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Nahum / Peace / Nahum 1
Series Number: 1

Readings:

- Nahum 1
- Psalm 94
- Romans 10:5-15; 11:22

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV®

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Opening Prayer

Introduction

If, like me, you're not very familiar with the book of Nahum, the opening salvo might have caught you a little off-guard. The Lord is "jealous and avenging"? He "takes vengeance and is filled with wrath"? Hang on, doesn't the Bible say "God is love"?

I'm not sure I like this wrathful, vengeful God!

If that's how you're feeling, you're not alone! In the 2nd century there was a guy called Marcion, and he cut out large portions of the Bible! He said there were actually two different gods - the angry God of the Old Testament and the loving, gracious God of the New Testament (Padgett 1997)!

Of course, we can't just cut out the parts of the Bible we disagree with - it's not our book to change. But what I want to get across this morning is that although we like to worship a god we're comfortable with, a god of love, grace, mercy and kindness - when we squish him into a box, into a stereotype like that, we miss out on really knowing the *true* God.

And the true God is much, *much* better than a God of our imagination - he's multi-faceted, he's bigger than we can comprehend, he's overwhelmingly *good*.

So we'll see this morning that, surprisingly, true peace comes through knowing him as God the avenger as well as a God of love. Yes, true peace is found through knowing *all* of God.

Oppressive People

State the Point/Explain

To understand God as avenger, though, we need to understand his enemies. And one enemy of God is oppressive people.

Show from the Bible

Now don't worry if you hadn't even heard of the book of Nahum. It's one of the least known books in the whole Bible. Its in the Old Testament, grouped with 11 other books called the "Minor Prophets".

Now if you were here in January, you might have heard Dan Clark and others preach on the book of Jonah.

Now these two minor prophets, Nahum and Jonah, have something in common - they both feature the ancient empire of Assyria and its capital city, Nineveh. Assyria was like a lion, prowling around, seeking out other nation-states and devouring them, assimilating them into its empire (Timmer 2020, 49-50).

Dan described some of the horrific things the Assyrians would do to the peoples they conquered - they would enforce heavy financial burdens on other nations to drive them into poverty. They would carry people away into oppressive slavery. They would mutilate and flay them and do all sorts of horrible, violent acts (Bruckner 2004, 28-30; Timmer 2020, 35-36).

Look at how Nahum describes their king in chapter 1. In v11, he "plots evil against the LORD and devises wicked plans." V14 calls him "vile", and v15 calls him "wicked".

The Assyrian king and his army are the worst. Should people like that not be held accountable for their actions? Should God not judge them? Well, if you have any sense of justice at all, you have to answer that with a "yes".

But here's the problem. We're comfortable with judging people like that - they're clearly, heinously evil. They're comfortably distant.

But what about us?

See, Nahum doesn't let us rest in this idea that God is going to judge the Assyrians. From vv2-7 there is no hint of Assyria! God's immensity and fury is described in global, earth-shaking terms, and Nahum leaves the description of his enemies uncomfortably ambiguous, doesn't he (Timmer 2020, 81)?

That's because its not just Assyria that needs to fear, it is you and I as well.

And you might think: "well I'm nothing *like* the Assyrians! I'm a good person, I'm kind to others, I pay my taxes and I don't speed...much."

Sure, you're not as wicked as the Assyrian king and his army. But everyone sets their standard differently, don't they?

Illustrate

Think about it like this. Let's say you spoke about someone behind their back - you gossiped. But you might say, "sure, but they won't know so its not hurting anyone. It was all true - at least I'm not a liar!" A liar will say "hey back off, its not like I killed anyone!" Then you talk to a murderer, and they'll say "they deserved it, they were an evil person. Its not like I committed genocide or anything." (Koukl 2006).

Do you see? Everyone sets a moral standard that they're comfortable with, and they judge everyone else by it.

But the problem is, we don't get to set the moral standard. God does. His standard is accurate, just, and perfect. In fact, he sets his standard far, far higher than ours.

That means *we* stand under his judgment. Sure, we're not as bad as the Assyrians. But we *all* do evil, so we, too are on the wrong side of this angry, avenging God. We, too, are God's enemies. Nahum won't let us escape that.

Apply

So this morning, if you're here and these words have got to you, and you can now see that you're under God's judgment, I urge you: you *have* to get on the right side of God! Don't wait, don't leave it til tomorrow, don't risk it. God will not rest until he has punished every sin and every sinner unless we repent. Please, keep on listening, because soon I'll explain how to be reconciled with God.

Despairing Saints

State the Point

Now, let's turn our focus to the people of Judah, and let's talk about Despairing Saints.

