

Zephaniah week two.

My aim was to write these notes last weekend but life got in the way. I am discouraged by everything going on (French fridges and freezers hacked and lots of waste followed, riots, so many thoughts about the topic and all the interesting threads, but hard to bring together, my "n" key isn't working so typing is slower than ever, getting back on my bike after weeks away and everything hurts, politics here is very scary at the moment, my husband's new car brand was "hacked" by cyber security experts to show how vulnerable it is to bad actors, nothing seems calm, simple or beautiful or so it seems) So now it's Thursday evening and I will try to get some cohesive thoughts down.

So, let's take a moment to breathe, and as Elizabeth Oldfield says in the book Steve recommended, sit with not knowing and maybe be happy with that briefly.

Some queries from last week

Audience was;

primarily Judah in the south as well as a faithful remnant (the humble, meek and righteous who chose to seek the Lord and turn from idolatry and sin and rely on God rather than false god's or their own pride and

secondarily the surrounding nations of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush including Ethiopia and Assyria and

thirdly subsequent readers/hearers including us.

Contemporary prophets Jeremiaiah, Nahum, Habakkuk.

Contemporary philosophers and thinkers (check them out, very interesting contributions)

Josiah (spear headed major political and religious reforms

Thales was the pioneer of Western Philosophy and natural science

Solon was a legendary lawmaker and poet who laid ideological foundations and constitutional reforms

Pitacus was a respected military leader who restricted the power of the nobility to advocate for the common people, a great political thinker.

Sappho was a lyrical poet that shifted ancient cultural views toward individual human emotion and love.

Anaximander studied under Thales to develop early cosmic theories and constructed one of the world's first maps.

These people would have affected our Bible writers. To me this is powerful and shows God in many and diverse ways. What are your thoughts?

Personal reflection for sharing from last week.

Meanings

Oracle. A lifting a load or burden or solemn utterance, a declaration from God. (Most likely this meaning in Zephaniah), or it means the Holy of Holy where God's voice is heard or simply a spoken word or speech usually divine counsel as in Samuel.

Daughters of Zion is the poetic personification of Jerusalem and the people of Israel to announce future restoration and joy and the removal of discipline after a period of judgement (Zeph 3:14)

Please read the following 3 oracles to get a picture of Zephaniah's message from God.

Oracle of judgement Zeph 1:2-18

Oracle against foreign nations Zeph 2:4-15 (this shows God's judgement and message is to all people on earth.

Oracle of Salvation and Joy Zeph 3:9-20.

Discuss what you would like to share after reading these.

4 lessons we can take from this book

1 We can worship each week but then get distracted by our lives and stresses. Do we give away our worship?

2 Repentance we need this to be free from a futile life and become fully alive.

3 Pride brings destruction God is God and He loves us and only wants to give us everything as seen by the repeated judgements thru the Bible and then the repeated restoration.

4 Judgement and repentance bring Joy Zeph 3:14-15.

Tangent Tim's thoughts. Do we need divine intervention to make wise choices, is scepticism useful in working out whose voice we are hearing, the risk of following a voice that is not actually God's is serious so is the risk greater than the benefit? Just because it is in the Bible doesn't make it true. My thought is we are God's, he speaks in many ways, and none contradict, human messaging may be helpful but not complete. Tim sent me an excellent podcast discussing how we think. Something I learned is Ataraxia in philosophy is the art of calm, peace of mind and freedom from emotional turmoil. We can achieve this by saying "I don't know" that opens the door to discussion, growth and eventual peace.

We should question our beliefs and not live in an echo chamber but look at them and discuss with people who have the opposite beliefs. I certainly could do this more and my critical thinking and understanding of God and myself would develop.

Conclusion at 10 minutes to whatever hour we are, in our time zone.

If we believe we were created then we are God's creation. When we are reconciled to Him by carefully examining our biases, how we are brought up, our beliefs, our traumas and triggers then we can realise His promises, protections, be discerning and feel His power and presence in our lives.

The prophets knew this. They passionately tried through various methods of poetry, song and fierce judgements to get us to listen. This can be overwhelming to comprehend but do you feel this urgency and passion that they and God has for us.

Read Zephaniah 3:14-17 and end with Revelation and Billy Graham.

Prayer

