

The LORD is good, even when...

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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, we praise thy name, oh Lord, and we thank thee. We thank thee, Lord for thy work in us that has given us a thankful heart if, indeed, we are thankful. Lord, I pray at this hour thou would make us thankful, that thou would give us a spirit of love and thy Spirit of mercy to come away from the world all the things that so easily beset us. And, Lord, may you make us strong. Make us strong this day in thee. Or may you attend these hours ahead of us this day for thy glory, for thy name's sake, for the edifying of thy Church for the glory of thy name. Lord, I ask thy blessing now upon this time, thou would fill me with thy love and, Lord, that thou would loose the lips to speak thy truth as thou art pleased to reveal it. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

There is a saying that goes in this life that things ain't always what they appear to be. They are not always what they seem to be. You know, that its true in the child of God's life. Sometimes here on earth this great Lord of ours is hidden from us. it doesn't change who the Lord is. It doesn't change that he is good. It doesn't change that he is love. It doesn't change that he is merciful. But our perception of it does, of him does. Because at that moment we, of course, are blinded by self, sin, Satan and the world.

Today I want to take you to a book I am pretty sure we don't spend a lot of time in. I don't. It is the book of Nahum. I have a verse for you this morning and I want you to... and I hope as the Lord is pleased to reveal himself in these pages and shows you at the time it was written what was going on and how he brought his servant Nahum to say these words.

Our text comes from Nahum chapter one verse seven. And it reads this way:

“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”¹

¹ Nahum 1:7.

Now if we just took that verse in its own self, took it right out of this passage, that would be something very easy to talk about, the goodness of the Lord, especially in this time of year when we are enjoined to be thankful, when our minds are taken to be thankful for the things that the Lord has given us. But that is not the case for Nahum. For, see, when he said this verse, when the Lord brought him in the midst of this chapter it is the only thing good in the entire chapter.

I want to begin today. We are going to spend some time in verse seven when we get there, but I want to back up to set the stage to what the Lord revealed to Nahum. May he reveal it to each one of his children in this room today. Chapter one begins this way.

“The burden of Nineveh.”²

We have been here before, haven't we, with Jonah? In fact, it was 112 years earlier when the Lord burdened Jonah with the burden of Nineveh. He sent Jonah to preach to Nineveh and then the Lord did something miraculous. He worked in the hearts, upon the hearts of man and there was a national repentance, something that in our day and age we know in our minds that is ... our Lord is very much capable of, but yet we doubt.

The Lord worked mightily that time. And all he did through Jonah was preach their destruction. But when the Lord attends his Word it has mighty effects and the Lord spared Nineveh for a time.

Now there is a lot of speculation why Jonah was so angry at the end of the book. Some even believe that he foresaw this day of Nahum, that he knew that the Lord would use Nineveh as a scourge on Israel. I don't know if I believe that or not. But that is the time that Nahum now is writing.

As I said, it has been 112 years since the Lord spared Nineveh. But now he has put the burden on another prophet, Nahum. And he has raised up Nahum to speak and:

“The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”³

This was a time, if you remember, if you recall a few years ago as the Lord laid upon my heart to preach a sermon called “The Attack of Satan,” we went through 2 Kings in two chapters and we met one in there called Sennacherib. He was of Assyria. He was the one that Nahum now is preaching the destruction of. And we knew that came about because throughout that picture that the Lord unfolded for us that day, we saw the destruction of him. That is the time that Nahum is prophesying about.

He begins in verse two.

“God is jealous.”⁴

² Nahum 1:1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Nahum 1:2.

You know, if we limited the Word of God to the historical account that is unfolded before us this morning it wouldn't have much meaning for you and I today. We could sit here and we could nod and say, "Yes, the Lord did that. Yes, the Lord he is the same today, tomorrow, yesterday, today, forever and the Lord never changes. And yes he could do that again." And all of that is nice. But as I ask many times and as the Lord puts the burden on my soul is to ask the question: What about your soul?

When you read the word God is jealous from a prophet and you know that the prophet is the mouthpiece of God, what does it mean to you that God is jealous? Now I want you to keep in mind what we have done today is we have started with our focus verse which is verse seven, the Lord is good. And I want you to understand that Nahum as he is being revealed this picture of who God is, he is brought to see that in everything that he has revealed the Lord is good. And we begin with God is jealous. But what is God jealous over? Well, he will have all the honor that is due his name. He will have all the glory that is due his name. He will not have his glory ascribed to another. And that means to man, to rulers, to anyone. The Lord is jealous for his glory. But the Lord is also jealous for his people. He is very jealous in the protection of his people. He is very concerned with their safety. And once again I am not talking about our physical safety. We understand that. We understand that the Lord puts hedges about his people.

