**Nahum 1:1-5 The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. 2God *is* jealous, and the Lord avenges; The Lord avenges and *is* furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves *wrath* for His enemies; 3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit *the wicked.* The Lord has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm, And the clouds *are* the dust of His feet. 4He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, And dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither,
And the flower of Lebanon wilts. 5The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt, And the earth heaves at His presence, Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.**

 Last week, we left Jonah after spending a few weeks with him. We left him in Nineveh, likely before the Assyrian empire rose to power, no doubt contemplating what God had just spoken to him. He’d mourned a plant, but not the people. He’d cared for the gourd, more than God’s goodness towards the lost. Do we ever struggle with the same?

 This week, we’re in the book of Nahum. Nahum is a minor prophet, only mentioned in his own book. He wrote God’s word in poetry, a poetic style. He prophesied between 663 BC and 612 BC, about 50 years. We know this because he mentions the recent fall of No-amon, better known as Thebes, which took place in 663 BC, and he talks about the coming fall of Nineveh, which takes place in 612 BC. But interestingly, he doesn’t talk about the rebuilding of Thebes which took place in 654 BC. Some scholars suggest this book was written between 663 BC and 654 BC, while others place it closer to 612 BC.

 Nahum was an Elkoshite, No one knows for certain where Elkosh was located. Many theories through the years have placed it in Judah, while others place it in Iraq, in the Kurdish areas. While interesting, it’s not critical to our study.

 Nahum prophesied during the reign of King Manasseh, a very evil king. This would have been the darkest of times for Judah – a time filled with idolatry of all kinds, when the country had it’s back turned on God. One can imagine that people were afraid, believers were disheartened, all seemed certainly lost as evil seemed to win every battle and good seemed to be losing the war.

 Into this, God chose to send Nahum, who’s name means “Comfort” or “Comforter”. This is about 125 – 175 years after Jonah visited Nineveh. God relented in Jonah’s time. We’re about to learn that God does not relent forever. Nineveh has risen to be the capital of the Assyrian empire, and God is about to judge this oppressor of His people. Nahum confirms that God’s justice is always right and always sure. Slow to anger doesn’t mean no to anger. Slow to wrath does not mean no to wrath. Nineveh learns. We too learn.

Verse 1 says - *The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.* The burden against Nineveh. This means the utterance or the prophecy, the words against Nineveh. The book wastes no time telling us what this is all about. This is the continuation of the book of Jonah, the sequel if you will. Jonah left us with a cliffhanger. Nahum will wrap it up.

Verse 2 goes on - *God is jealous, and the Lord avenges; The Lord avenges and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.* God is jealous. He is a jealous God. Remember, we are in the time of Manasseh, a time of idolatry, a time when the people are worshipping everything and everyone but God… sound familiar? Listen to God, as He warned the Israelites and, quite frankly He has warned us, in Exodus 34:14 *for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* He says His very Name is Jealous. He avenges and is furious. That word furious has the idea that God is a furious master, a furious husband, that has been cheated on and will take His vengeance. That makes sense, given the state of Judah, Israel already conquered by the Assyrians and Judah turned away. He will take vengeance on His adversaries – those who have caused this tight position and reserve wrath for His enemies – those He hates. Often, we think of adversary and enemy as the same, but two different Hebrew words are used here. One seems to be causing issues and irritations and the other is hated.

Verse 3 *The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked.* God is slow to anger, patient, merciful. He is great in power. Remember Habakkuk 1:2 *O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save.* But God will not acquit the wicked. It’s been 125 years since Jonah said in Chapter 4:2 **2***So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.* But God will not relent forever. It may seem so, but God’s timing is perfect. Psalm 121:4 says - *Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.* As my grandmother used to say – I believe that the chickens are about to come home to roost. Nineveh was spared and took the mercy for granted. They will be spared no more.

Finishing verse 3 *The Lord has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm, And the clouds are the dust of His feet.* This portion has the idea of “God has His way, His path, His plan in the storms – even the worst of storms, when all seems lost and all is hopeless, God is making His way. This was great encouragement to Judah, in a time that all looked hopeless and lost, when the government was out of control and doing all manner of evil, when the enemies were at the gate, when the love of God had all but disappeared… Nahum says – God is making a way for His people.

We need that today don’t we? We need that hope that God, our Salvation, still has a plan and a way in this storm, in this swirling tempest. We need not lose hope or be discouraged. God is moving. Be assured.

Verse 4*He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, And dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, And the flower of Lebanon wilts.* Nahum goes on – God disciplines, controls, reproves the sea – that’s great power right there – and dries up, parches the rivers – the same rivers that beat upon our house and cannot shake it when we’re in God’s will. God will cause the flowers of even the most fertile regions to wilt and wither… no one and no where is above God. Not even a great empire like Assyria or a land flowing with milk and honey like Isreal…

Verse 5 *5The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt, And the earth heaves at His presence, Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.* The mountains quake – but not like an earthquake – this has the idea of shaking in fear before something. The mountains quake, undulate, in fear before God. The hills literally dissolve and flow away, they melt. The earth heaves – is burned – brings forth in His presence. The very earth shakes before Him – and all who dwell on the earth.

This week, as we see things happening around us, as we witness evil and idolatry and lawlessness, let’s remember that the God of Jonah, the God of Nahum, and the Father of Jesus, is still God today. He hasn’t changed, but we have. He hasn’t turned away, but we have. He has not broken fellowship, but we have. He will not abide wickedness forever. He has His timing. May we trust Him even when we don’t see His plan.