**Zephaniah 3:8-13 “Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy. 9“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him with one accord. 10From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering. 11In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain. 12I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the Lord. 13The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid.”**

Tonight, we’re in the book of Zephaniah. Zephaniah is the name of several people in the Bible. Zephaniah makes sure that we can identify him in the first verse of the book. He says that he’s the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah. Why is this important? Hezekiah was a Godly king and Zephaniah traced his royal lineage back to Hezekiah. We know that Zephaniah is growing up in an ungodly nation. He’s prophesying between the time of 622 BC when King Josiah found the scrolls of the Law (2 Chronicles 34) and the Battle of Nineveh – of course we’ve heard a lot about that and it took place in 612 BC. Zephaniah is therefore writing this between 622 and 612 BC. He’d have been growing up during the time of Manasseh who was an evil king and Amon who was also evil. Zephaniah would have seen idolatry all around him, child sacrifices to foreign gods and unjust killings documented in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles… yet, he remained strong and faithful to God – standing before an evil people and proclaiming the coming of the day of destruction and the power of God!

Zephaniah had challenges! His society was not supportive! His government acted against the things of God. Guaranteed there were people all around that sought to influence him in an ungodly way, but he stayed focused on God, faithful to God, and placed God first – he reverenced God. Zephaniah serves as proof that we too can stand no matter what is going on around us. Following God is conscious choice not an unconcious fate.

Tonight, I want to speak from Zephaniah 3 about the faithful remnant God maintained. In the scripture, the remnant is very clearly a faithful group of Jews. A remnant – anyone familiar with sewing or woodworking knows exactly what I’m talking about when I say remnant. It’s a small piece of a larger part… something remaining from the larger whole. Look at verse 8 - “Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy.” God will devour – in this time Judah would soon be conquered by Babylon. God says wait. But look at the part that says All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealously. We’ve seen scripture about God’s jealously before haven’t we? How is it that God says over and over that He is a Jealous God, a God of zeal for His people and we fail to grasp that? Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Psalm, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Nahum, Zephaniah again and again, verse after verse. Proverbs 27:4 says, Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

Look at verse 9 and 10 - 9“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him with one accord. 10From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering.Now, God is giving a glimpse of His restoration. After the destruction, God restores. Can there be any doubt that this is the recipe that God follows? Revival never springs from a fully revived people. When a heart stops, the doctors work to revive, but they don’t try to revive a fully beating heart… why would they? Likewise, God doesn’t revive a fully engaged people. He revives those who have lost their focus and repent, who call out and return to Him, who turn their eyes from the worthless things and toward the things of Him. Why then would we expect that God would revive a nation like ours that still believes that evil is OK? We must come to the end of ourselves before God will gather us to Himself.

These verses are a glimpse of the coming day of Jesus. Revelation 7:9 describes the scene in heaven - After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. The Kingdom of God won’t all come from North Carolina… or even the United States… we’ll be among the brothers and sisters from all nations, all families, and from all different times through the centuries.

Verse 11 - 11In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain.When we are revived, God takes away our haughty spirit and gives us a spirit of humility. He forgives us. Those who rejoice in pride will be taken away… removed. James 4:6 tells us that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. When the Holy Spirit is really in control, we become humble. We all can think of one or more people who God changed and they became humble people, where before they were prideful.

Verse 12 speaks of the remnant. 12I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the Lord. 13The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid.”We know that, when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, about 170 years in the future yet, (we know that Nehemiah approached Artaxerxes in the 445 BC time period), only a small portion of the total exiled went back.

There is a remnant in the United States today… a remnant of Christians. Most of what we see today are churches that are far more like the world than like the Kingdom of God. We see large club houses with loud music and entertaining sermons. Motivational speakers draw large crowds with prosperity focused sermons. Not many people want to hear any more that Jesus said we would suffer. Not many want to hear any more that Paul tells us to glory in our infirmities. Not many want to hear any more that we are to be doers of the Word and not just hearers. People want to be told that they will heal, but there is no real healing here on earth. People want to be told that they will find peace, but there is no real peace on earth. But there is a remnant of faithful Christians in this nation, that still pray as though God hears, that don’t see a prayer meeting as a prelude to a pizza party, but as a window to a World of Wonders. God is moving among that remnant today – we’re not afraid to pray in Jesus name… we’re not afraid of man because God has our hand.

Tonight, let’s rejoice in the fact that we’re a strange people in a strange land. Let’s rejoice that we don’t fit in. God raises up remnants. Not everyone will come along – for some the fire is too hot, the cost is too high, the path is too narrow… only the remnant will follow faithfully. Like Zephaniah, we see children being sacrificed… we call it abortion. We see other gods being worshipped… we call them possessions and people. We see unjust killings… unjust judges… unjust politicians. May God help us to be faithful as these things swirl so close to our lives. May God forever keep us humbly seeking Him, longing to be part of His faithful remnant.