Our lives testify of that day after day. But as we are facing yet another week in this small fellowship of tests, of procedures, of surgeries of things so unknown, how is it that we can be brought to verse seven to say that the Lord is good in the midst of all of these things? How is it that we can be brought to say that we are thankful for these things? How is it that we can be brought to see that in all that God does he is good? And that is the amazing thing in this passage. As I said, there is not much good in it that we would see with our eyes.

God is a jealous God. And praise be to God that he is, because he is jealous for his Church.

I want you to hold your finger there and the only place we are going to go today outside of this passage is just a couple of pages over to Hosea chapter two. I want to read you three verses. And this the Lord gave to Hosea at a time of backsliding, at a time that Jerusalem had backslid so mightily. And I want you to look at verses five, six and seven.

"For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."⁵

That is us, dear ones. Every day of our lives as we see the things of this world we lust after them. The fallen nature that lies within us, whatever that is, whatever it may be and, you see, you see a whole array of different things here, bread, water, wool, flax, oil, my drink. If I see it, I am going to after it. That is my desire.

⁵ Hosea 2:5.

“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns.”⁶

This is the Lord speaking. Where did brother Paul use this on Thursday as we were talking about the goodness of the Lord then?

“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”⁷

That is what the Lord does for his children. He is jealous over his children. He sets a hedge around their path so they don't walk where they are not to walk.

But you say, “But I am backsliding?”

You are right. We do.

You know, one day, brothers and sisters, when we are in glory the Lord is going to reveal to every one of us what he kept us. He is going to reveal to us those hedges. He is going to reveal to us how those hedges were made with afflictions and he is going to reveal to us how those hedges were made with hardships and he is going to reveal to us how they were made with trials.

And we don't understand right now. We look at that glass and we can't see through it. We can't see the fullness of the Lord's goodness in it.

“I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.”⁸

When the Lord hedges up the way he not only hedges up the way, but he reveals his Son in the way. He reveals his Son and he brings his children back into that union that is broken by our sin. Well, as I said, it seems to be broken by our sin. Yes, the Lord God is jealous. Yes, the Lord is very zealous and jealous over the souls of his children. Don't ever forget that. Don't forget that as the Lord sends the afflictions, the appointments, the appointed hours that we go through these things that seem so much like vanity down here. Somewhere the Lord's goodness is in it. If you be his child his goodness is in it.

Let's go back to our text.

“God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth.”⁹

⁶ Hosea 2:6.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hosea 2:6-7.

⁹ Nahum 1:2.

You know, the more I see the enemies of my Lord the more I am thankful for this, that the Lord revengeth. As we live in a world that rejects our Lord sometimes I feel so small. Sometimes I cry out to the Lord and say, "Lord, the hatred of this world for you is much greater than the love that I have." There is so much hatred around and here your people are just this small little number. That is where the Lord's glory is. And his glory also is in destroying the wicked. And that is a hard one for us. It is a hard one because we work with these people. We are in the public shopping center with these people. We go out into the world and sit in a movie theater next to these people. We see the plight of man as the Lord brings his judgment upon them. And there is something in our nature for man that always rallies around man that always says, "You know..."

I will never forget and I don't know why. It is just one of those things that sticks out from my childhood and it... it was a bumper sticker that my sisters got real early in my life and they put it on their door. And I can't remember the exact words, but it had an eagle on it and it said something like, "Looking for the good in everyone and praise it." And that always stuck with me because every time they had their door shut I had to go in the door and that would be right there in front of me. You know, look for the good in people. There is good in every man. And we hear that. We hear that in song. We hear it... There has got to be good in someone.

I am going to tell you something. There is no good in our old man. And there is nothing good if Christ isn't in it. And we are going to see that it in the pages here. You might be shocked by some of the things that the Lord gave Nahum and all under the banner of the Lord's goodness. It is good, Lord, that you revengeth, because you are greater than us. And it is not our enemies. It is his enemies. That is the one that the child of God's desire is that they are destroyed.

I always think about Ananias and what his answer was when the Lord sent him to Paul. "Lord, aren't you making a mistake? Don't you know which one this one is? He is the one who persecutes the Church."

