

December 12, 2021 – Third Sunday of Advent

Joy to the World Zephaniah 3:14-20

*The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing*

If you were to read the entire book of Zephaniah (all 3 chapters), you would find it a book of doom and gloom. God is upset with the people because they have not followed His will. They have become spoiled, shameless people (His words not mine), and He is determined to wipe them out.

But in the scripture for today, He has changed His mind. Judgment is past, and God is in the mist of the people showing them love and forgiveness and leadership. He is telling them to sing aloud the joy of gladness for new life.

This song of joy to the world is exactly what we need in these uncertain days. God is promising the children of Israel that judgment is past, and the joy is waiting. He will be in their midst just as He is in our midst. The judgment will be past, and the marginalized and the outcasts will be honored.

We do not need to look for examples of bad news in our days. But in the midst of fears, wars, killings, government messes and so much anxiety over a pandemic, it is good to remember that God offers us a time of joy. A time that we no longer must fear disasters but rejoice in the fact that we are His people—called by His name, and He is in our midst.

Just as God built bridges for the people of Israel, bridges of hope, love, and joy, bridges to bring them home, so He builds bridges that will take us home.

During this season of advent, let us rejoice in the fact that God sent His only son to bring us eternal life. During our times of fear and anxiety, let us trust in Him to bring us joy. Let us accept the gift of God's love, peace and joy made known to us by the birth of the Savior.

Prayer: *Good and gracious God, during this most holy season, help us to remember that we are not alone. Thank you for being in our midst and bringing us the joy of your love. Help us to show that love to others. Amen.*

Judy Raines
Trinity United Methodist Church, Bluefield, West Virginia
denraines@frontier.com
Chair - Global Ministries, Certified Lay Speaker, and
WV PAG representative to United Methodist Women