**Sunday, February 14th, 2021**

**Obadiah 1:17-21**

The Colonel joyfully dressed in his uniform.

There was not a speck of dust or a wrinkle in his clothes.

The soldiers had finally managed to finish boot camp

          and he always enjoyed this first inspection of their ranks.

He knew he would find at least one soldier with some type of flaw

          he could point out.

The new soldiers were standing at stiff attention, barely daring to breathe,

          as the Colonel paced down their ranks, studying each man carefully.

Everything went smoothly until the officer stopped in front of one of the men.

The colonel faced the soldier and looked the man up and down.

There were several long moments of absolute silence.

The Colonel was pleased to have finally found someone he could criticize.

Abruptly the Colonel ordered: "Button that pocket, soldier!"

Sweat broke out on the man's forehead as he stammered: "Right now, Sir?"

"Of course right now!" yelled the Colonel.

With shaking hands the soldier very carefully reached out

          and buttoned the flap on the colonel's shirt pocket.

There was absolute silence as the soldier stood at attention again.

Angry and embarrassed, the colonel marched

          through the rest of the inspection without another word.

We so often see the mistakes of others, but miss our own.

The prophet Obadiah was given a message of doom for the nation of Edom,

          and a message of hope for the future for Judah.

Although Edom and Judah were two tribes of Israel,

          they did not get along with each other at all.

God was angry with the actions of the Edomites against Judah.

Through Obadiah, the Lord God declared:

          Because of the violence against your brother Jacob,

          you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever.

On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth

          and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem,

          you were like one of them.

You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune,

          nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction,

          nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.

You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster,

          nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster,

          nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster.

You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives,

          nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.

The day of the Lord is near for all nations.

          As you have done, it will be done to you.

          Your deeds will return upon your own head.

The tribe of Edom was so consumed with the hatred

          they had against the tribe of Jacob,

          they ignored the fact that they were family.

They were actually pleased to learn that Israel had fallen on tough times.

They had acted with violence toward their brother.

They stood aside and did nothing to help

          when the tribe of Jacob was attacked.

They gloated and rejoiced over their misfortune.

They even looted their goods.

They not only offered no help, they even turned people over to the Babylonians.

God expected the Edomites to care about those of the tribe of Judah.

God expected them to help the tribe of Judah.

Instead, the Edomites sat and watched as their relatives were being killed,

          and taken captive.

They offered no help at all.

They stood and watched the Babylonians kill, steal, and destroy,

          without doing a thing to help.

God was angry and told the tribe of Edom they would finally be destroyed,

          because they did not help but mocked the tribe of Judah.

After Cain killed Abel, he asked God

“Am I my brother's keeper?”

The answer was a very definite "Yes!"

And that answer is still God's answer to us.

We are still our brother's and sister's keeper.

Since we all have the same Heavenly Father, we are all family.

And God expects us to help each member of His family,

          in any way we can.

God does offer us forgiveness, but that forgiveness comes with a high price,

          the death of Jesus on the cross.

We are not to ignore the problems of others.

We are not to rejoice in their troubles or difficulties.

God expects us to help them in any way we can.

God wants us to love and help our neighbor,

          not criticize, or harm, or ignore, our neighbor.

And He especially does not want us to gloat, or rejoice,

          over their troubles.

The prophet Obadiah made it very clear:

          we are not to stand idly by while our neighbors suffer.

We are to love and help our neighbors –

          even when we really do not like them very much.

This is, after all, our Father's world.

We are to live the way he taught us.

And the Lord offered Judah a message of hope for the future.

In spite of their slavery and great difficulties, in time they would be free.

The day would come when they were not captives of a foreign nation.

They would return to their homeland.

Obadiah ends with these words, "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

Actually, the whole universe belongs to our Heavenly Father.

Although we live in a world with so many problems and difficulties,

          we can trust God to watch over us

          and lead us through the tough times.

He loves us always.

We are his family.

AMEN