I got a lot of people like that, that I would think that. If the Lord revealed himself to those people, I would probably say the same thing to the Lord. Lord, didn't you make a mistake? Hasn't this one been your enemy their entire life?

But that is the depth that we see. That is the depth that is given to us. That is not his ways that are higher than our ways.

"God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious."¹⁰

We are going to talk about that fury, because the Lord will pour that fury out. The Lord has poured that fury out. That word furious, just looking at it looks ominous to me. It looks an all powerful anger. It looks like an unbridled wrath. And he is furious.

¹⁰ Ibid.

“...the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”¹¹

Oh, our Lord said:

“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”¹²

And, you know, this might shock you, too, but I can’t wait for his vengeance to be poured out on my old man. I can’t wait for it to be destroyed. That is some heavy baggage.

The Lord is good in taking vengeance. We don’t equate those words often with our Lord. We know that our Lord is love and oh he is. We could all stand up here and exhaust everything we know about his love and not even scratch the surface of the depth. But somewhere in his love is his vengeance, because he takes vengeance on his enemies. And in the child of God’s life he brings every child of God to that place, to desire the destruction of the enemies of his Lord.

I think about that often. Just in the frailty of my understanding of what goes on in worldly events, sometimes I get so distraught of wanting to throw my Lord out of this country, of taking him off the currency, taking him out of the pledge. And the Lord has to stop my anger. He has to reveal to me that it is his vengeance that will come. And he has to remind me that no matter what man does they can’t take Christ out of me. They can’t take Christ off his throne for he is ruling and he is ruling everything after the counsel of the perfect triune Lord’s will. And there is no man that can stay his hand.

And when he says he reserves wrath for his enemies, wow. Those words, the Lord and wrath, are two things I pray... I know that it is something the child of God will always be spared from. In fact, we are going not see that in just a minute, but I tell you. The fears that we have. The unbelief that we have. I always make us fearful of maybe one day being that one that has that wrath poured out. But as you will see here shortly, there was one that it was poured out upon as he stood in your place, as he stood in my place and absorbed this fury.

I want you to keep this fury in mind. We are going to get a little bit further down. But look at verse three.

“The LORD is slow to anger.”¹³

Yes, he is long suffering toward us ward. He is long suffering towards the people of God.

I don’t know when the last time you read the account of Noah but, you know, you think about God’s longsuffering at that time when he reveled to Noah that all the world was wicked. You think about how many days it took Noah to make that ark. You think about

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Romans 12:19.

¹³ Nahum 1:3.

all those days it took him and as he hammered away and the world was mocking and spitting and ridiculing Noah for his God, not Noah, but what they were saying about the Lord, the great Jehovah. Yes, the Lord is slow to anger.

Then I think about Lot, Lot in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot who finally upon leaving still tarried long, still tarried as the Lord's anger was building and he was ready to pour out the fire and the brimstone and to burn them to nothing. But yet Lot still tarried. He still couldn't wean himself from that horrible place. And it took the Lord's angel to come and grab hold of him and to pull him out of that place. It is no different from you and me.

I will tell you how slow the Lord's anger was to us. It is so slow that we will never see it. We don't see the anger of God. It is not reserved for the people of God. It was absorbed by our surety. It was absorbed by our substitute.

“The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.”¹⁴

The Lord is great in power and that is what I mean. As we live in our own modern day Sodom, the Lord is great I power.

You say, “Oh, ok, so he is going to bring fire and brimstone?”

No. I am telling you what he does in your soul. As Paul said:

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”¹⁵

That is the power that this talked about here. This is how Nahum can be brought to see in the midst of all of the destruction that is going to come, Lord, you are good. It is not Lord, you are good when I walk out to the mailbox and there is a check in it. It is not, Lord, you are good when I am given three or four days off from work and I told that to my kids one night this week in our Bible study. I love my time off from work. I love my time to spend with my family. And you think those days are going to be just the greatest days that are ever there, because you are not at work. You have all these freedom to do things. But I will tell you, if the Lord is not in it, they are the most horrible days. They can be. You can try to fill them with the activities of the things of the world and they are empty. It is vanity unless the Lord is in them.

But that is the greatness of his power that in the midst of all of the afflictions, in the midst of all of the doom, in the midst of all the gloom, the Lord's power in your soul is to lift you to see something, to see someone, to see Christ high and lifted up and to see eternal life in him, that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world and that we are just passing through.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Philippians 3:10.

