



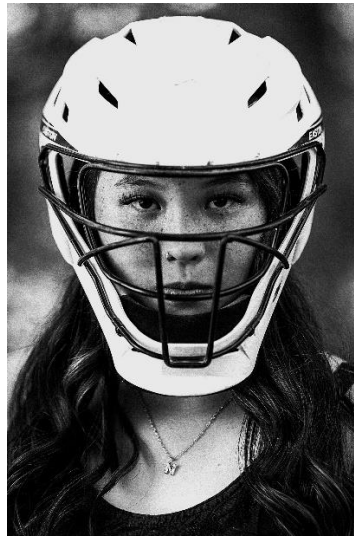
Nahum – Take Refuge!

Minor Prophets #4 • August 3, 2025

Opening

Fashion question (for a friend): which goes best with a purple prom dress? A catcher's mitt...or a catcher's mask?

(Show pictures of Kylee)



This is my neighbor, Kylee. She's going to be a senior this year, and recently she had her senior pictures taken. The portraits included the usual pictures by the lake, illuminated by a beautiful sunset, showing Kylee in typical “teenage girl” outfits and poses.

But then there were photos like these.

Why? Well, in addition to being just a girl in high school, Kylee is also an avid softball player. She has played catcher on various teams over the years, and the sport is such a big part of her life that she wanted to include it in her senior year photos.

(I'm partial to the mitt, FYI)

What Kylee did in her photos is not unusual. Many seniors try to find a few different items or looks or styles that capture their personality more than a single school photo might show. Whether the portrait connects to an old

truck they fixed up, or a guitar they love to play, or a pet they've had since kindergarten, the senior pictures feature looks and interests you otherwise might not have imagined. They show different sides of the same person, highlighting his or her personality and character.

And that's great! Because seniors (just like you... just like me) have several different sides to their personality and nature. We are complex! We have many interests! We have many qualities that, at first glance, do not seem to fit well together. But the combinations are unique and beautiful in their own way.

The reason we are so varied is because we are reflecting God's nature in our own. God himself is complex!



“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10, NKJV)

That phrase, “manifold grace,” always threw me off. The only time I had ever heard the word “manifold” was in connection with cars (e.g. “exhaust manifold”)! But now I get it.

Think of “manifold” simply meaning “many-folded,” or “multifaceted.” “Manifold” just means there are many different sides to God.

The variety of gifts we have (from teaching to hospitality to service to leadership) all reflect a unique facet of God's personality and nature.

Scripture shows us many of these facets in the different books of the Bible. The Bible doesn't include a lot of original photographs (nor senior pictures), but it does try to show different sides of God in His “manifold grace.” 66 different books in the Bible provide testimony about Him...in complementary but distinct ways!

- In Genesis, we find a **creative** portrayal of God
- In Proverbs, we find a **wise** portrayal of God
- In Acts, we find a **mission-focused** portrayal of God

The manifold grace can look like any of those pictures...

...or **it could like Nahum**. Take a listen to this portrayal of God:



“The Lord is a jealous God, filled with vengeance and rage. He takes revenge on all who oppose him and continues to rage against his enemies! The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he

never lets the guilty go unpunished. He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet. At his command the oceans dry up, and the rivers disappear. The lush pastures of Bashan and Carmel fade, and the green forests of Lebanon wither. In his presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed. Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence. The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him. But he will sweep away his enemies in an overwhelming flood. He will pursue his foes into the darkness of night.” (Nahum 1:2–8, NLT)

Phew! This is a side of God that might require a bit of work to understand! But that’s okay. We’re equipped and experienced looking at books like this!

Recap



Nahum is this week’s Minor Prophet. In our summer sermon series, we have been exploring through **a selection of** these short, prophetic books...because they really matter! They help us hear not just *about* God...but *from* Him!

We spent a week looking at Obadiah, then we spent two weeks looking at Jonah...and today, we’ll cover the short book of Nahum.

Nahum presents a side of God we might struggle to understand. **It’s the catcher’s mask paired with the prom dress.** It’s unending love paired jealous wrath.

“Those things don’t go together,” we might protest.

True. Except they do. They absolutely do!

Like Kylee’s softball/prom mashup, the picture of God as an overwhelming avenger does fit with the picture of Him as a loving father. Both are equally good and perfect sides of God...if we would just understand them properly.

In our exploration of Nahum today, you will find a portrayal of God that might challenge your ideas about Him. But take the challenge! Do your best to understand this good and perfect portrayal of God...because this is part of who He is!



