



Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord
Week 6: Zephaniah 2:1-3 “Gather, Seek, Hide”
By Pastor Onan Coca, June 7, 2026

Zephaniah 2:1-3 Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, ²before the decree takes effect—before the day passes away like chaff— before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord. ³Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.

[READ THE TEXT]

“People of God, this is the Word of God!”

Congregation - “Thanks be to God!”

[PRAY FOR UNDERSTANDING]

Good morning! If I've not met you, my name is Onan Coca, and along with Pastors Jody May and Bill Alderson, I serve as one of the elders here at Highlands Community Church. I'm so glad to be here with you on this beautiful Lord's Day, though I'll be honest, I'm already missing our young folks. Particularly, my own kids, who are now on the mission field in Tennessee this week, working hard for God's glory.

Please take time this week to pray for them. Pray for safety, for gospel opportunities, for growth and camaraderie, and for the hearts of everyone involved. Including the parents sitting here waiting for them to come home.

Now, I want to begin today with a little thought experiment before we get into the text.



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Here in Georgia, we know storms. When the tornado sirens go off around the Atlanta metro, nobody stops to debate the forecast. Nobody finishes dinner. You grab the people you love, and you move, because you understand that what's coming changes everything.

That's the tone of Zephaniah 2. The Day of the Lord is approaching like a storm nobody can outrun. And yet, in mercy, God still calls. Even now, He echoes what Isaiah wrote: **"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).** The storm is coming, but mercy is still speaking before the thunder falls.

This is the sixth sermon in our series through Zephaniah. Over the past month, Pastor Jody has walked us through the judgment facing Judah as the Day of the Lord drew nearer. We've learned that most of Zephaniah is poetry, and Zephaniah was clearly a gifted poet, carried along by the Spirit of God, weaving together the whole story of the Gospel: creation, the fall of Israel and Judah, the first coming of the Messiah, and ultimately the Day when our Messiah returns in judgment. It has been a great and terrible rollercoaster of covenants and covenant breaking, of sin and mercy, and of judgment and hope.



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Last week, chapter 1 closed with some of the most terrifying pictures of wrath in all of Scripture. The prophet described darkness, distress, and the great Day of the Lord hastening near. God promised to sweep away everything from the face of the earth. Because God takes sin seriously - He would cut off man and beast, bring ruin upon the wicked, and fill the land with the blood of the guilty.

Now, as we arrive in chapter 2, the prophet pauses to make a pleading appeal. These first three verses are the emotional heart of the whole book.

They move from warning to command to something like trembling hope. The message is urgent: God has declared judgment, but He is still, right now, offering a way of escape to anyone who will listen.

So here is where I want to land us this morning:

Main Point: Before the day of anger comes: gather urgently, seek humbly, and hide in sovereign mercy.

Let's look at verses 1 and 2 together: **“Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, ²before the decree takes effect—before the day passes away like chaff— before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord.”**



The first thing we see is the call to...

1. **Gather Before the Day Comes** (The Urgency of Imminent Judgment)

Did you happen to notice the repetition? Two "gathers." Four "befores." The Hebrew text uses a double imperative, giving the language force. It sounds like a military officer calling troops to formation, or a father shouting at his children to get in the storm cellar right now. Do it now. No time for discussion. The decree is about to take effect. The day will pass like chaff caught in the wind, light and gone before you can grab it.

But the words that stop me every time I read this verse are right in the middle of it: "**O shameless nation.**"

Judah had become shameless. The nation had lost the ability to blush.

People could bow down to Baal on their own rooftops and still pretend to claim loyalty to the Lord. They could listen to clear prophetic warnings and walk away completely unmoved. They mixed idolatry with outward religion, violence with their prosperity, complacency with covenant privilege.



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Their greatest danger was not simply sin. **Their greatest danger was sin without shame.**

I think we all feel that instinctively, don't we? There is a real difference between a person who is ashamed of what they've done and someone who acts as if they've done nothing wrong at all.

We've all seen courtroom footage or the true crime stories. You know what I mean. The faces of evil men, like Ted Bundy or Charles Manson, never show even the slightest bit of remorse.

The difference between a remorseful killer and one who feels nothing is the difference between a courtroom drama and a horror movie.

And in our own culture right now, our streets are full of people who don't just commit sin quietly but glory in it publicly. The shame is gone.

And that loss of shame makes us uneasy, and rightly so, because Paul is clear in Romans 1 that when sin stops hiding and starts celebrating, judgment is not far behind.

The prophet Jeremiah said the same thing to Judah in his day: **"Were they ashamed when they committed**



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abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15).

That same numbness marks our time, too. Repentance gets mocked as weakness. Spiritual sensitivity gets treated as a character flaw, a sign that you haven't evolved past your prudishness or that you need to be more open-minded.

But before we start pointing only at the culture around us, we need to remember that in our reading today, Zephaniah is pointing at the covenant people.

He's talking to the church, in other words.

