

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Briana Hughes

The Advent season is focused on the coming of Jesus, when He came to this earth as a baby, born to Mary. As Christians, we not only believe in this advent, but another second advent; the return of our Lord to restore creation. The reality of our lives is that we are people waiting between two advents - the advent of Jesus's miraculous birth and the advent of the anticipated promise of His return one day.

Today, our reading points our attention to this second advent. In Zephaniah 3, God encourages Israel to rejoice for the redemption He will surely bring to those who call upon the name of the Lord. This is the same Israel that has rebelled against the Lord so many times and has faced the judgement of God so many times. But through the prophet Zephaniah, God points to the day when His judgements against them are taken away, and their shame will become praise. They will rejoice because they are restored, and they are restored by the hand of the God who is with them.

That message to Israel sounds incredible, but how is it possible? It becomes possible through Immanuel, which means "God is with us" (Matthew 1:23). God steps on the scene to do a work that will change the course of history. Despite the faithlessness of man, God is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). This faithfulness is seen in Jesus Christ. He is the King that will be in our midst that has taken away our judgments/sin with His blood. We deserve condemnation but have found mercy. We deserve to be separated from God, but instead, our relationship has been restored to God.

One of the most beautiful pictures displayed in the word is that of God rejoicing over His people (v. 17). He loves His people and has established a plan for the purpose of bringing them satisfaction for His glory. That same passionate love is displayed in Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2). What would Jesus gain through His gruesome death? A family from all over the world that cannot be numbered.

God has created a plan to redeem you for Himself because he loves you and rejoices over you as His child. Have you ever thought about God rejoicing over you? Did you know that God rejoices over you? It is so easy to feel like we are unworthy of this kind of love because we feel the need to earn love. Our actions create the desire in someone else to rejoice over us, right? Not with God. His love for His people is not swayed by their actions. Like the father running out to meet his prodigal son who has decided to come home, our Father not only welcomes us, but runs to us and rejoices over us. Why are we not punished? Because God took the punishment for us in Jesus Christ. The reason for a Merry Christmas.