

THE PROPHET Zephaniah **PROCLAIMS:**

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult 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, O 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 exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. **And I will save the [physically challenged] and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise** and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

AFTER OUR CONVERSATION; CATCHING UP ON OVER 20 YEARS SINCE SEEING ONE ANOTHER, PASTOR CHRIS SHARED WITH GENEVA AND ME WHAT THE ASSIGNED LESSON WOULD BE FOR THE SUNDAY OF HIS INSTALLATION. AFTER ENDING THE ZOOM CONVERSATION === I SAID TO GENEVA: ZEPHANIAH???

AND WENT RIGHT TO A BIBLICAL COMMENTARY TO **RE-AQUAINT** MYSELF WITH THIS BIBLICAL PROPHET OF GOD.

I TURNED TO DR. MARGARAT O'DELL; PROFESSOR EMERITI AT ST OLAF'S COLLEGE IN MINN. AND LEARNED THAT:

Throughout This book, the prophet declares a great "sweeping" as God comes to rid the land, temple, and people of all the foreign and idolatrous ways that have SEPARATED Israel from their God.

THAT IMAGE PROCLAIMED BY ZEPHANIAH STUCK IN MY MIND'S EYE:

A GREAT SWEEPING ===== SHOWING THE DOOR [IF YOU WILL] TO THOSE FORCES IN

THE WORLD WHO WOULD KEEP GOD'S PEOPLE SEPARATED FROM THE GOD OF MIRIAM AND MOSES == THE GOD OF SARAH AND ABRAHAM. AND FOR US: WE WHO FOLLOW JESUS; HERE IN THIS PLACE AND IN THIS TIME IN GOD'S HISTORY.

CHRIS, I THINK OF THE TIME IN OUR RELATIONAL - HISTORY WHEN YOU PLAYED A **PROPHETIC ROLE** = BY WAY OF YOUR WRITINGS AND YOUR DEEDS == IN CALLING THE CHURCH TO BE IN DIALOG WITH LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE === **AS THE INSTITUTIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH WAS**

'SHOWING' THEM , [THEY WHO ARE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD] === === SHOWING THEM THE DOOR.

LITERALLY, THROWING PASTORS OUT OF THEIR PULPITS;

LITERALLY, THROWING CONGREGATIONS OUT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

AND CHRIS, WE WHO ARE ADVOCATES FOR THE GENUINE WELCOMING OF ALL PEOPLE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE WERE **GRATEFUL** FOR YOUR VOICE PROCLAIMED IN THESIS AND BOOK: THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH HAD SHOWN A PORTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE **THE DOOR**, TO OUR PERSONAL AND CORPORATE **SHAME**.

THAT WAS 20 YEARS AGO, AND SINCE THEN GOD BROKE INTO OUR PERSONAL AND CORPORATE HISTORIES

AND **I SUSPECT** THAT WHEN THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH ASKED THOSE PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS FOR **FORGIVENESS** AND **REINSTATED** THEM TO PULPIT AND CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY . . . **I SUSPECT THAT YOU CRIED LIKE A BABY (WHEREVER YOU WERE) AT THE LIBERATION FROM EXILE THAT THOSE WHO WERE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY HAD SUFFERED ; AS DID GENEVA AND I SITING IN A CHURCH PEW IN WASHINGTON, D.C. .**

AS GOD WILL DO, TIME AND TIME AGAIN IN OUR PERSONAL AND CORPORATE HISTORIES, GOD **GATHERED** THE OUTCAST, AND CHANGED **THEIR SHAME** INTO **PRAISE**.

CHRIS, AS I HAVE WATCHED YOUR VOCATIONAL JOURNEY FROM THE DAYS OF YOUR INTERNSHIP IN OAKLAND, CA, IT HAS BEEN CLEAR TO ME THAT YOUR ACADEMIC [SIGNIFICANT BODY OF THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AND YOUR PASTORAL/PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR THEOLOGICAL CONVERSATIONS HAVE BEEN: **IN THE MIDST** OF THOSE **WHO HAVE BEEN SHOWN THE DOOR** === IN THIS NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT: **SHOWN THE DOOR THEY HAVE: AND LEFT** IN EXILE == WALLOWING IN RACIAL/ETHNIC OPPRESSION ==

SHOWN THE DOOR:

WALLOWING IN ECONOMIC DESPARITY ==

WALLOWING IN EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

WALLOWING IN GENDER IDENTITIES/SEXUAL ORIENTATION/ GENDER EXPRESSION BIASES AND OPPRESSION.

SO, ZEPHANIAH SAYS TO YOU CHRIS AND TO THOSE GATHERED AS THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF "LYDIA'S TABLE":

LET NOT YOUR HANDS GROW WEAK.

FOR, YOU HAVE WORK **TO DO**; AS YOUR SHEPHERD ===== LEADS YOU.

AS YOUR SHEPHERD RECEIVES THE SYMBOLS OF HIS OFFICE, THIS AFTERNOON:

+ PERFORMING THE PRIESTLY ROLE == OF **SPLASHING THE WATER** OF: RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THE CREATOR; RELATIONSHIP GOD OUR SOVERIGN; RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPIRIT == WHO BRINGS US TO FAITH/TEACHES OF THE FAITH/ AND HELPS US IDENTIFY OUR GIFTS OF SERVICE.

YOUR SHEPHERD WHO IS:

+ PRESIDING AT THE TABLE OF JESUS: FORGIVING YOU ALL === OF YOUR REBELLIOUSNESS AGAINST GOD AND

YOUR NEIGHBORS == WHO HAVE BEEN **SHOWN THE DOOR**.

YOUR SHEPHERD WHO IS:

+ PROCLAIMING [**AS A TEACHING THEOLOGIAN OF THE CHURCH**] --THE LIVING – WORD OF GOD FROM THE PULPIT == **GLEANED** FROM SCRITURE AND THE XIAN - FAITH TRADITION

AND PASTOR CHRIS, AT THIS INSTALLATION:

YOU WILL BE ===== “SHOWN THE DOOR”

NOT FOR YOU TO **PUT PEOPLE OUT --- BUT RATHER,** FOR YOU AND YOUR FLOCK TO **WALK THROUGH ===== IN SOLIDARITY WITH:** THE COMMUNITIES/PARISHES IN

WHICH THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAS PLANTED YOU AND INVITE PEOPLE TO ENTER THAT DOOR TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF JESUS: INSIDE.

THERE’S THE DOOR –“ST. LYDIA” AND PASTOR CHRIS === SO, BE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD === MOVING THE RESIDENTS OUTSIDE OF THAT DOOR === FROM **SHAME INTO PRAISE**. AND WHEN YOU DO === GOD’S PROPHET ZACHARIAH DECLARES: YOU === PASTOR AND CONGREGATION WILL BE **RENOUNED AND PRAISED.** AMEN!

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