Even congregations can grow shameless. Church leaders can excuse moral compromise for the sake of growth or to keep people happy. Members go through the motions: attendance, giving, outward religious activity, all while their inner lives remain untouched by the fear of God.

Jesus had strong words for exactly this kind of religion: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

Outward activity without inward repentance has always been offensive to God.



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You may have come across this a couple of weeks ago in our church's Bible reading plan, in Isaiah 58, where God confronts people who claim they are seeking Him while simultaneously living in horrific sin and idolatry.

God didn't want their hypocritical, outward worship. He wanted repentance. He wanted them to turn from their sin and follow Him with their whole hearts.

This is exactly His call in Zephaniah 2, and it's His call to us today!

Family, shamelessness is the prelude to judgment. When a people loses the capacity for holy shame, the ground is being prepared for divine discipline.

Something else we need to take note of in this passage: the call here is not for private, individual repentance only.

Zephaniah is summoning a covenant assembly. He's calling the people of God to gather together - as families, as households, as the visible community.

It's true that we must each repent individually. But we also repent together. Families turn together. The church humbles itself together.



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This is one of the reasons that we practice corporate confession of sin here at Highlands Community Church every week, as God's people have done for thousands of years.

Zephaniah's call is not a call to isolated spirituality. God's people gather before Him in humility before the storm arrives.

This is why in **Hebrews 10:23-25 we read, “23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**

The approaching Day should drive the people of God closer together, not farther apart.

In the Old Testament, God dealt with His people as a community. They were saved together and judged together. The same principle applies to the church today.

Do not isolate yourself spiritually.



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I want to say something directly about isolation, especially to those of you who are wired like me. I'm what people usually call an introvert. And I want to encourage you, don't let that become an excuse to retreat.

Introversion is not a sin, in and of itself. But if you pull away from the body because it's simply more comfortable to be alone, you risk abandoning the very people who need you most, and you cut yourself off from what you need.

We are made in the image of a relational God. That means something. We simply cannot live as islands and thrive.

Gather your household. Gather with the saints in the ordinary means of grace, the Word preached and read, corporate prayer, fellowship, and the Lord's Table. There is strength, accountability, and grace in the gathered body that you simply will not find on your own.

What does this look like practically for us today?

Families can set aside regular time each week to read Scripture together and pray. Heads of families must lead their homes in regular confession and renewal.



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Again, here at Highlands Community Church, this is why regular, at-home, family worship is part of our core tenets. Regular family discipleship is vital for the health of our homes and our hearts.

Church members can commit to consistent attendance, meaningful fellowship, and mutual encouragement. Gatherings of friends for dinner or fellowship can become places of honest accountability and worship, rather than superficial socializing. Pursue real accountability and mutual encouragement before the Day arrives.

The urgency of the coming Day calls us out of casual Christianity into intentional, corporate pursuit of God.

The storm is coming. The Day of burning anger draws near. There is no more time for delay.

2. Seek the Lord While He May Be Found (The Call to Heart-Deep Repentance)

Secondly, today, we must seek the Lord while He may be found.

Look with me at verse 3:

3 Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.



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After calling the nation to gather, Zephaniah narrows his address. Not everyone will listen. Not everyone will repent. But the humble must seek the Lord while mercy still remains.

This seeking is for a specific group: the humble of the land. Not the proud. Not the self-righteous. Not the self-sufficient. It is for those who know they deserve nothing from God.

Remember, our Lord opened the Sermon on the Mount with these words: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 5:3). The kingdom belongs not to the proud, but to those who know their need.

These are the ones God describes through Isaiah: **"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word"** (Isaiah 66:2). People who take His warnings seriously. People who tremble at His word.

The command is active, and it's stacked for emphasis: Seek the Lord. Seek righteousness. Seek humility.

The prophet Micah put it plainly when he asked what does God really require of us? Not sacrifice, not ritual performance, but **"to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"** (Micah 6:6-8).



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This is not shallow morality. True seeking flows from a heart that has been genuinely humbled by what we read in Zephaniah chapter 1.

Think back. Remember the picture of God searching Jerusalem with lamps. He examined every corner, and He gazed upon every heart. He sees past appearances into hidden motives and secret thoughts. Outward religion without heart change is worthless in His sight.

Which is why David prayed in **Psalm 51, "You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."**

Where the Holy Spirit works true humility, it produces obedience. That obedience is not the root of salvation, it's the fruit of a heart that has genuinely turned to God.

Real repentance is not cosmetic. Joel preached this same thing generations earlier: **"Return to Me with all your heart... rend your hearts and not your garments" (Joel 2:12-13).**

God is not after changed appearances. He's after transformed hearts. It means more than feeling sorry. It means changing direction.



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The time has come for us all to commit to honest self-examination.

Are you merely religious, or are you truly seeking the Lord? Do your daily choices, your words, your spending habits, and your affections show evidence of humility and righteousness? Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).**

Our God is not merely concerned with external behavior, but with the condition of the heart from which all behavior flows.

