



W H E N T H E
L O R D
C O M E S N E A R

H E H U M B L E S H I S E N E M I E S

December 12, 2021

Zephaniah 3:14–17 (EHV) ¹⁴ **Sing out, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, you daughter of Jerusalem!** ¹⁵ **The LORD has removed the judgment against you. He has turned back your enemy. Israel’s king, the LORD, is in your midst! You no longer need to fear disaster.** ¹⁶ **In that day Jerusalem will be told, “Do not be afraid, O Zion. Do not give up.** ¹⁷ **The LORD your God is with you as a hero who will save you. He takes great delight in you. He will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.”**

Do you remember meeting the Prophet Jeremiah 2 weeks ago? Do you remember his nickname? That’s right—he was the “Weeping Prophet.” He had a lot to weep over. He wept over the pain his prophecies would cause. He wept because he would never have a wife and family. He wept because his people had abandoned the LORD for gods made from wood and stone. He wept for us, if you recall, because we have followed idols of our own making too. We found plenty of reasons to weep.

This week, I have another question for you: what makes you laugh? I’m talking about any kind of laughing—happy little giggles, gentle chuckles, peals of laughter, gut-busting snorts with tears streaming down your face, belly laughs. What makes you laugh?

I love to laugh. The LORD has given me so many reasons to laugh and celebrate. I guess if Jeremiah’s nickname was the “Weeping Prophet,” people might call me the “Joyful Prophet.” Let me introduce myself. My name is Zephaniah. I know, I know, it’s another one of those confusing Bible names. Every time I tell someone my name people say, “Oh, so you’re Zechariah!” I guess it’s not so bad if people think that’s my name. There were an awful lot of great men with that name—priests, kingly advisors, godly men who loved the LORD. But no, my name isn’t Zechariah. It’s Zephaniah. I love my name. Do you know what it means? “The LORD has treasured!” That’s something to celebrate and laugh about! The LORD has treasured

me! He treasured me enough to give me a great family. My great-great grandfather was King Hezekiah. He loved the LORD and led the people back to him. When my cousin, Josiah became the king of Judah, I held my breath. Would he lead as well as Hezekiah? He did! We shared the same heart for serving the LORD! That was enough to make me laugh with joy!

The LORD also treasured me enough to let me work alongside my friend Jeremiah. Jeremiah was still a young prophet, so I had the opportunity to mentor him and encourage him. His messages weren't easy to share—no wonder he spent so much time crying.

My message wasn't any easier to share than Jeremiah's was. Have you ever read my book? It's just three chapters long—only 1600 words. That barely qualifies as one of your research papers. There isn't much to laugh at, unless you're the kind of person who laughs at other people's misfortune. The LORD's anger had been building for almost 400 years. I can't tell you how often the LORD said about one of our kings, **"He did evil in the eyes of the LORD."** As a result of their unfaithfulness, the LORD promised that he would humble them. He would humble all of his enemies. He would humble the earth.

The LORD sent me with the message that he was coming to judge the world and destroy everything! That was no laughing matter. When the LORD said, **"I will completely sweep away everything from the face of the earth"** (Zephaniah 1:2 EHV), he meant it!

The LORD had seen his own people worship Baal on the rooftops of their homes. He witnessed priests who had abandoned him for pagan rituals. The enemy would come, just as Jeremiah would later proclaim. The Babylonian horde would besiege Jerusalem, tear down the walls and destroy the LORD's once gold-covered temple. No one would escape his judgment. **"At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, to deal with the men who are complacent"** (Zephaniah 1:12 EHV). The light of his glory would drive away the darkness and no one would be able to hide from him!

I had to deliver a message of judgment against all of Israel's ancient enemies. The Philistines, who over the centuries had conquered our people again and again; the Moabites and Ammonites who had made life miserable for us, mocking us; the people of Egypt who had enslaved us; the Assyrians who so arrogantly declared their power and might—the LORD would humble them all and turn them all to dust and ash!

He meant it. Our great prophet Moses once said, **"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he changes his mind. Does he say something, and then not carry it out? Does he speak, and then not bring it about?"** (Numbers 23:19 EHV). He's serious about judgment. That's no laughing matter, and I'm not laughing. In fact, my knees are shaking. I know how wicked my people have been. I know how sinful I am.

Are you any different? What does it take to distract you from worshiping here on Sunday morning? I see what happens as soon as someone hears a buzz from the device you wear on your arm or carry in your purse. Does your mind drift somewhere else, to the game you were playing yesterday, or the sport you'd rather be watching on a screen? Are you wishing that you could spend your time at home today because the other 6 days of the week you are so intent on work that you have no time for yourself or your family? What does it take to distract you?

The LORD is serious about every sin, and promises judgment. **“They eagerly sinned in everything they did. So wait for me, declares the LORD... For I am determined to gather the nations, to assemble the kingdoms, and to pour out my indignation upon them and all my furious anger. All the earth will be consumed with the fire of my zeal.”** (Zephaniah 3:7–8 EHV). The LORD’s judgment is no laughing matter!

