Good News/Bad News

Nahum

Nahum – a power-packed book buried on 1 page of your OT. (Notably: page 666 in my Bible = Fitting, because it delivers news about a people who lived a 666 life by rejecting God.)

Nah 1:1 “An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.”

This unfamiliar book concerns a city called Nineveh.

*Built in Genesis, by Noah’s disobedient son, who also built cities like Babel.

*From its earliest days, Nineveh was a sanctuary city of evil & lawlessness; later became the capital city of Assyrian empire (“Sin City”) and chief opponent of Israel.

*If its history doesn’t interest you, maybe current events will: the ruins of Nineveh are in Iraq, outside a city, which remains a key stronghold of the Islamic State: Mosul. (Picture)

Nineveh is most well-known for its biblical connection to Jonah.

*Summary: Jonah announced God’s judgment to Nineveh b/c of their vast evil, but instead of rejecting God’s word, the leaders of Nineveh’s Congress...did the unbelievable!

They turned from evil ways, & passed legislation to call mightily to God, saying: “Who knows? God may turn & relent from his fierce anger....”

*And God did the unthinkable: He turned from His anger & extended mercy to them.

*That’s our God! He still delights to show compassion and love to all who call on Him.

But...how many parents realize that saving faith does not automatically get passed down to kids?

About 100 years later, Nineveh returned to old ways. Faith got swallowed by fish: “rebellion”

*Lesson: Children/Grandchildren cannot live on borrowed faith of their parents.

*Saving faith, like flights on Delta airlines, are non-transferable between parties.

*This verse in Jeremiah frames Nineveh’s problem: “you recently repented and did what was right in my eyes...but then you turned around and profaned my name...” (Jer. 34:15-16)

*What is wrong with us? How quickly we wander! Backslide. Vacillate. Hot...Cold.

So, God raises up Nahum to deliver 2nd message. A “Sequel”. Jonah, Part 2. There would be no trilogy

Nahum – a Jewish prophet, who God called to announce His Word to people who wouldn’t listen.

(We offered $250 to the first parent who named a newborn son Zephaniah. I repeat that offer for Nahum = which means, if you have twin boys, there is $500 on the line.)

His name means: “Comfort. Compassion.” Ironic, b/c there seems to be little Comfort in his message

*Indeed, v.1 says His message is an “Oracle” of Nineveh = used 65x in OT = translated “Burden”.
**KJV renders: “Burden of Nineveh.”** This message will be a heavy burden to the city.

But, for the Jewish people, the news of God judging wicked Nineveh is a great comfort:

*God is a Loving Warrior who will judge the nations, protect His people, and deliver justice.*

IOW: Nahum is both Good News/Bad News...Good Cop/Bad Cop...depending on which city you lived in

*For the people of God,* it is Good News b/c God will lift the burden of evil off our shoulders.

*For the world,* it is Bad News b/c God does not look blindly on political corruption or evil.

(Side note) Nahum is from “Elkosh” – which is shrouded in mystery, but one possible location is that he grew up by a sea called Galilee, in a town called CaperNaum, which means: Village of Nahum.

*A fascinating possibility that when Jesus ministered from CaperNaum, he was the True and Better Nahum, bringing Comfort to Israel: He would lift their burden & defeat their enemy.*

1. **Be warned,** (v.1-6)

   v.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.*

   Probably not a memory verse in AWANA, but this is a profound Biblical description of God’s character, as He relates to: *his adversaries...his enemies.*

   • **Jealous & Avenging =** In Scripture, Jealousy is not only an attribute of God, but also His name:
     - Ex 34:14 *...for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*
     - Deut 4:24 *...For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*
     - Josh 24:19 *...He is a holy God; he is a jealous God*
     - Joel 2:18 *...Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.*
     - Zech 1:14 *...Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem...*

   *In perfect, flawless Jealousy, God created the Universe & actually thinks it is his!*

   *IOW: He has full rights of ownership (Ps. 24:1). He wants that which is His!*

   • **Avenging (x3) & Wrathful =** Lit: Bottles his displeasure.

   *Imagine going to a local liquor store and asking if they have a bottle of God’s Wrath.*

   *Yes, God is Love,* but if we make Him “only” Love, we have a malnourished, lopsided view of God, like running a marathon with 1 leg 6 inches shorter than the other.

   • **Slow to Anger & Great in Power**

   v.3 *The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.*

   Yes, God is “Slow to Anger,” patiently enduring seasons of sin, desiring NONE to perish.

   *But, also Great in Power (Exceeding in both Force & Capacity) & “by no means clear the guilty”*

   *This week: Judge Gorsuch sat before a panel, as he was questioned about his past, decisions...*
*Let it serve as a picture: A day is coming when the world sits before the Judge of the Universe, and enemies of God will have to face questions, without the blood of Jesus.

Nahum pictures the cosmos shaking at the knees b/c of Judgment: (Like Shaggy: Zoinks)

3...His way is in whirlwind (hurricane) 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 (fertile lands wither); the bloom of Lebanon withers. 5 The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; (consume) the earth heaves (Heb. ‘nasa’) before him, the world and all who dwell in it.

*Best word picture for Northern MI, is: The Storm of August, 2015 (See Pictures)

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.

*What chance does anyone have to talk their way out of His fury; buy their way out?

*Last Sunday, driving with Kyle on Hammond Rd. Saw a policeman, realized I was going 65.

*Seeing authority immediately brought guilt: “Uh-oh, buddy, I think he got me.”

*Kyle – 11 years old: “Why are you so good in front of police officers when the Lord your God is looking down on you all the time?”