Show from the Bible

Before Nahum was written, Israel split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, where Jerusalem lies. Assyria had already wiped out the northern kingdom of Israel.

And then the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib invades, pillages, and plunders Judah, imposing heavy tribute on the people. He even besieges Jerusalem. Decades later when Nahum utters his prophecy, Judah *still* lives in terror of the Assyrians.

That's why v9 says "trouble will not come a second time" - that's a reference to Sennacherib! So is v11, where it says "From you, Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and devises wicked plans." (Timmer 2020, 101-102)

Now notice v12. God says "Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more." Judah had been unfaithful to the solemn pledge, the covenant they'd made with God - that's why he had allowed the Assyrians to oppress them.

Explain

Judah, God's people, were suffering under evil oppressors then, but its no different today. Many Christians around the world endure great suffering for their faith.

For example in 2024, 4118 Christians were killed in Nigeria. Many more have been killed, evicted, and abducted since (Open Doors International 2025a; 2025b).

They've been suffering for years and years and years before that. Who is coming to help them? When will their suffering end?

Should they not despair? Their plight seems helpless. Where can God's people find hope?

Apply

If you're suffering here this morning, perhaps you're grieving, perhaps your body is failing you. Perhaps you are being oppressed in some way - your boss is harsh and vindictive, or your extended family attack you for your faith.

You need to know this: you are not alone in your suffering. You're in good company. God's people have suffered for century after century - poor health, poverty, imprisonment, hatred from others, even being killed for their faith.

That's what happens when you live in a world full of evil, and especially when you profess your faith in the true God in this world.

It can be tempting to despair, can't it? To give up hope, because nothing ever seems to change.

Well let me suggest that we explore new aspects of God that we haven't dared to yet.

Avenging God

State the Point

We need to know God the Avenger. We need to know God as the Avenger.

Show from the Bible/Explain

The book of Nahum probably wasn't written to the Assyrians, even though it seems like its addressed to them. They're the *rhetorical* audience - the author speaks to them for literary effect. But I believe Nahum was primarily speaking for the benefit of Judah (Timmer 2020, 44-45).

What kind of God did Judah need when faced with such a cruel, relentless enemy? They needed a warrior and a judge.

When they had suffered such atrocious things, they needed to know God *cared*, that he wasn't just going to look the other way.

If someone ever did anything to my wife or one of my daughters, should I not be angry? If it didn't make me angry, they would question whether I cared about them, right?

In the same way, Judah needed to know God was *angry* with the oppression of the Assyrians. That demonstrates his love for them. If he just dismisses the evil, forgives the Assyrians, and does nothing about it, what kind of God is that?

Our God is good, so he hates evil.

Look at what [Nahum 1:2-6](#) says:

Nahum 1:2-6 NIV

² The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and vents his wrath against his enemies.

³ The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.

His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet.

⁴ He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade.

⁵ The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it.

⁶ Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him.

You're supposed to get this feeling of awe, of fear, even terror when you read this. When Yahweh, God Almighty arrives in fury, creation itself unravels (Timmer 2020, 81-85).

Yahweh cares about his people. He cares enough to be angry.

He also cares enough to *judge*.

Look at verses 7 & 8. Verse 7 is such a lovely, assuring verse to read if you know you're one of God's people, right? He is *good*. He's our refuge and he cares for us.

But Nahum includes that verse mainly as a *contrast* with v8. Yahweh is good to those who trust in him, BUT to Nineveh he's going to be like an overwhelming flood, relentlessly pursuing them into darkness.

Then vv9-14 continue to pronounce judgment on Nineveh. But verses 12-13 put that judgment in its context - they are being judged *because* of their oppression on Judah, and the result of their judgment will be freedom for Judah!

Wouldn't it be a great comfort for Judah to hear that? God is going to hold our oppressors accountable! And when he does, look at v9 - trouble will not come a second time.

Now, look at v15. Because of God's judgment on Assyria, Judah will enjoy *peace*. They'll freely celebrate their festivals. The vows they made when they pleaded with Yahweh for deliverance - they'll be able to fulfil them! The Assyrian threat will be done away with.

What a comfort, right?

Judah needed an avenging God. And so do we.

Illustrate

When you read Nahum, and you put yourself in Judah's shoes, its a bit like watching a massive thunderstorm.

Now if you were outside in the raging wind and the pelting hail, near flashes of lightning and deafening thunder - you *should* be a bit scared right? You want to get out of the storm as quick as you can!

But if you're inside a sturdy house with the lights on, peering out through the window - its kind of fun, isn't it? Its still a bit scary! When you hear the deafening clap of thunder and the sky lights up with lightning, you still feel a sense of awe.