When conflict arises, do you respond with gentleness or with defensiveness? When temptation comes, do you flee to Christ or entertain sin in your mind?

Church, the time to seek is now, while He may still be found, before the door closes, because the Day is coming.

I want to tell you about something that happened in the fall of my junior year of high school, and I still think about it from time to time.

I graduated with a class of over 700 students, and while I was a Christian and growing in my faith, I was still pretty guarded about it in a school that big.



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One day, as I walked onto campus, I immediately knew something was wrong. The weight of it was just in the air.

I soon found out what had happened: the afternoon before, two of my female classmates had left school together in one of their cars, out for a fun afternoon, that sadly ended in a terrible accident. The driver was injured and out of school for weeks. The passenger was killed.

She was a quiet girl who was well-liked, and since we’d been in school together most of our lives, well-known. Now she was just gone. In our senior year, we honored her in the yearbook and at graduation.

But the truth that I could not shake, and still think about, is that the moment her life ended, everything else stopped mattering to her. Time ran out. And I had never talked to her about the Gospel. I never asked her if she knew my Lord.

God used that day to press into me the urgency of eternity, that **we must speak of Christ while there is still time.**

The early church in Acts understood this.

After Pentecost, believers gathered daily. They devoted themselves to the apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. They shared with one another generously.



They lived like people who understood what time it was. Their seeking was not passive, and it was not private. It was communal and whole-hearted. That's what we need today. Finally, this passage shows us that God is the One who does the work, not us.

3. **Hide Yourself in Sovereign Mercy** (The Hope of Being Hidden in Christ)

Our only hope is to “Hide ourselves in His Sovereign Mercy.”

Let's go back to the end of verse 3: **“...perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.”**

Here is where the emotional weight of the passage reaches its peak, not in sadness, anger, or despair, but in hope. Trembling hope.

That word “perhaps” carries a great deal of weight, doesn't it? And I want to be careful with it, because Zephaniah isn't saying: “If you do all the right things, you still can't be sure if you'll be safe.” That's not the point. **Humble seekers should not read that word and despair.**

What “perhaps” does here is crush presumption.

It reminds us that outward religion, our DNA, family heritage, church membership, moral effort, none of that saves anyone. Mercy belongs to God alone.



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But "perhaps" also tells us the door is still open! The same God who pours out wrath also delights in hiding His people.

David rejoiced in this reality when he prayed, "You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble" (Psalm 32:7). God Himself becomes the refuge of His people.

On the cross, Jesus endured the Day of the Lord in the place of His people. The darkness of judgment fell on the Son so that all who trust in Him would never face condemnation. As Paul says in Romans 5:9, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God."

Jesus was not hidden, as we hope to be. The perfectly humble One was exposed, taken outside the camp, treated as cursed, given the full fury of divine judgment. He, who was truly poor in spirit and pure in heart, was treated as the worst of sinners so that shameless sinners, like you and me, who flee to Him could be welcomed as sons. He took the storm so we wouldn't have to.

This is sovereign mercy.

And now, what Zephaniah spoke of in hushed, trembling tones becomes a certainty for everyone united to Christ by faith. Colossians 3:3 says it plainly: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."



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Brothers and sisters, it is not the quality of our seeking that saves us. It is the work of Christ, once and for all, finished by our Shepherd Savior in His life, death, and resurrection.

For everyone hidden in Christ, the Day of anger becomes the Day of joyful deliverance. Not wrath but welcome. The same storm that brings judgment to the wicked brings final salvation to all who are in Him.

So what do we do with this?

For our **call to obey** this morning, let me leave you with three things to consider as you go into your week.

First, **Gather Now**. Stop delaying. Repent of shamelessness in your own life and in the life of this congregation. Gather your household and your own wandering heart in urgent prayer and turning. Don't retreat into isolation. Come together with the saints.

Second, **Seek Him** while there is still time. Pursue the LORD in His Word, in prayer, in obedient humility. Let your life show what a heart that has genuinely turned actually looks like. Look at your priorities, your entertainment, your relationships, your use of time. Where the Spirit convicts, make changes.



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Third, **Hide Yourself**, don't put your trust in your own effort. Flee to Christ, the only safe refuge. Rest in the righteousness of the One who bore the storm for you.

And if you are outside of Christ this morning, I want you to hear the full weight of this passage. The storm is coming. The decree has gone out. But today, mercy is still calling.

Main Point: Before the day of anger comes: gather urgently, seek humbly, and hide in sovereign mercy.

Before the day of anger comes, gather, seek, run to Jesus. He is mighty to save, and He is ready to hide you.

For those already in Christ, live watchfully and hopefully. The Day that once threatened our destruction has become the Day of our final deliverance, because we are safe in Him.

The storm is coming. The decree has gone forth. But mercy still calls today.

Gather. Seek. Hide yourself in Christ. All who are hidden in Him will stand safely on that Day, to the praise of His glorious mercy and grace.

Let us pray.



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[CLOSING PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

[RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY]

Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*