



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 25, 2023

The Lord be with you.

Theologian Ray Anderson suggests that on the day after the father throws that big homecoming party for his prodigal son, that on the day after the prodigal son returns to the far country, but that he returns in order to tell everyone how He had lied about his father, to tell everyone in truth, how extravagantly loving his father is. To tell everyone how his father forgives, rejoices and celebrates a prodigal come home.

I'm thinking about that today as I ponder some amazing words from the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah, now, I'm not sure that we usually think of celebration and joy when we think of the Old Testament prophets, but... But just listen to this passage from Zephaniah chapter 3, verses 14 to 18, "sing aloud, O daughter, Zion, shadow Israel, rejoice and exalt with all your heart, O daughter, Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord is in your midst. You shall fear disaster no more. On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem, do not fear, oh Zion. Do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God is in your midst a warrior who gives victory. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will renew you in his love, he will exalt over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

Now, Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah almost 700 years before Christ, and as a prophet, Zephaniah sees into the future. He sees God saving His people. He sees God taking away their sins, so that Zephaniah, calls for God's people to sing for joy, to shout, to rejoice and exalt with all your heart. Now again, Zephaniah is speaking, he's speaking prophetically, he's telling the future. When God, he says, is in the midst of us. And this is, of course, God in the midst of us. As the son of God became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glorious of God's only son, full of grace and truth. So, Zephaniah is talking about Jesus as Immanuel, as God with us, as the Lord, he says, as the Lord has taken away the judgments against you, the Lord has turned away your enemies, and so that calls for rejoicing celebration. And so Zephaniah heaps up words about rejoicing and celebrating. He says, Sing for joy. Shout, rejoice and exalt with all your heart.

The Christian life is joy. Yes, we have troubles, we have trials, but we sing for joy, we shout, we rejoice and exalt with all our heart, because of what God has done for us. And this is why Psalm



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100 begins, make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the Earth, Worship the Lord with gladness. This is why the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4, verse 4, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Now, look what happens next in Zephaniah. That he says is that God rejoices in our joy. He, God will rejoice over you. Have you ever thought of God as rejoicing over you? That you give God joy. He says God will rejoice over you with gladness. He will renew you in his love, he will exalt over you with loud singing.

Now in a few days, my wife read and I, we're oing to be going to see our grandkids, now, let me tell you, I'm going to rejoice over my grandkids. I'm going to rejoice in seeing them have a good time, I will rejoice in seeing them rejoice. And so, you see, God rejoices over your joy. God rejoices over you. Now, we're often told that the God of the Old Testament is so stern and serious, but God is not stern and serious and subdued here, as we see God as He is bursting into song. And it says that God will exalt over you. Now, the Hebrew were translated to dissolved, it literally means to move in a circle, that is... God is exalting, God is doing a jig, God is dancing for joy over you. As David danced for joy in front of the Ark of the Covenant, so God dances over you in exaltation. God exalts, he dances for you. I think this might help us understand just a little bit better what Jesus means when He says that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

I hope that you know that God not only loves you, but that you know that God rejoices over you, that God has fun. Just loving you. And so, Zephaniah is telling us, sing for joy, shout, rejoice and exalt with all your heart. And why? Well, because God rejoices over us.

And so a loving Father. We pray that you would give us that fruit of the Spirit, that is joy, the joy that comes from your joy in us.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening, until next time.