Lord, I pray that you would wean us from our clutches from this world, the things that tie us to it.

We are going to see that here in a minute, too. But the Lord is slow to anger. He is great in power. Can you imagine the wrath of God and the absolute restraining power of God to keep that wrath for the Lord's people? He is long suffering toward us ward. I think of that fury and I think of that anger and I think, wow, you must have great power.

I think of the things... listen, if an ant comes over and bites me, that ant is dead. I am going to smash it five or six times. That is my anger. I have dominion over that ant. You think about the power of our Lord who has dominion over all he has created. And you think about what the creation has done to the Creator.

Oh, to be shut up in that ark, in the Lord Jesus Christ when the floods come. And they come.

Look at the end of verse three.

“...the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.”¹⁶

Do you understand that? Do you understand the bare sovereign power that is in that statement? And I am not even talking about on the physical realm. We understand the Lord moves the hurricane. We understand the Lord moves the tornado. We understand the Lord moves the volcano. We get that. But we are talking something a little deeper here. The whirlwinds of your trials, the whirlwinds of your afflictions. Do you understand that the Lord has his way in them? Not your way, not my way, not the way we believe they should go. I have been exercised on that one a lot lately. We go to the earthly physicians and the earthly physicians can only tell us the limited knowledge that they have. And they tell us what it is the book says. Here is what the book says. Here is what you do. And you get better.

There is a problem with that if the Lord is not in it. It is not going to work. And I am talking about to the people of God. The Lord has his way in the whirlwind. Whatever that trial is and whatever that mysterious thing that befalls us each day, the Lord has his way. He has his way in the storms of our lives. He has his way in the dark clouds that come up over us, the cloud of fear, the cloud of torment. The Lord has his way in it.

“...and the clouds are the dust of his feet.”¹⁷

Do you see the sovereignty of your Lord in that passage?

And now look at four and five.

¹⁶ Nahum 1:3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.¹⁸

What is Nahum allowed to see here? What I pray that God would reveal to you today, that everything in this life is vanity. Everything that the Lord... look at this. Everything that he made has an appointed end to it. If the Lord is not in it, he will consume it. Do you understand that? He rebukes the sea. He makes it dry. The great created waters, the Lord dries them up. He dries up all the rivers. The mountains shake and quake at him. The hills melt. The earth is burned at his presence. Anything in relation to Christ will be consumed. The dross and the child of God's life will be consumed. The things that we hang our hats on, our lives on, the things that we get up and we care so much about that we spend so much time with, things, whatever they are. They will be burned at his presence.

Praise be to God that he does. I tell my children this all the time as I see them day after day in front of the electronic devices.

You say, "Well, why don't you take it away from them? Why don't you make them read the Bible?"

I will tell you something, because the Lord is true. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises. And I know that if my children are the Lord's children, the Lord is going to burn up all of these things and he is going to consume them in relation to himself and he is going to reveal himself so mightily in his children's life that you are not going to be able to walk the way that you used to. And he consumes these things over and over and over again, because nothing can be in comparison with our Lord. The Lord is good.

God sends a blight on everything in this world. It is marred. It is marred by sin. It is marred by man. It is marred by the spot and it is designed that way so that no man can find God {?}. The Lord must be revealed in your soul. And praise be to God that he does.

So now we come to verse six where we see our Lord and Savior.

"Who can stand before his indignation?"¹⁹

Remember that fury I told you to remember up there?

"Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."²⁰

¹⁸ Nahum 1:4-5.

¹⁹ Nahum 1:6.

²⁰ Ibid.

Who can stand there? As the Lord revealed to Nahum the destruction that would come on the enemies the destruction and the judgment had already come to Israel. It had already come to Judah. But the Lord in his faithfulness to his remnant of people said, "I will destroy my enemies. I will destroy them all." And then this question comes up to you and I today. Who could stand in his fury? Who could stand in his wrath?

We know the answer and the only answer is our substitute who stood in that appointed hour and absorbed all of the wrath and the fury for sin, the sins of his people. I just... I tell you... the more... every time I think of it and the Lord gives me just a glimpse of how wicked my sin is, just mine alone would be great accomplishment. But all of my bothers and sisters throughout all of time, How hot do you think that fury was? How hot do you think that anger was at that sin? But he stood, because he is the only one who could. And the only one who can, the only one who did. He can stand before the indignation. He can abide my substitute.

