

¹⁴ Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. ¹⁶ In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. ¹⁷ The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”

Text: Zephaniah 3:14-17 A 12/8/24 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18 Psalm 98
Hymns: 706, 707, 103, 94

SING, SHOUT ALOUD, BE GLAD AND REJOICE WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

- 1. Jesus defeated sin and Satan for us**
- 2. Jesus is with us**

Dear fellow believers in the Christchild,

Our text is from the Old Testament book of Zephaniah. Zephaniah served as God’s prophet “*in the days of Josiah ..., king of Judah,*” who the Bible informs us “*did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*” (Zeph. 1:1; 2 Ki. 22:2). That was a blessing for Zephaniah. What made his calling as God’s prophet difficult was the fact that the nation of Israel as a whole was unbelieving. In the portion of his book before our text Zephaniah pronounces God’s judgments upon the Jewish people as well as upon other nations. But in the midst of all this bad news comes God’s wonderful news in our text.

“*Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem!*” (my emphasis). That is real joy! The Lord had Good News for His people, meant to bring them great joy! What could that Good News be? Here’s a hint: “*I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*” (Lk. 2:10-11, my emphasis).

1

Zephaniah told the people, “*The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy.*” Many times in the past God had punished His people for their faithlessness by allowing their enemies to attack them, and often defeat them. But now the Lord “*cast out [their] enemy.*” God wasn’t talking about stopping the Jews’ enemies from ever attacking them again. The continued unbelief of the Jewish nation as a whole meant that wouldn’t happen.

What enemy had God “*cast out*” from His people? The real enemy of God’s people, and of all people, is Satan. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, God promised to send their Descendant who would “*crush [Satan’s] head*” (Gen. 3:15). This happened when God’s Son, Jesus Christ, came down to earth as the baby in the manger, died on the cross, and rose again. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would do this: “*Comfort, yes, comfort My people!*” Says your God. Speak

comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare” (against our great enemy, Satan) “is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned” (Is. 40:1-2). Jesus “has taken away [our] judgments, [and] has cast out [our] enemy” – Satan, defeating him once and for all: “It is finished!” (Jn. 19:30, my emphasis).

Because we are sinners, because we often give in to Satan’s temptations, we deserve God’s judgment and punishment. Zephaniah told the people, “*The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy*” (my emphasis). Those words in the English and in the original speak of what Jesus had already done. Yet Zephaniah spoke those words hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. Zephaniah prophesied about Jesus the way Isaiah prophesied about Jesus: “*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*” (53:4, my emphasis). Even though during the time of the Old Testament Jesus hadn’t been born and died on the cross and risen again, God prophesied that He would. And when God said that Jesus would do a certain thing, it was as good as if Jesus had already done it. That is why Zephaniah could tell the people (and us!) that Jesus “*has taken away your judgments,*” and Jesus “*has cast out your enemy.*”

2

Zephaniah told the people, “*The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst.*” God assured and reassured His people that He was always with them. God would send His Son down to earth as the God-Man, Jesus Christ, to be “*with*” us. After the angel told Joseph that Mary would give birth to God’s son, Matthew tells us, “*All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’*” (1:22-23, my emphasis). In everything you and I go through in life, in whatever the future holds, Jesus assures us, “*I am with you always*” (Mt. 28:20, my emphasis).

Zephaniah told the people that because “*the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more.*” Obviously God wasn’t promising them that they wouldn’t have any more problems in life. In what sense can it be said of us as God’s people, “*You shall see disaster no more*”? In Christ we never have to fear any harm. Zephaniah told the people, “*In that day,*” when Jesus would come, “*it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear.’*” By faith in the Savior who was to come, God’s Old Testament people didn’t have to be afraid. Isaiah prophesied, “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: ... Mighty God, ... the Prince of Peace*” (9:6). As their almighty God and Savior, the Son of God took away the fears of the Old Testament believers and gave them peace. By faith in the Savior who has come, we New Testament believers don’t have to be afraid. As our almighty God and Savior, Jesus takes away our fears and gives us peace. In the words of the Christmas carol:

What harm can sin and death then do? The true God now abides with you.

Let hell and Satan rage and chafe, Christ is your Brother – ye are safe. (TLH #103:4)

We're told, "*The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save.*" The angel said to Joseph, "*Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Mt. 1:20-21). God's Old Testament believers were saved by faith in Jesus who was to come. We New Testament believers are saved by faith in Jesus who has come.

We're told, "*The LORD your God ... will quiet you with His love.*" The "*Mighty One [who] is to save*" is the same One who "*[quiets us] with His love.*" Scripture calls Jesus both "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*" the "*Mighty One [who] is to save*" us, as well as "*friend of ... sinners*" who assures us, "*I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*" (Mt. 11:19, 29).

Throughout the history of God's Old Testament people and His judgments on them, the believing Jews had to suffer along with the unbelieving Jews. The believing Jews had to live among the unbelieving Jews, which was most of their fellow Jews, and the believing Jews had to live among the unbelieving, idolatrous nations around them. God didn't take away all of His believing people's earthly problems. What God did do was "*quiet [them] with His love.*"

Today we face the threat of terrorists. We're living in a country and world in which godlessness is growing daily, it seems. Each of us has our own problems. God doesn't "*quiet*" us by working everything out the way we think it should be. God doesn't quiet us by telling us exactly what will happen to us in the future. We bring all of our problems and worries and fears to God, place our trust in Him and His Word, and God comforts us and "*[quiets us] with His love.*" In love He sent His Son down to earth to "*quiet*" us. Jesus tells us, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (Jn. 14:27). "*In Me you ... have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" (Jn. 16:33)

We're told, "*The LORD ... will rejoice over you with gladness ... He will rejoice over you with singing.*" When we're told that "*the LORD ... will rejoice over you with singing,*" the word "*singing*" comes from the same word in the original as "*Sing!*" in the beginning of our text. There God tells us to "*sing, ... shout ...! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart*" over Him and all that He does for us. God deserves our praise, and we do praise Him. But to hear, God "*takes great delight in you*" and "*rejoices over you with singing,*" that's amazing! It's wonderful. Picture God "*[rejoicing] over you with singing.*" That God truly feels that way about us undeserving sinners – what a testimony to God's love for us!

On the first Christmas God sent us His Son. Because of Jesus and all He did and does for you God "*takes great delight in you*" and "*[rejoices] over you with singing.*" Because of what God has done for you when He sent Jesus, at Christmas time and always, "*Sing..., shout! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart*" to God! Amen.