A City Bent on Evil

To understand this side of God in Nahum, we need to start like we start any piece of literature – by getting our bearings in the text. And Nahum is both familiar and unfamiliar.



“This message concerning Nineveh came as a vision to Nahum, who lived in Elkosh.” (Nahum 1:1, NLT)

Like our other Minor Prophets, Nahum comes without a lot of personal backstory. His name is Nahum (which, compared to his harsh message, ironically means “compassion”), and he is from Elkosh – a village location which has been lost to us over time, but likely was in the nation of Judah.

While the author’s backstory is uncertain, the time in which he wrote is more defined. The text references two events which have verifiable dates. Nahum was written between 663 BC and 612 BC – **after** the destruction of the Egyptian city of Thebes (Nahum 3:8ff) and **before** the destruction of another city you might recognize: Nineveh.

Because this message is directed at Nineveh. Again.



If you were here for the past two sermons, you know about Nineveh. Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire, was the recipient of a message from God in the book of Jonah. God had threatened it with judgment for its inhabitants’ wickedness, their violence, and their brutality... yet when Jonah shared a message of judgment, this city of 120,000 people repented! God offered mercy to them by relenting in their punishment.

That was nearly 150 years ago, though. And a lot can change in 150 years!

Whatever repentance had occurred, Nineveh’s penchant for evil never fully left. By the time of Nahum’s prophecy, Nineveh’s wicked ways had grown back stronger than ever and she was **a city bent on evil**.



Recognizing Evil

When I say, “a city bent on evil,” I’m not being dramatic. I’m speaking truth.

I had a conversation this week with a family that was facing some challenges related to childcare. They were opposed to some of the lifestyles of people who work at the facility. They didn’t like the influences that were being allowed, and they said, flat out: “It’s evil.”

We continued our conversation, but I was thinking about that statement later. It struck me how awkward that word sounded in normal, polite conversation.



“Evil” might be mentioned in some conversations, but mostly it is a label for big, society-level issues (an “evil” terrorist group; the “evil” of abortion). “Evil” is a concept for horror movies and video games (“The Evil Dead;” “Resident Evil”). If it is applied individuals, it is usually reserved for acts of depravity that are uncommonly bad (an “evil” serial killer; an “evil” child abuser).



But the word is rarely uttered and applied seriously to people around us. To our neighbors. To our spouses. To our friends. We are conditioned by culture “not to judge.” We are supposed to be supportive and positive about the people around us. And if we call a person (or that person’s action, or that person’s belief) “evil,” then we are out of line.

It seems insulting to call someone “evil” to their face. It is offensive!

Yet, there is real “evil” that we must honestly identify. Evil is defined as **“spiritual corruption”** and **“opposition to God’s will and God’s righteousness/goodness/holiness.”**

Evil exists. Its corrupt beliefs and behaviors can be shocking. Evil can be gruesome. Evil can be systemic. Evil can be a spiritual attack.

But evil can also be pedestrian. Mundane. Accepted. Even celebrated. Its corruption can be subtle. Its opposition can be passive.

Evil doesn’t always come wearing a demon mask or emblazoned with a pentagram. Nevertheless, wickedness is present. We must recognize evil in all its forms, wherever we find it.

We must see it present at the level of our own hearts and choices.



- **If I choose to put my own needs above God’s plans, that is evil.**

- Putting my own **sexual needs** above God’s plan? Evil.
- Putting my own **parenting needs** above His plan? Evil.
- Putting my own **freedom** above His plan? Evil.



- **If I choose to view issues differently than God does, that is evil.**

- Making up my own **definitions** of God? Evil.
- Making **declarations** contrary to God’s Word? Evil.
- Making **predictions** opposite of God’s promises? Evil.

Evil is certainly out there – for “those people.”



“They know God’s justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.” (Romans 1:32, NLT)

But evil also lingers inside each and every one of us.

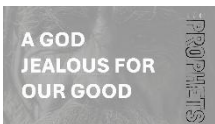


“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:19, ESV)

Each of us has been twisted by sin, missing the mark, and making “evil” part of our experience.

Church, if we are going to understand the facets of God described in Nahum, we need to have a better sense of evil’s prevalence. We can’t **sugarcoat our rebellion** or assume it only **applies to others** or think that it is **mostly harmless**.

Evil is here. In our hearts. It is bad. And it needs to be confronted.



A God Jealous for Our Good

So, God confronts it.

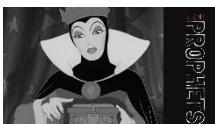
Nahum is given a message from God that highlights an attribute or facet of God’s character we are sometimes nervous to discuss – His **jealousy**.



