

SERMON FOCUS: I must live as though the victory is won.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will examine if he is living a life that reflects joy in Christ.

BACKGROUND: Zephaniah is preaching to a nation that has gone corrupt. They have neglected worship of God, or combined it into worship of idols. They are doing whatever they want, thinking nothing bad is ever going to happen to them. But they are going to face God's judgment. Yet, there are some among them, a faithful remnant, who are going to experience the exile along with their unfaithful countrymen. But there is good news on the other side of the judgment.

SCRIPTURE READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20

INTRODUCTION: We have a lot in common with some who would have been Zephaniah's original audience. We have watched our society decay further and further, we watch the world being shaken, and more and more people denying God with their words and their actions. Yet, we have something that they didn't have (yet). We live on this side of the birth of the Messiah, so we have received a hope that they could only imagine during their time. Yet, they were told to rejoice because God was going to be faithful to them, even though His people had been unfaithful to Him. We can heed that same call today.

MESSAGE:

1. I MUST REJOICE

- a. Rejoicing is such a natural response to our Lord's victory.
- b. We rejoice in a variety of circumstances:
 - i. When our team wins the game.
 - ii. When a child is born.
 - iii. When someone has a major accomplishment.
- c. Singing is a natural part of rejoicing.
 - i. We sing team songs at games.
 - ii. We sing along with our favorite songs at concerts.
 - iii. We even sing along with the radio in our cars.
- d. In this passage, we see a command to sing because of the removal of punishment. That's a great reason to sing! We are also told in v. 17 that the Lord will delight in us with singing. Picture the God of the universe singing over us!
- e. Of course singing is an outward sign of rejoicing; however we must have an overall attitude of rejoicing.
- f. Many Christians do not display an attitude of rejoicing. But we should rejoice. Our sin is gone and so is the penalty of it. Rejoice, and rejoice loudly and publicly in song!
- g. We should rejoice the same way we live our lives which is without fear.

2. I MUST NOT FEAR

- a. (16) On that day it will be said to Jerusalem: “Do not fear, Zion, do not let your hands grow weak.”
- b. The reason for this is simple: God is on His throne; we have nothing to fear.
- c. His perfect love casts out all fear.
- d. We have our Lord, a warrior who saves us, what need do we have of fear?

3. I MUST HAVE HOPE

- a. One day, all God’s people will be gathered.
- b. One day all God’s enemies will be finally destroyed.
- c. One day all our sickness and sadness will be gone.
- d. Our Lord has conquered death.

4. THE GOSPEL IN SIMPLE FORM (adapted from Dr. James Merritt).

- a. Bad News: We are all sinners separated from God.
- b. Worst News: There is nothing we can do about our sin problem.
- c. Good News: Christ did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- d. Best News: Salvation and eternal life are a free gift, but you must receive it.

INVITATION HYMN # 280 Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.