The Day is Coming **November 16, 2025**

Zephaniah 1:14-18
14 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. 17 I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth (NRSV).

We don't cover Zephaniah much in our churches today. We don't hear a lot about him, and perhaps that's because his message is uncomfortable—intense, urgent, and uncompromising. But his words matter, perhaps now more than ever. Zephaniah prophesied during a pivotal time in Israel's history, around 640–620 BC, during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. This was a period marked by spiritual decay, injustice, idolatry, and mounting political pressure from rising empires. Zephaniah was likely descended from King Hezekiah, which means he came from a royal background and was close to power. He lived in Jerusalem, right in the heart of political and spiritual corruption.

The book of Zephaniah is short—just three chapters—but it is full of intensity. His central message is clear: judgment is coming. The Day of the Lord is near. It is a time when God will expose hypocrisy, purge idolatry, and bring justice. This is another biblical example of God confronting human arrogance, and the stakes could not be higher. What makes Zephaniah especially striking is that judgment starts at home. He goes after Judah first. He's not a prophet standing on the sidelines, cheering for God to smite the nations. He's warning his own people to wake up. His message is a call to humble repentance, an invitation to run to God—not from God. The final chapter of Zephaniah is true to prophetic form. It offers a beautiful Old Testament picture of promised restoration. God will gather the scattered. His message matters today because he calls out complacency and spiritual sleepwalking. He reminds people that God isn't indifferent to injustice. He shows that judgment isn't the final word—renewal is. And his warnings aren't just threats. They are invitations to step back into alignment with what is true and life-giving.

The prophet Zephaniah delivers a chilling and urgent warning: the Day of the Lord is near. The "Day of the Lord" is a recurring theme in Scripture. It points to a time of divine intervention—a day of judgment and reckoning. In Zephaniah's context, this had an immediate fulfillment in the destruction facing Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. But it also points forward to the final, universal day of God's judgment. This day is always near in the divine timeline.

Zephaniah confronts us with the urgency of accountability by painting a terrifying picture of what this day will look like. It is a day of desolation, distress, anguish, devastation, darkness, and gloom. It's a hopeless picture of an impending day, leaving no doubt about the severity of the occasion. It is God's justice, power, and anger poured out. It is a time of serious and inescapable trouble for humanity—a day of ruin when

everything will be destroyed. No human defense will stand against the Lord. This is a day of darkness and gloom, the very opposite of the glorious day of triumph that many expect. God's favor will be entirely withdrawn from the unrepentant. Imagine this day: it is so bitter that even the warrior cries aloud as the strongest and most powerful will be overwhelmed.

The prophet is clear about the cause of this judgment: it is sin against the Lord. Sin blinds us, tricks us, and causes us to stumble. When people live in rebellion, they choose their own way over God's. They have abandoned God's guidance. This judgment is not arbitrary. It is the consequence of their rejection of God. The horrifying imagery Zephaniah uses is self-inflicted. Everything they held dear will be reduced to nothing.

One of Zephaniah's most striking lessons concerns the futility of earthly security. Neither gold nor silver will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. In Zephaniah's time, people were putting their trust in wealth—hoarding gold, silver, and money. They trusted in power—walls and fortified cities. They lived in complacency, indifferent and comfortable in their prosperity. The prophet shatters these illusions. Your portfolio, your prestige, your political power, your sense of comfortable indifference—none of these things will purchase a pardon or secure a sanctuary when God's wrath is revealed. The Day of the Lord will be a time of universal judgment. There will be no escape and no hiding place.

Wisdom dictates that we follow the Scriptures. They provide divine guidance, which is far better than human guidance. The call is to humility and repentance, and it is urgent—before it is too late. Just as Zephaniah warned Judah, the Church today must examine whether we've replaced God with comfort, success, or political power. There are several things we must do in response to Zephaniah's message. The intense description of the Day of the Lord cautions us that God is not a passive observer. God is the ultimate, sovereign Judge. Zephaniah cautions against putting trust in wealth and self-reliance. Your salvation is not found in your possessions but in your relationship with God. In the day of ultimate testing, only God can deliver. We need a refuge, and we find shelter by seeking the Lord and trusting in the salvation offered through Him. The text encourages believers to live with urgency, not to rely on temporary, corruptible things, but on the enduring mercy of God.

This is a hard message, but it is mercy in the form of a warning. God warns us because God loves us. God does not desire to bring about calamity but desires us to change, to prevent it. The prophet offers a ray of hope: "Seek the Lord, do the Lord's justice, seek righteousness, seek humility." If the Day of the Lord were today, where would you stand? Here is the good news: Jesus absorbed the full wrath of God's judgment on our behalf. For us who are in Christ, the wrath we deserved was poured out on Jesus. Our judgment day became our salvation day. The invitation still stands: run to God, seek and obey the Lord.