**Sunday, March 7th, 2021**

**Nahum 1:12-15**

Here we are again at Nineveh.

You remember, God told Jonah to warn the people of the great city of Nineveh

          that they would be wiped out if they did not change their evil ways.

But Jonah did not want God to forgive the Ninevites.

So, Jonah ran away as fast as he could.

He took a boat ride, then took a dive into the water, and was rescued by a whale.

When the whale spit Jonah out on dry land,

          Jonah decided he had better do as God told him.

Reluctantly he walked through the enemy city warning the people

          to turn back to God, and live His way, or they would be destroyed.

The Ninevites put on sack cloth, prayed for forgiveness, and fasted.

The Ninevites repented, and God forgave the sins of Nineveh,

          and spared their city.

Jonah was disappointed, frustrated and very angry,

For a number of years after Jonah's preaching Nineveh was a changed city.

But not for long.

By Nahum's time, Nineveh had returned to her evil ways.

And God was angry.

About 100 years had passed by, and the people of Nineveh

          had reverted to their old evil ways.

The Ninevites turned away from God again,

          and this time they did not turn back to God.

God sent Nahum to warn the people of Nineveh to change their ways,

          or they, and their great city, would be completely destroyed.

The Assyrian Empire was feared and hated by everyone around them,

          including Judah.

Nineveh, Assyria's capital, had become the symbol of cruel oppression,

          and of lust for wealth and power.

To most people, mighty Nineveh seemed impregnable.

A thick protective wall eight miles long encircled the city.

To reach the wall attackers had to cross a moat 150 feet wide.

Behind those fortifications waited the Assyrian troops known for their cruelty.

Yet Nahum predicted Nineveh's complete downfall.

Assyria was the bully of the Middle East,

          the conqueror of many nations including Israel.

Proud and defiant, Assyria plundered, oppressed, and slaughtered its victims.

Nineveh was the capital of one of the cruelest, vilest, and most powerful nations.

Historical records tell us they cut off the heads of their enemies,

          and stacked their heads into a pyramid in front of the city.

They burned children and women in fires,

          or cut their throats like lambs, stacking their corpses in piles.

It took almost fifty years, but Nahum's predictions came true.

Nineveh did fall, never to rise again.

The greatest city in the world became a pile of rubble overgrown with grass.

And there was great rejoicing among the oppressed nations.

Nineveh was gone, but Nahum's testimony lives on,

          reminding us that although God's justice may seem slow,

          nothing can ultimately escape it.

God is in control, and God is good.

In spite of all the problems, difficulties, dangers around us,

          we can put our trust in God and follow Him.

Abigail and Sydney were both in the 4 th grade and were best friends.

One day Abigail's mother invited Sydney to have dinner with the family.

When Sydney arrived, Abigail's mother asked if she liked broccoli.

"Oh, yes, I love broccoli," Sydney said.

But when the dishes were passed around,

          Abigail's mother noticed Sydney did not take any broccoli.

"I thought you loved broccoli," she said.

"I do love broccoli, very much," answered Sydney. “But not enough to eat it.”

The Ninevites at one time claimed to love God very much.

But they did not love God enough to obey Him,

          or to follow Him, or to live His way.

God tells us to love one another, to love our neighbor,

          to love the stranger among us, and to love even our enemies.

But the question is:

          Do we love them enough to help them and to care for them?

For a short time, the Ninevites followed God's way.

They claimed to love and trust God.

But they did not love Him for very long.

Soon, they returned to their evil way of life.

God wants us to love Him always.

He wants us to love Him enough to trust and obey Him.

He wants us to love Him each day.

He wants to love him enough to help each other, every day.

And when we do, we discover a whole new way of living.

Life becomes more interesting, and exciting, and satisfying.

God has promised to be with us always, helping us, guiding us, protecting us.

Troubles and storms will be with us always.

But storms will come to an end, and troubles will eventually fade away.

God will be with us and lead us through the tough times.

Because He loves us.

Because He loves each one of us enough to take of us.

Always.

AMEN