And that is what Nahum has revealed. It is like who is going to be able to stand? The Lord's people who safely shut up in the ark that is the Lord Jesus. That is who is going to stand. And how is it when you see everything around you destroyed? How is it when everything that you come to verse seven now? How did we get here? How did we get in all of this that the Lord is good?

And I want you to look at that Lord there. It is all capitalized. That this the Hebrew word Jehovah, the great three in one. Jehovah the Father is good. Luke 12:32 says:

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."²¹

Jehovah the Son is good. John 10:11 says:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."²²

Jehovah the Spirit is good. Psalm 143:10 says:

"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."²³

Yes, the Lord is good.

Psalm 100:4-5 says:

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.²⁴

²¹ Luke 12:32.

²² John 11:10.

²³ Psalm 143:10.

²⁴ Psalm 100:4-5.

Yes, he is jealous. Yes, he is a revenging Lord. Yes, he is slow to anger. Yes, he is great and powerful. Yes, he is faithful to destroy his enemies which are our enemies, too. Yes, he is faithful to destroy all the things that we rely on and yes he is faithful to reveal himself as the only way to eternal life as our great substitute.

Psalm 23:6 says:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”²⁵

I see that house as his Son that no man can ever take me out of. And no sin that I commit past, present or future, can wrest me away from the hand that has plucked me from sure death and destruction.

Psalm 52:1 says:

“Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.”²⁶

The Lord is good. That is what he is. He is a strong hold in the day of trouble. That is what he is to us, a fortified place, a place of security.

David said in Psalm 61:3:

“For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”²⁷

We sang this morning *A Mighty Fortress is our God*. He is. And I know that when you hear words they are just words until the Lord comes with that mighty power to show you that he is that strong place. We all have things on the horizon again, because this isn't heaven. If you think that it is going to end, if you think that the trials and the sufferings here are going to end they will end one day in glory. But, dear ones, we need to be weaned from this world. And he is good to do it and his mercy endures forever.

And, you know, he knows them that trust in him. He knows his work. He knows his people. Blessed be his name. We may be unknown to this world, but we are known unto him.

Psalm 142:3 says:

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.”²⁸

²⁵ Psalm 23:6.

²⁶ Psalm 52:1.

²⁷ Psalm 61:3.

²⁸ Psalm 142:3.

The Lord knoweth my path. He knoweth my uprising. He knoweth my down sitting. He knoweth my laying down and sleeping. The Lord is my Jehovah-shama. He is there. He knows my every thought and he knows that it trust in him, because that is his work. He knows that I trust in him and he knows that I am persuaded that I trust in him because of him.

The Lord said in Matthew 6:8 as he is talking of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees:

“Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”²⁹

He knows what we have need of. I am sure some of you in this room the paths that the Lord has wrought out for each one of you are not the paths that you would have chosen for yourself. But he knoweth them. He knows what his sheep have need of. He knows our frame and he bears patiently with us. He knows our temptations and he brings us succor. He knows our sins and he forgives them. He knows our sorrows and he comforts them. He knows our accusations and he confounds them. He knows our enemies and he scatters them. He knows our tears and he will wipe them all away till he takes us safe up to that place to be with him where there is no more pain, no more tears and no more sorrow.

In the midst of this chapter you heard what came before it. Three things come after it: destruction, desolation and death. And right in the midst of all of that:

“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”³⁰

I do want to point you to the very last verse of this chapter as we close.

“Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.”³¹

There is only one that can bring you good tidings, the great Jehovah Lord that is good. He brings it by speaking to you by the power of his Spirit in a small voice. The Son brings it to you by teaching you as the great prophet, priest and king. And the Father brings it to you in his great electing and his great predestinating and his great providential work in the lives of his children.

“Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.”³²

²⁹ Matthew 6:8.

³⁰ Nahum 1:7.

³¹ Nahum 1:15.

³² Ibid.

You know what the wicked there is in the Hebrew? Belial. It is Satan. I long for that day, too, when that one will not torment me anymore. I long for the days the Lord rebukes him and drives him far from me as he does. I long for those minutes and those hours that the Lord sets me in the place to see his peace, to feel his peace, to experience his love and his mercy. And that is what I pray for you today.

As the Lord gives you time this week may he press upon you what he gave to his prophet many years ago that:

“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”³³

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, add they power, add they clarity for thy name's sake of the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

³³ Nahum 1:7.