“The Lord is a jealous God, filled with vengeance and rage. He takes revenge on all who oppose him and continues to rage against his enemies!” (Nahum 1:2, NLT)

Raise your hand if this seems weird – to call God “jealous?” (Anyone?)

It *should* sound weird.



When I think of “jealousy,” I think about classic Disney villains: the Evil Queen in Snow White (who wanted Snow White’s beauty), Scar in the Lion King (who wanted his brother’s kingdom), Randall in Monsters, Inc (who wanted his coworker’s top ranking at work). These characters saw something in another person’s situation that they wanted but couldn’t have. And they would do anything to get it!

We should never think of jealousy (in relation to God) as that same emotion. The “jealousy” describing Him is nothing like “envy.” It is nothing so petty.

No, God’s jealousy is a zeal to have us recognize what is best; to not allow us to settle for something lesser. It is rooted in His being! Since He is the source and the pinnacle of all good, a jealous God won’t let us settle for or follow a cheap knock-off. He wants us to have the best... and the best is Him!



“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols.” (Isaiah 42:8, NLT)

It is this godly jealousy – where He does things (as we sang earlier) that are “for His glory and my good” – that necessarily and logically prompts His wrath.



Several years ago, I had a call from a friend who was battling alcoholism. He asked me to come over and take him to rehab. I said, “Absolutely,” and headed right over. But as I walked into the house, he was regretting the call he made to me.

He didn’t really want to go. Not yet. He just needed one more drink before he went – after all, that would be the last one.

I said no. He laughed and changed the subject, stalling for time. But I encouraged him to get his bag and get in the car.

He tried to head to the kitchen. I blocked his way to the cabinet. I stood firm in the face of his irritation and anger. I finally got him to step out of the house and into the car, with him bargaining to have me stop on the way to grab one last shot.

I didn’t stop. I got him to rehab and in the door where the professionals took over. It was a great moment – the start of a big change. He turned things around after that! I’m really proud of who he became!

But if my persistence and deflection didn’t work, what would be the logical next step? If I needed him to choose what was better (sobriety), what would need to happen?

Suddenly, wrath seems appropriate! Pour the whiskey down the sink. Smash the bottle of vodka. Destroy the enemy in a long-neck bottle! Take away the idol that he is trusting. Because only when the evil he wanted was gone would he find his way to what he truly needed!

Does it make sense now? God is jealous for us – He knows that He alone is what we need. And if we put our hope elsewhere, He might have to destroy that false hope to push us to the place where something better is.

Where *He* is.

God is patient and “slow to anger” (remember, he waited 150 years between Jonah and Nahum), but sometimes His rage against evil must be revealed... and when it is, it is awe-inspiring!



In Nahum 1:3-6, God showcases His power over nature – over the storm, the sea, the mountains, the world! He flips almost every expectation:

- The clouds, including storms and tornados (above, impressive) are simply the dust of his feet (below, insignificant)
- The sea, an endless supply of water, can dry up at his word
- The pinnacle of agricultural abundance (Bashan, Carmel, Lebanon) withers to nothing
- Sturdy mountains quake and melt, the steady earth heaves

And in the face of that power:



“Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence.” (Nahum 1:6, NLT)

If his fury is like fire and the rocks are thrown down by Him, what chance can an evil city have if God has set himself against her?! What chance can a Tonganoxie soccer mom have? What chance can a blue-collar electrician have? What chance does an ornery teenager have? What chance does a retired octogenarian have?

While God may be slow to reach the point where He reveals this side of himself, it is there...and it is fearsome to behold. When He chooses to avenge, He cannot be opposed. He may relent, but He cannot be stopped.



A Refuge in His Rage

The righteously wrathful side of God’s character is no joke. It is powerfully displayed throughout the rest of Nahum’s message.

In chapters 2 and 3, Nahum shares how God will pour out judgment on Nineveh. Using sharp poetry, sarcastic taunts, and harsh analogies, Nineveh’s defeat is made certain. God says, “*You’re done. Your gods are done. I’m putting you in the grave!*” He shares about their fate, as well as the moral failures which have led to their imminent downfall. God chooses to make Nineveh a “spectacle” – something that others will look at in horror because of the shame heaped upon her.



In 612 BC, the predictions shared by Nahum will come true. God will eventually use the combined forces of the Babylonians and the Medes to defeat Assyria. In that year, King Nabopolassar of Babylon will breach the walls as part of a ten-week siege. The defeat will be total...so total, that for centuries no one will live there, and its ruins will crumble beneath the sands!

