

## GOD PROMISES JUSTICE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ZEPHANIAH 3

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ZEPHANIAH 3:1-2, 5, 12-13

Key Verse: *The Lord...is righteous; he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgment, each dawn without fail.* Zephaniah 3:5

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 5, 12-13 (NRSV)

### **Zephaniah 3:1-2**

1 Ah, soiled, defiled, oppressing city!

2 It has listened to no voice; it has accepted no correction. It has not trusted in the Lord; it has not drawn near to its God.

**5**

5 The Lord within it is righteous; he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgment, each dawn without fail; but the

unjust knows no shame.

### **12-13**

12 For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord—

13 the remnant of Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.

## WORD POWER!!!

---

- **Defiled** – Marred or spoiled.
- **Remnant** – A small group of people who will remain faithful to God; what's left.
- **Utter** – To say something.
- **Deceitful** – Guilty of misleading others.
- **Famished** – Very hungry.

## GETTING READY!!!

**H**ow does it feel when someone treats you with kindness? How does it feel when someone is mean to you? Can we agree that everyone wants to be treated kindly and not unkindly?! In order for us to make sure that we stay on the right path, it is important for us to not only trust in God, but ask for forgiveness when we do something wrong.

Have you ever done something wrong? How did it make you feel when you were corrected? One of the amazing things about God is that even though God sees us when we do wrong, God still loves us anyway. However, we have consequences for our actions when we disobey God or even our parent(s) or guardian(s). Back in biblical days, there was a prophet named Zephaniah. His message was very stern to the people in the land. Zephaniah told them that God not only hated sin, but will also punish people for their bad actions. How do you think this made the people feel?

God knew that Zephaniah's message was going to be harsh, so God also told Zephaniah to give them some words of hope.

Zephaniah told them that God would save a remnant and that this remnant would enjoy God's grace and mercy forever! Even though Zephaniah's message was harsh, it gave hope for the future. God would not completely destroy everything, but would allow God's grace and mercy to still abide.

### **INTO GOD'S WORD!!!**

**H**ave you ever done something *really* bad? Maybe you broke a vase or did something completely opposite of what your parent(s)/guardian(s) told you to do. Zephaniah, the prophet in today's lesson, was preaching to the land of Judah. He wanted people to repent and turn back to God from their evil ways. In a sense they had forgotten about God and were just doing what they wanted to do.

In these three short chapters of this book, we see that the people in the land of Judah have forgotten all about God. They made false gods (idols) out of wood and stone and started worshipping them. God was not pleased. God was very angry. God sent Zephaniah not only to give them the message, but to promise that God's justice was going to come on earth.

In the midst of all this idol worship, there was still a remnant who made the choice to continue to do what was right. They worshipped the true God and worshipped God with their whole hearts. Zephaniah told them that God would spare and remember them. God would continue to take care of them and allow them to prosper. This was good news for the remnant. It showed that even though everyone else around them was choosing to do wrong, their faithfulness was going to be rewarded.

## USING GOD'S WORD!!!

**F**orgiveness is an essential part of the Christian life. We are human. We make mistakes. However, no matter what we do, God forgives us. God wants all of creation to worship God and to make the right choices. We see in the story today that the people of Judah didn't care about God. They decided to make their own idols and worship the sun, moon, and stars. This displeased God, and Zephaniah's message was to let them know! Sometimes, when we don't do what is right there are more extreme consequences for our actions. When we do wrong, we must be accountable for our actions and ask God for forgiveness.

Think about a time when you did something wrong. How did it feel when the other person(s) forgave you? What do you do when you do something wrong? When we pray to God and ask for forgiveness, God forgives us. We too should offer forgiveness when others do us wrong. We can always live in the confidence that God's way is about fairness and honesty.

## REMIX!!!

**G**od wants to be involved in our everyday lives. God gives us opportunities daily to not only show kindness to others, but to take time and pray. All our prayers do not have to be just about ourselves! We can pray on behalf of others who are going through problems or injustice. We can show others how to be kind by our daily actions. Though this is all true, we don't always make the best decisions. We can have

assurance in knowing that no matter what, God will always love and forgive us.

## QUESTIONS

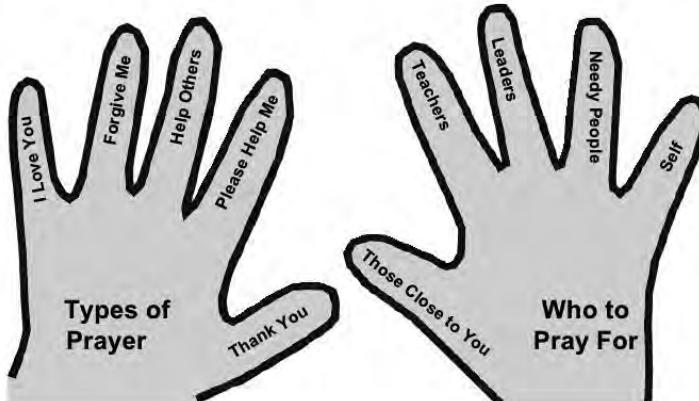
1. Have you ever prayed for someone else?
2. Why was God mad at the people of Judah?
3. What is something that you want to pray to God about?

## PRAISE GOD!!!

**A**s Christians, God calls us to pray for others. Let us learn the “5 finger” prayer model that gives us some examples of those for whom we pray. Get a piece of paper and trace around one of your hands. Write the following on the picture of your hand:

- **Thumb** - Pray for those who are closest to you. Examples: family, friends, etc.
- **Pointer Finger** - Pray for those who lead or teach you. Examples: teachers, coaches, etc.
- **Middle Finger** - Pray for those who lead our government. Examples: president, mayor, etc.
- **Ring Finger** - Pray for those who are weak. Examples: sick and poor people in the world
- **Pinky Finger** - Pray for yourself. Examples: needs, choices, future, etc.

# Hands For Prayer



## CLOSING PRAYER

**G**od, thank you for the ways in which you move in our lives. Thank you for always being there for us and providing the help we need. God, remind us that we are called to not only pray for ourselves, but others as well. When we see injustice help us to be agents of hope and restoration in the world. Amen.