**Lesson for August 4**

**Open the Conversation**: Sometimes big news can be good for one group of people and hard for another group. Think about when a coach chooses a team or makes a change in the starting line-up. Consider the news that comes when parts are posted for the school play, or you find out which teacher you will have, and which one you won’t. The same news is great for one side while it can be devastating for the other. A great job promotion for one person means another candidate will be turned down. Perspective and position play a huge role in how certain types of news is received. Today we are studying a book of the Bible centered on a prophetic word given about one group of people that also had implications for another group. The perspective in Nahum comes down to the people’s relationship with God. It was destruction and devastation for one group and encouragement and hope for the other. What difference does your perspective make when news is received, or events unfold?

**Introduction:** Today we will consider the message of judgment God sent to Ninevah through Nahum from two perspectives—what the message meant for the Ninevites, and what the message meant for God’s people, who were being cruelly oppressed by the Ninevites.

Nahum’s name meant “comfort.” God even named his prophets in ways that communicated something important about the message He was sending them to deliver!

How is a Word from the Lord regarding His justice and judgment often good news for some and “bad” news for others?

How does knowing God’s constant purpose of redemption and restoration help you interpret passages like this?

**Read Nahum 1:1**

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and is the same city that Jonah preached repentance to about a hundred years earlier. Nahum’s call was to preach to these people who had slipped back into sin and needed to repent. Sometimes we may feel oppressed by our circumstances, but what God’s people faced daily was much more difficult than what most of us encounter. They longed to know God saw their need. Nahum’s prophecy is also a reminder that God deals with both individuals and nations.God asked Amos to do something difficult. How can you prepare for the time when God asks something difficult of you?

* How does the reminder that God will not allow injustice and wickedness to go on forever serve as an encouragement to us? How does it motivate us to persevere?
* How can we pray in response to the truths that God sees injustice and oppression and will act on it?

**Read Nahum 1:2-8**

* What pictures do you see in your mind as you read Nahum’s prophecy against Nineveh?
* How does recognizing God’s authority in our lives reorient everything we do? What happens when we fail to recognize His authority as the Assyrians did?
* The people of Nineveh, Israel, and Judah all needed to remember the truth about God. He is slow to anger but that patience does not mean He will overlook sin, and when His judgment came, it would be like an overwhelming flood. Where do you need to remember God’s power right now, either for encouragement or challenge?
* Which description of the Lord in these verses stands out to you most and why?

**Read Nahum 1:9-15**

* How did God’s decree against Nineveh serve as a reminder of His faithfulness to His people?
* What qualities of God do you think were most precious to the Israelites as they heard this message from Nahum?

**Wrap Up:**

Notice the contrast between the fate of the wicked and the godly. Nineveh would be wiped out but there was good news for the people of God. Nahum spoke of those who bring good news having beautiful feet indicating movement, action, and progress that reminds us of the active work of sharing the gospel (Romans 10:14-17). The separation of the people belonging to God from the ungodly ultimately will be eternally just as stark. Every believer is called to share Jesus with others and that necessarily includes action. Why do you think truth about God’s authority, sin and it’s consequences can be an unwelcome message?

As the new school year starts, consider how you might re-order some of your time to match the priority of walking closely with God. Be committed to time and energy for a lifegroup, pray at a planned time each day, and meet with a mentor sometimes. Choose an unreached people group or missionary to pray for, to keep you aware that God is working all around the world and all people need a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

**Extended Cut:**

Although Nineveh repented when Jonah preached to them years earlier, they slipped back into all their evil ways of idolatry, wickedness, and oppression of God’s people. It’s important to realize that faith in one generation does not necessarily translate to faith in the next and following generations. One of our greatest callings as believers is to teach and encourage those following after us about the faithfulness of God, being open with them about our real journey with God as His people. You can do this with your children one day, but you can be intentionally doing it now with younger siblings and friends. As a Christ follower your walk with the Lord impacts others—not in a way that causes undue pressure, but in a beautiful, knit-together kind of way. Even, and sometimes especially, the young can have a great impact on the faith journey of others.

The Lord gave a vision to Nahum and sent him to proclaim the coming judgment and punishment God was going to bring. God promised there would not be a second judgment because this first one would be completely devastating. This message gave encouragement to God’s people who were suffering under daily abuse. It was a reminder that God was watching out for them, and He takes the mistreatment of His people very seriously. Regardless of the opposition, God is our source of strength. Despite evidence that Nineveh was strengthening and seemingly impossible to defeat, God was at work preparing to put them in their place and pour out His wrath on them. God also had a plan of redemption and planned to bring victory to His people. **Nahum stressed that God is good, loving, kind, and patient. He was not reacting hastily according to the moment but delayed giving the people time to decide if they would repent or face the consequences.**

Nahum first said God was jealous and avenging. It was important for the people to remember that God was jealous for them. He refuses to share our worship and deserves our whole-hearted devotion because of who He is. This laid the foundation for where they had gone astray and why the vengeance of the Lord was coming against them. Ultimately, any people who set themselves up against the Lord will face vengeance. **Recognizing the Lord is slow to anger and patient is just as important. God is not like humans who often fly off the handle or overreact to something they don’t like. God’s anger is not random or quick. Because He loves us, and He loved the people of Nineveh, He offers ample time and opportunity for us to see our sin and return to Him.** Nahum also described God’s matchless power. Understanding God’s people leads us to trust in Him and have a healthy fear of His judgment.

Nahum made clear that once God acted, it would be swift and complete. The reason trouble would not rise up again was not because the people would have learned their lesson but because this destruction would be total the first time. The reference to tangled, dried thorns described how ripe Nineveh was for judgment. Think about what the comparison would be today for a person, people, or country ripe for the judgment of God. **While Christians can be assured that God’s judgment has been satisfied in Jesus, it is right for us to continually assess our hearts to be sure we honor Him with our lives.**

This chapter closes with instruction for how God’s people were to live moving forward. They were to keep the feasts as a means of staying in the right relationship with God. Knowing the grace and mercy of God is not a license to be careless and disobedient. Knowing who God is and knowing His characteristics should make us more careful to obey Him. It was time for God’s people to live in the fullness of a right relationship with Him. Believers today are called to the same.