How in the world could I call myself the “Joyful Prophet”? The LORD didn’t give me a lot to say, but after those words of judgment came words that made me laugh, and sing, and shout, and celebrate! **“Sing out, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, you daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has removed the judgment against you. He has turned back your enemy. Israel’s king, the Lord, is in your midst! You no longer need to fear disaster”** (Zephaniah 3:14–15 EHV). Did you hear that? The LORD sees his future work for his people happening in the present, right now! He **“removed the judgment against you.”** Everything my people did—every altar to Baal and Asherah pole they built, every sacrifice they made on their rooftops to the sun, moon and stars, every child they sacrificed in the fire, every immoral, evil act—REMOVED!

He’s turned back our enemy. Even though the Babylonians would come, destroy, and carry people off into exile, the LORD would turn them back. He would preserve his promise of a Savior. The LORD is our true king. He is with us. We don’t need to be afraid!

That promise is the reason that you can sing out, shout, and laugh until you can’t laugh any more because of the joy that fills your heart. The LORD came to be with you. **“Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord”** (Luke 2:11 EHV). Sing out, people of God! Shout aloud, sons and daughters of the King! Be glad, celebrate, laugh about the incredible gift the LORD has given to you, the gift you celebrate every Christmas. Your Savior is here! He came to take our place so that the LORD would judge him for our sins and not us! **“In that day Jerusalem will be told, “Do not be afraid, O Zion. Do not give up. The LORD your God is with you as a hero who will save you”** (Zephaniah 3:16-17 EHV). *Laughing*

This first promise sounds ridiculous. The child in a manger is **“A hero who will save you”**? The LORD says, “Yes! Hero! Better than your comic book heroes: Stronger than the Incredible Hulk; smarter than Tony Stark; more accurate than Hawkeye, more agile than Spiderman. Jesus came to crush the opposition, to defeat Satan, to demolish death itself. That’s a hero worth reading about! That’s a hero worth idolizing. Jesus is the “hero who will save you”! *Laughing* Can you understand how I can laugh with such joy?

“He takes great delight in you.” It’s easy to like the people who love us. I like my neighbor who takes time to talk with me. I don’t like the one so much who doesn’t talk and even seems to ignore me. God doesn’t have a good reason to take delight in us, let alone like us. We haven’t done anything to make him like us. There’s a song from your time called “Reckless Love” that describes the way the LORD delights in us. **“When I was Your foe still Your love fought for me You have been so so good to me When I felt no worth You paid it all for me You have been so so kind to me O the overwhelming never-ending reckless Love of God O it chases me down fights 'til I'm found Leaves the ninety-nine I couldn't earn it I don't deserve**

it Still You give Yourself away O the overwhelming never-ending reckless Love of God.¹ The LORD's delight in us is so powerful, so overwhelming that no matter what we do he loves us and will always come after us! *Laughing*

“He will quiet you with his love.” I can still see one of my children sick and crying inconsolably. I remember sitting in the rocking chair singing quietly, gently rubbing their back, whispering in their ear, “Shhhhhh...shhhhhh...shhhhhh.” Sometimes it even worked and they would fall asleep on my shoulder. It was okay, because daddy (or more often mommy) was there to console and quiet them with our love.

The LORD is there to quiet you when you feel inconsolable. Friday afternoon your pastor did Chuck Johnson's funeral. It was tough for his wife Gwen and their three children and the rest of their family. They cried a lot of tears openly and unashamedly. As the service went on and they heard the songs and listened to God's Word, the LORD did what he promised. He quieted them with his love. They even found that they could laugh together! *Laughing* His gentle love is there for us EVERY time we need it!

“He will rejoice over you with singing.” Have you ever had someone sing to you? Maybe you were on a date and the person started singing a love song to you. Maybe it was your mom or dad singing as you got ready for bed.

The LORD is willing to sing over us and as he sings, he'll rejoice. *Laughing* Can you believe it? When we are happy, his voice sings along with ours in joyful love. When we are sad, his voice sings of unbounded peace. When we are angry, he sings a song of forgiveness. When we are mourning, he sings of comfort and life. *Laughing*

So many reasons to laugh, to sing, and to celebrate! Do you know someone who needs a hero? Who feels unloved and unnoticed and needs someone to take great delight in them? Do you know someone who is struggling loudly (or maybe not so loudly) with something? Do you know someone who needs a song sung over their lives? Now is your chance! They need to hear about the Savior that came to love them, to help them, to save them! They may not listen. I understand! My message fell on a lot of deaf ears, but some listened! *Laughing* Invite someone to come to church next weekend, or your Blue Christmas service. Invite them for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. If they don't come, invite them again. Then invite someone else. Those invitations are a song that their hearts need to hear. The LORD has humbled his enemies. He's coming soon. We have nothing to worry about because he's coming with a smile on his face, a song in his heart, and a laugh on his lips for you and me. Amen!

To God alone the glory! Pastor Jon Brohn

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