*Indeed! Why do we live as if the Lord our God is not all-knowing, all-present God of Creation?

2. ...but be comforted, (v.7-8)

v.7 The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. 8 But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

*A diamond in rough. One of the most gorgeous descriptions of God’s character in the Bible! He is:

- GOOD - in character. What love He has! What favor He shows! What delight He feels!
- STRONG - in the day of trouble. He is Mighty to Save!
- SAFE - A place of refuge & protection for His people! (Luther: “A Mighty Fortress!”)

*Zephaniah: “The Lord has Hidden!” Nahum: “Comfort” b/c The Lord is Good!

*As I studied this verse Tuesday, we got word that Rena, our Syrian Pastors’ wife, was hiding in the stairwell of her building in Damascus as it was getting shelled by artillery.

*We prayed this verse: The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble!

*Friend, when we see the judgment we deserve, there is only one place to hide: In Christ!

*Believer, when Satan launches an assault (shame & condemnation), there is no better place to hide than this: “God is Good; Strong; Safe; knows those who take refuge in Him!”
*Christ is the “goodness & lovingkindness” of God who appeared to bring salvation - the True & Better Nahum who promised that all in Nineveh who repent would live! (Lk. 11)

The Gospel News: “We are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe, yet at the same time more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” (Keller)

3. ...because we have good news. (v.9-15)

To understand v.9-15, imagine Nahum standing on a mountain at the border between Israel/Assyria, declaring news that will “burden” Nineveh & “comfort” the Jewish people.

- **Enemy Defeated** (v.9-11)

  9 What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time. 10 For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried. 11 From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor.

*Nineveh is described as *‘drunken drunkards’; straw on fire; entangled thorns (or fishhook)*

Fishermen: when lines get tangled, it is best just to cut it off & throw it away.

*What do you plot?* Lit: *What are you thinking? What is the forecast?*  Where does it end?

*Here is God’s Forecast for His enemies: “trouble will not rise up a second time”. IOW: when God strikes a final blow to his enemies, Nineveh will not be getting off the mat.

*When I was a kid, I’d pull dads’ chest hair just to bug him. His words are seared in my mind:

“Craig, there’s going to be 2 hits: me hitting you...& you hitting the ground.” (IOW: You will not rise up a 2nd time!)

- **Burdens Lifted** (v.12-13)

  12 Thus says the Lord, “Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. 13 And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart."

*Nahum turns to comfort Israel: God will cut down (shave) the enemy (who is at full strength)*

*He would free his people from the heavy yoke of burden which afflicts them.

*650 years later, Jesus stands in CaperNaum, and delivers a prophetic message:

“And you, CaperNaum (village of Nahum), will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades....Come to me, all who labor & are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy, my burden is light. (Matt 11).

- **Justice Delivered** (v.14)

  14 The Lord has given commandment about you: “No more shall your name be perpetuated; from the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the metal image. I will make your grave, for you are vile.”
March Madness is a contest for #1. Who’s the best? In the halls of history, there is only 1 Name to be perpetuated forever: Jesus Christ.

*He is The Supreme Justice of all People; the Ruler of all Nations.

- **God Exalted**
  
  (v.15)
  
  15 Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!

*Nahum borrows language from Is. 52, about Good News = a public announcement of God’s deliverance that brings joy to the people.*

**This Good News announcement** is repeated by Paul in Rom. 10 regarding the salvation that comes through calling on Jesus as Lord!

*Publishes Peace = That is one thing our news outlets don’t publish much of.*

*Shalom = Universal flourishing as a result of God’s presence dwelling with His people.*

*Peace that comes when God restores the world to Harmony; Joy; Abundance.*

**Action Steps of COMFORT:**

**C - Cast your Burdens on Him**

1Pet. 5:7 “Casting all your anxieties on Him because he cares for you.”

*Nahum writes of a God who is good; who breaks our yokes; who helps in times of trouble.*

*Cast it on Him in prayer: *Are we weak and heavy laden; cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior still our refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

**O - Own and share the Good News**

*Philippians 3:12 “I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”*

*Nahum is a warning to all who live on Borrowed Faith? Faith in Christ is non-transferrable. Your momma may have baptized you. But at some point you must call on Christ as Lord.*

**M - Mend your ways**

*Jer 26:13 “Mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God…”*

*If I was an atheist or agnostic listening, I would be concerned about Nahum’s warning that God is avenging & wrathful. I would want to know if there was an avenue of escape from judgment.*

*And I would take heart that God receives all that come to Him by faith in Christ.*

**F - Fulfill your vows**

*Nahum 1:15...Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows,*

Keep = move; march; Fulfill = Complete; Reciprocate; Make Amends...
Vows = the thing you promised God.

*Nahum reminds us that it is not enough to be hearers of God’s Word, but Doers.

*It is a reminder to be people of integrity; who honor our word; who fulfill our promises

O - Offend Him no longer

Jer. 34:15-16 “you recently repented...but then you turned around and profaned my name

*Have you Backslidden? Vacillated & lukewarm? Let Nahum call you to return to the Lord.

R - Run to Him for refuge

Nahum 1:7 The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble...

Is trouble brewing? Are you concerned about political future? Are you experiencing problems with marriage, family, children, or work? Run to Him!

T - Trust Him for justice

Ps 22:28 For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.

Are you concerned about justice? Are you angry over national injustice? Personal?

*Look with hope to the day of Resurrection, when God will right every wrong, gather His people, and deliver a blow of justice to those who have rebelled against His kingdom.

“I will cast all my cares upon you...”