If we had more time, we could explore more of Nahum’s writing, because he writes some fascinating material to show the “jealous” facet of God’s character.

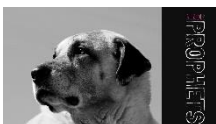
But you can’t leave today without catching one other facet. In the midst of Nahum’s portrait of God’s vengeance against evil, we find this verse:



“The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him.” (Nahum 1:7, NLT)

Verse seven stands out like a **catcher’s mask with a prom dress** against the rest of the chapter. God is a **scary, terrifying** force... yet he is also a **refuge** in time of trouble.

Both **can** be true.



A few years ago, we had a big dog named Tank. Got him from a place that didn’t share as much of his background as we should have known! He was an Anatolian Shepherd, over a hundred pounds with a strong jaw.

When strangers were around, Tank was a **scary force** to be reckoned with. Yet with us, he was a cuddly and loveable bundle of allergies! He would lay on the ground by your feet, waiting for tummy rubs!

What was the deciding factor in whether we could feel safe or troubled around a dog like Tank? What is the deciding factor in whether we can feel safe or troubled around our powerful Yahweh God?



Relationship. Our dog knew us. He loved us.

The same is true with God. **Relationship** makes all the difference.

Those who trust and obey God find themselves in the eye of his storm. His power and fury are real when directed against evil. But He knows those who put their hope in Him!



“But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3, NLT)

When you acknowledge your sin, when you believe in Jesus as your Savior, when you confess Him as your Lord, when you demonstrate obedience in baptism, you put yourself in a new kind of relationship with God. It is the kind of relationship where you fear less during displays of God’s wrath...where you can safely declare:



“Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by.” (Psalm 57:1, NLT)

Closing

For those who don’t have that relationship, God’s jealous wrath is a frightful thing!

For those who do, God’s rage against evil will still happen, but you will find refuge in Him!

Rage and refuge may not seem like they fit together. But they are both facets of God’s character. They are the catcher’s mask and the prom dress.

Nahum shows us both sides, together, in this book. He wrote it for Nineveh, but it’s not limited to a moment in history. This is truth to experience, now!



- I want you to know the jealous wrath of God as He destroys anything and everything that stands in the way of what is best for you. I want you to recognize the evil that creeps into your life, and I want you to give it over to Him for destruction.
- But I always want you to know the powerful protection of God as He becomes your refuge in the storm. I want him to be your Rock...your Shield...your Fortress...your Hiding Place. I want you to have the kind of relationship with Him - with Jesus - that makes you rejoice in both facets of his character!

Invitation



If you don't have the kind of relationship yet, we invite you to start it today. Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins – he faced the full wrath of God and bore the penalty for your sin so you could have that relationship.

You might not be ready to accept Him as your Savior and Lord yet, but His actions should be enough for you to give it some thought.

If you are interested in learning more, in starting that conversation, then I invite you to write your name on the connection card in your bulletin (or send me an email – steve@tongiecc.org) and say, “I want to know more about the God who jealously wants what is best for me!”

I'd love to have that conversation with you.

Give it some thought during our time of invitation.

Let me pray, then we'll stand and sing.



Prayer

Sermon Notes

1 Peter 4:10; Nahum 1:2-8

A City Bent on Evil

(Nahum 1:1)

Recognizing Evil (Romans 1:32; Romans 7:19)

A God Jealous for Our Good

(Nahum 1:2; Isaiah 42:8; Nahum 1:6)

A Refuge in His Rage

(Nahum 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Psalm 57:1)

Sermon Discussion Questions

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- What is the first evil you wish God would remove from this world? What would be your reaction if it were suddenly gone?

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- Read 1 Peter 4:10. What are some different facets of God’s character and personality? Discuss different Bible books/stories and which facet of His character is shown most prominently in each.
- Nahum addresses the city of Nineveh. What kinds of evil were found in the city? Consult a study Bible for more information on it.
- How do you define “evil”? Do you use it in your everyday speech? If so, do you apply it more to big, society-level issues or to individuals around you?
- Read Romans 7:19. What types of evil are still part of your character? How does God work to remove that evil from you?
- Read Nahum 1:2. God is “jealous” because He won’t allow us to settle for something less than Him (aka anything else!). How is this type of jealousy different than “envy”?
- Read Nahum 1:2-8. Describe the type of power God displays here. Does this make God dangerous? Explain.
- Why does a relationship with God change whether we feel threatened by His power or not?
- How has God been a refuge to you in times of trouble?
- How can you lean on Him more than you do currently?

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Pray Psalm 57:1 as your prayer and personalize it!
“Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by.” (Psalm 57:1, NLT)