

LIFE GROUP LESSON

HOME - Week of December 17

Introduction

Many of you know our oldest two granddaughters have lived with my husband and I since they came into the world (8th and 7th graders). In August of this year, our oldest daughter moved back home with year 8-year-old twins; this is in addition to our son who has lived in the downstairs area for a couple of years with his boxer-Jack Russle mix (Quincy). Additionally, we host a bearded dragon (Basco) on the main level and a guinea pig (Clementine) that we moved out in the garage because she makes some of us sneeze. There is never a dull moment in the Kyker household. Lots of energy, emotion, and differing opinions are often shared amongst the folks who live within the walls of this home. Sometimes in the night, I wake up, see the stars from my window and ask: "Lord, you see all this. Are you really working all things for good?"

God's house is also full of all kinds of folks. Across the landscape of human history, the LORD has never not welcomed a child back home. As with any healthy home, when we move into the LORD's house everyone must agree to follow *his* house rules. God expects us to love one another. The Lord Jesus, God's Son, taught us that to love the LORD with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love one another as we love ourselves is the greatest commandment. This kind of love flows out of a relationship with the Father that stirs us to willingly align our hearts with his heart. There is never a dull moment in God's house. In fact, in God's economy, we may often be surprised at how extravagantly generous the Lord is with his love, mercy and forgiveness. Any truly repentant prodigal son or daughter is always home.

Background

Also across the pages of history, we see how evil has wreaked havoc in the lives of individuals, villages, people groups, and entire nations. It is sobering to read about entire populations of people being abused, even wiped out, due to persons (often in positions of leadership and influence) overcome by greed and incessant appetite for power, control and dominance. God is not pleased with this. And God has never been pleased with this. Like Habakkuk we cry out: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! 'Violence is everywhere, I cry!' But you do not come to save" (Habakkuk 1:2). Like Nahum and other prophets, we hear the Lord pronounce impending judgment upon his enemies, upon those who oppress his people. God wants all to turn – even pagan kings (the king of Nineveh who humbled himself during the

days of Jonah's preaching). Yet, less than 150 years later, Nineveh had returned to evil again.

Read: Nahum 1:1-15 through 2:1-2

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

God's Promise

We hear and read about how Israel is God's chosen people (and they are!) Yet, Israel is chosen by God so that *through* this nation (Jacob's descendants), God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled (see Genesis 12:1-3). Jacob, grandson of Abraham, was known as *heel-puller* until God changed his name to *Israel* (Genesis 32:28). He had twelve sons whose offspring would become the 'twelve tribes of Israel' – the nation of Israel. It was through the lineage of Jacob's fourth son, Judah, that a shepherd boy David would be 'called from the sheep pens' to rule God's house (Psalm 78:70-71). One day the Lord promises to restore the fallen house of David (see Amos 9:11), thus, ultimately blessing all people of earth through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – born of Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of king David.

Reflection

On the night shepherds were watching over their flocks in fields near the village of Bethlehem, something big was about to happen in the city of David. Something that had been foretold during the days of Micah, the prophet. When the LORD gave this message of hope, it was during what appeared to be a time of sheer hopelessness. Enemies surrounded Judah and Jerusalem, and Israel had already been taken captive by the Assyrians. Yet hear these words of hope:

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the wom-

an in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed for he will be highly honored around the world. And he will be the source of peace. And he will be the source of peace" (Micah 5:2-5).

In Closing

God is holy. Hear the lesson for us today: We do not always understand how and when God will rise up and move on our behalf. But he will move. Thus, we too are called to turn from sin and live *by faith* in eager expectation of God to show up. Are you ready for his appearing? We too are called to let go of false gods and rely only upon the Lord our God. He is a God of love. God is also holy and just. "The LORD is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished" (Nahum 1:3a). Are there false idols in your life that you need to destroy? If we don't get rid of them God will (Nahum 1:14). Are you trusting God to provide in your time of need? Or are you turning to the ways of this world – worrying, stealing, cheating to get what you need? Are you rolling up your sleeves and serving others in Christ's name, or are you focused only upon yourself?

The Lord really is working all things for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). God cares about everyone in your household *and* he cares about you. He did not send his Son into the world to condemn us, but to save us! (John 3:17). Have you accepted God's gift of salvation? Why not begin the journey home today. God loves you. His grace and forgiveness will lead you home. Ask Christ to make his home in your heart. Then resolve to help lead others around you on the journey home. God's love is for all.

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

December 17: Nahum 1:1-3:19, Revelation 8:1-13, Psalm 136:1-26, Proverbs 30:7-9
December 18: Habakkuk 1:1-3:19, Revelation 9:1-21, Psalm 137:1-9, Proverbs 30:10
December 19: Zephaniah 1:1-3:20, Revelation 10:1-11, Psalm 138:1-8, Prov. 30:11-14
December 20: Haggai 1:1-2:23, Revelation 11:1-19, Psalm 139:1-24, Proverbs 30:15-16
December 21: Zechariah 1:1-21, Revelation 12:1-17, Psalm 140:1-13, Proverbs 30:17
December 22: Zechariah 2:1-3:10, Revelation 13:1-18, Psalm 141:1-10, Prov.30:18-20
December 23: Zechariah 4:1-5:11, Revelation 14:1-20, Psalm 142:1-7, Prov. 30:21-23

HOME

Text: Micah 5:2; Nahum 1:14-15; Mark 1:1-8

PLAIN TRUTH

Jesus _____ his heavenly _____ so the Holy Spirit could make his _____ in us.

- 1. The journey home begins with expecting God to move in your life.**
- 2. We continue the journey _____ by letting go of false _____ and seek _____.**
- 3. Our journey _____ leads us to find _____ and repentance in God's saving _____ so that we can be baptized in the _____.**

December 17, 2023