But you know you're *safe*, so you can just watch it and enjoy it, and think, "I'm glad I'm not out in that!"

Its like that with God the avenger. V7 says that for those who trust in him, he's our "refuge in times of trouble." His anger is not directed at us, but we watch in awe as we see God the avenger fight our battles for us.

What a comfort to know he *cares* enough about us to be angry, even *furious* at our oppressors. And what a relief to know he's powerful enough to act and destroy our enemies once and for all.

Apply

So I encourage you, get to know God the avenger, and take comfort in him. Enjoy this side of God that perhaps you haven't encountered yet.

But if you're on the wrong side of God, you might find yourself out in the thunderstorm, under the fury, the judgment of the divine warrior. I plead with you, don't stay there. Come inside to safety, and you'll find him a refuge rather than a judge. But how do you do that?

Gospel Messenger

State the Point

Well, let's talk about the Gospel messenger.

Show from the Bible/Explain

We saw just before in [Nahum 1:15](#) that God's vengeance on Assyria will mean peace for Judah - they can celebrate their festivals and no longer live in fear of the enemy.

One day there will be a messenger coming over the mountains. If we just look at map on the next slide, you'll see Israel's geography. Judah and Jerusalem are down in the south, and Assyria and its capital Nineveh are way off to the north east.

So when the messenger brings news of Assyria's downfall, they'll avoid the eastern Arabian desert and they'll come from the north, over the mountains of Northern Israel. Jerusalem is down at the Mount of Olives, so they'll go over more mountains to get there.

This messenger will announce peace because Israel's oppressor is no more.

Now, we don't live in Judah under the oppression of the Assyrian empire, do we? Rather, we live under the oppression of sin that controls us, the oppression of evil in a broken world, and the oppression of the vile one, Satan, who drags us into hostility with God.

Well, many centuries after Assyria fell there was another messenger that came from Northern Israel, from Galilee. He travelled over the mountains north of Jerusalem preaching peace, preaching that the kingdom of God is here and the oppressors of evil, sin, and Satan are defeated (Michael Russell, 13/04/2026).

His name was Jesus.

He preached that if we repent and trust in him, we can have peace with God. We can know God the avenger as a refuge and a comfort, not as a condemning judge. God wants to forgive us and love us as his own people.

But wait - remember, God can't just stop caring about the evil we've done and dismiss it! He judges evil! So how can Jesus preach such things?

Here's how: Jesus came not just to preach peace, but to die a horrible death. He chose to be crucified for our sake. As he hung on that cross he put himself under the unrelenting fury and wrath of God's judgment - God the avenger.

And Jesus' message was this: believe in him, trust in him, and follow him, and you will no longer face God's judgment - he already did.

One day Jesus will return and renew the entire world, destroying all evil. When he does, you will live forever with God in peace, celebrating the festivals, worshipping him with vows, enjoying him as your refuge. All grief will turn to joy, all oppression will be history, and every tear will be wiped away. How amazing!

Apply

So trust in Jesus. Come to him and accept this offer. If you want to know how to do that, come speak to me after the service, or write your details on the card in front of you and place it in the letterbox up the back.

We all need to accept Jesus' message of peace by living in the Gospel each day. And part of the Gospel is the vengeance and wrath God poured out on Jesus for our sin.

Listen, if you want to know how God feels about sin, look at the judgment Jesus bore on that cross. To really appreciate his forgiveness, we *have* to know God the avenger. It makes the peace proclaimed in the Gospel all the sweeter.

Conclusion

In the *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, an allegory written by C.S. Lewis, two of the main characters, Susan and Lucy, ask Mr. & Mrs. Beaver about meeting the great lion Aslan. Aslan represents God in the story.

Susan asks: "Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs. Beaver, "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "...Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good." (Lewis 1950)

Now obviously God isn't a literal lion, and beavers don't talk. But otherwise, Lewis' portrayal of God hits the nail on the head. Often we try to tame God, to make him safe, to water him down to a fairy or a genie who always nice. We love to sing about his love, his grace, his forgiveness. But those things only make sense in the context of his fury at evil, his vengeance on the wicked, and his deep passion for those he cares about.

Knowing God as avenger brings us comfort and peace because we know he takes evil seriously, and he's willing enough and powerful enough to deal with it properly. That should give us *real hope*.

Are we serious about knowing God - the *real* God? He is bigger than any box we can put him in, and he's better than we ever imagined. But we have to open our minds, adjust our moral categories, and know him as *he* describes *himself*.

Let's stand and sing our next hymn together.

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