

“God Sings”

Zephaniah 3: 14 – 17

Makemie Presbyterian Church

January 18, 2009

<sup>14</sup>Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. <sup>17</sup>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

Matthew 26: 30

<sup>30</sup>When they (that is Jesus & the disciples) had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This ends the reading.

I want to thank God's Country Crossroads for singing to the glory of God this morning and for our enjoyment. Now this as you will note in your bulletins is a homily, or really short sermon. A few minutes of prose food in our Sunday worship. And I thank all of you for giving me the benefit of the doubt that I can do a short sermon; almost a mini-message. We've enjoyed the hymn singing and I don't want to hold us over. It is a big Sunday for football fans. And I don't want to go too far out on a limb here but I'm pretty sure God is for all the teams.

Singing is such a major part of our worship & in the reformed tradition, John Calvin & Martin Luther both wrote hymns. And we sing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" almost every Reformation Sunday which is the last Sunday of October. Music touches the heart & opens us for worship in ways, prose, words without music, just can not.

And in this beautiful passage Lee just read from Zephaniah, the prophet tells us, that God sings. Selah. God sings for us. Now Zephaniah spoke in God's name & he is given the right to speak "the word of the Lord as it came to Zephaniah by his giving a genealogy that goes back four generations. And although we don't see many Zephaniah's today his name is a form of the Hebrew to protect combined with Yahweh, or God protects. Scholars because of Zephaniah's name, Zephaniah ben Cushi or African or

son of an African, suggests an African heritage. Zephaniah is one of the Minor Prophets and his book is about the coming day of the Lord in terrifying judgment, except this terrifying judgment is reversed at the end of the three short chapters that Zephaniah writes. His book ends with the victory song of joy for Jerusalem that God sings. Hear the word of the Lord as written by the prophet Zephaniah, “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.” So the key that Zephaniah gives to us to unlocking the message of God to Israel, to the nations & to all of us today, is joy. The promise that God people with one voice will call on the divine name. It shows us that there needs to be a change in our relationships, where the heavy sentence of judgment is commuted to make way for a future that is different from the past. Prophets seem to be more about the future than the past, more about those who will inherit the future than about those who will be punished.

It is the faithful who rejoice & perhaps most shocking -- it is the God who commutes the judgment sentences who also rejoices among those who have been released to live another day and in another way. God sings. God sings for us. Selah.