notice in verses 2 & 3, he mentions some things about God.

- He is Jealous.
- He is Avenging. [Mentioned 3x]
- He is wrathful.
- He takes vengeance on his adversaries.
- Keeps wrath for his enemies.
- the LORD is slow to anger and great in power.
- the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.
- He is indignant.
- the LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble;
he knows those who take refuge in him.

So, I hope you see what I see when I read this. We need to ask some hard questions this morning. Because on the surface, there seems to be a contradiction in this text. God's character seems to be contradictory. Is it?

Jealous	VS	slow to anger	
Vengeance		good	
Wrath		a stronghold	
Indignation		loving ("he knows")	
Just		refuge	
<i>("will by no means clear the guilty")</i>			

God forgives Nineveh in Jonah
God destroys Nineveh in Nahum.

God clears the guilty in Jonah.
God doesn't clear the guilty in Nahum.

What we see here and in the Bible as a whole is 2 aspects of God's character.

He is holy.

He is pure.

He is right.

He is perfect.

He is true.

He is right in every way.

He cannot tolerate any evil.

He alone created every person who has ever existed on the planet. As the giver of life he deserves gratitude and worship at every level.

He is jealous for worship because of this.

Because he alone deserves worship, all other worship is evil and wrong. Idolatry must be punished.

He **'will by no means clear the guilty'** as Nahum says.

And every person is guilty.

He cannot just 'sweep it under the rug' and let it go.

Sinners must be punished.

Example: Let's say you sat in a court room and heard the case against a man who murdered a friend of yours. You hear the evidence and the evidence is clear. He is guilty. But when the verdict is considered by the Judge, he says, "You know what, I am in a good mood today. I feel like being kind today. "Mr. Nineveh, you may go free. Even

though you're guilty. I declare you are not. Enjoy your life."

Now, you could say the judge was kind, if even in a sick way, but could not say he was wise or just. Instead, the family and everyone in there would cry out,

"INJUSTICE". We would demand that justice be served.

Well, what if God did serve justice?

What if God gave everyone what they deserve?

He would be a judge who's doing his job rightly then!

God must be just if he is to be good. Guilty people cannot be cleared!

BUT, God is also **'slow to anger'** [Nahum 1:3] and the LORD is **'good'** [Nahum 1:7]. As Jonah said..[Jonah 4:2] he is a **"gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love"**.

He is **a stronghold in the day of trouble**.

He is **a refuge** for those who know him.

A stronghold that protects from what?

A refuge from what???

HIMSELF.

His wrath...His vengeance on sinners.. His justice.

So, as John Piper once said....

"The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God."

How did he do that?

He didn't clear the guilty but transferred the guilt to a substitute.

He cleared the guilty because he transferred the sins of them to another.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to bear the wrath of God for sinners who will take refuge in him.

So, what we see in Nahum, God's holiness and justice over and against his mercy and love...we see all over scripture.

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 2:4-5

God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be revealed.

Romans 3:23-25

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed

over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5

the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief....For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us...

John 3

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

And Jesus finishes off that section with these beautiful words....verse 36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The book of Nahum proclaims God as a God of wrath and vengeance for sinners.

God is good and he is slow to anger.

God is a stronghold and a refuge to those who trust him.

There are 2 kinds of people in the world.

Those who receive his mercy and love.

Those who reject it.

Those who let their sin and guilt be transferred to Jesus.

Those who insist on carrying it themselves.

Those who are declared innocent.

Those who are declared guilty.

Those who turn their face to God.

Those who turn their back to God.

Which will it be for you my friend?

Which will it be?

Christian, take Nineveh to heart. They repented once and God forgave them. Year's later, they had turned away. Yesterday's repentance won't suffice for today. Press on till the end. Re-dedicate today. Everyday!