

“Just Wait Until Your Father Gets Home!”—Zephaniah 1:7

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Just Wait Until Your Father Gets Home!”, is Zephaniah 1:7 → *Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated His guests.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How many of you ever heard these words when you were a child: “Just wait until your father gets home!” Many of you may have heard these words spoken to you when your mother was angry and frustrated with your behavior. Since nothing she could say or do could “tame” your rebellion, in a final “ditch effort,” she uttered those words of threat: “Just wait until your father gets home!”

These words were meant to instill a fear and trepidation which would be so powerful that proper behavior was inevitable while you thought about the impending punishment awaiting you. Judgment day was just around the corner. Such a statement could instill so much fear in some children that they actually thought dad already knew what they had done wrong, even though he wasn't in their presence. At the thought of what he might do, the child would be trying to figure out how to get out of the impending punishment. “Maybe if I meet him at the door before mom

then I'd be safe! Better yet, if I run to him and give him a big hug when he walks in the door he'll be sure to go easy on me!" However, such finagling still does not seem to quiet the fear of the unknown connected with the impending day of judgment.

This picture is not much different than that held by many people when they think of the coming of that which the prophet Zephaniah calls in our text *the day of the LORD*. God's children of Zephaniah's day were being told by His true prophets that He was going to act in their lives in such a manner where they would feel His wrath upon their sinful behavior. Those prophets may not have said "Just wait until your father gets home!" but in effect it was the same thing. The difference was that Yahweh **did know their sin outside of His physical presence among them**. He truly is omniscient.

Throughout the prophetic proclamations in Scripture *the day of the LORD* is referred to very often. It refers to the time when the LORD will act, not just anticipating His wrath upon sin but also anticipating His salvation, both in light of Judgment Day. However, the proclamation of His impending judgment is always intended by the LORD to produce guilt because of our sin and make us drop to our knees in repentance and confess our sin to Him **so that we may be forgiven and restored in His forgiveness and grace**.

This humbling activity is described in our text with the command: *Be*

silent before the Lord GOD! If you refuse to be silent before the LORD in humble repentance He will ultimately find ways to silence the “cries” of your sin before Him. He will silence your excuses for continuing in sin with unrepentance. He will silence the blatant flaunting of your sin with no shame in all its amorality. He will silence your self-righteousness and idolatry. Such “silencing” will come in ways which will make you take notice of your sin. Why? So that you can experience *the day of the LORD* as the day of His deliverance from sin in repentance and faith—as a day of experiencing His love, grace and forgiveness **ultimately in Jesus Christ.**

In Scripture *the day of the LORD* could also refer to His judgment upon a nation with the devastation of its land and even its existence as a nation. Zephaniah’s proclamations of Yahweh’s judgment upon Judah was accomplished in 587 BC with the destruction of Jerusalem and the peoples’ deportation to Babylon where they lived as slaves. In our text he say: *the LORD has prepared a sacrifice*. It’s a reference to the people of Judah—God’s disobedient, hard-hearted people. The *guests* whom He has *consecrated* are “set apart” to consume the sacrifice. In other words, it is a picture of judgment upon God’s people in His plans to punish them through a foreign nation. A day of judgment was coming.

The day of the LORD could also refer to judgment upon other nations as the LORD delivered His people from such oppression. Jesus’ earthly

ministry was introduced by John the Baptizer with Judgment Day pictures in Matthew 3:7-10 when he encountered the Jewish religious leaders *he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* John was saying that with the appearance of Jesus, people were in for it. Judgment upon their sin was about to take place in numerous ways.

This judgment happened as Jesus revealed the sinful hearts of people during His preaching, teaching and healing ministry on earth. Simeon, a man described as waiting for *the day of the LORD* with its redemption from sin, said to Mary & Joseph about Jesus in Luke 2:34-35 → *Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel . . . so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.* When dealing with the hypocritical religious leaders of His day Matthew 9:4 says, *Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"* The day of Yahweh's judgment in revealing the sinful heart of humankind indeed did come in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ.

However, *the day of the LORD* with His judgment upon the sin of

mankind did just stop with the display of Jesus' omniscience—His all-knowing power as God. Rather, Yahweh's judgment upon sin came in the punishment which we deserved because of our sins being laid upon Jesus. This *day of the LORD* had been proclaimed by Yahweh's prophet Isaiah nearly a century prior to Zephaniah. Isaiah 53:5-6 says: *He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement (i.e. punishment for our sins) that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

On that dark day when they nailed Jesus to the cross *the day of the LORD* with His final judgment upon your sin was manifested once and for all. When Jesus willing became sin for your sake in His sacrifice on the cross, God the Father turned His face from His Son. Jesus was abandoned to experience hell, eternal separation from His Father, and cried out, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* (cf. Matthew 27:46) He did it **for you**.

“Just wait until your father gets home?” Jesus took the judgment upon your sin so that when Jesus comes back on His Father's final Judgment Day you do not have to cower in fear of the unknown. You don't have to dream up concoctions in an effort to make Him “go easy on you.” You don't even have to “shake in your boots” because you

know that you have been a disobedient child of you heavenly Father.

Rather, you can look forward to *the day of the LORD* with confidence. In Luke 21:27-28 Jesus said that on the final Judgment Day people will see Him *coming in a cloud with power and great glory*. He tells you: *When these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because **your redemption** is drawing near*. Because of Christ's atonement **for you**, the words, "Just wait until your father gets home!" takes on a whole new meaning of anticipation and even excitement. It's not just the anticipation and excitement of the final *day of the LORD* but also each day of the LORD's favor when He comes to us in His Word and sacraments to dispense His forgiveness in Christ to us anew!

Throughout my years in the ministry I have witnessed many small children accompanying their parents to the communion rail. Many times the children will dash to the rail with smiles on their faces, giving me the feeling that they are so eager to meet Jesus. This is the picture of how we long to greet our heavenly Father, not only as He comes to us by His Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament, but also when He comes on the Last Day. Forgiven, filled with His love and grace in Christ, we run to meet Him, embracing Him as He embraces us and says, "Welcome home, my child. I love you." Amen.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God

and to the steadfastness of Christ. Amen

(2 Thessalonians 3:5)

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