



SPRING-TIME DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

May 25, 2023



Photo: Our Daily Bread

GRANDMOTHER RESEARCH

He will take great delight in you.

Zephaniah 3:17

READ Zephaniah 3:17 - 20

Researchers at Emory University used MRI scans to study the brains of grandmothers. They measured empathetic responses to images that included their own grandchild, their own adult child, and one anonymous child. The study showed that grandmothers have a higher empathy toward their own grandchild than even their own adult child. This is attributed to what they call the “cute factor”—their own grandchild being more “adorable” than the adult.

Before we say, “Well, duh!” we might consider the words of James Rilling, who conducted the study: “If their grandchild is smiling, [the grandmother is] feeling the child’s joy. And if their grandchild is crying, they’re feeling the child’s pain and distress.”

One prophet paints an “MRI image” of God’s feelings as He looks upon His people: “He will take great delight in you; in his love he will . . . rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17). Some translate this to say, “You will make His heart full of joy, and He will sing loudly.” Like an empathetic grandmother, God feels our pain: “In all their distress he too was distressed” (Isaiah 63:9), and He feels our joy: “The Lord takes delight in his people” (Psalm 149:4).

When we feel discouraged, it’s good to remember that God has real feelings for us. He’s not a cold, far away God, but One who loves and delights in us. It’s time to draw close to Him, feel His smile—and listen to His singing.

By Kenneth Petersen

PRAY & REFLECT

Dear God, help me to feel Your smile upon me. Amen

How have you felt the pleasure of God? How does this make you feel?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Zephaniah’s message is predominantly one of judgment. Chapter 1 aims this harsh message at the whole world (vv. 2 - 3), but Jerusalem and Judah are singled out for their idolatry (vv. 4 - 6). Zephaniah 2 targets specific nations (vv. 4 - 15), and, again, Judah is included. The prophet calls them a “shameful nation” and makes a heartfelt appeal for them to repent “before the Lord’s fierce anger comes upon [them]” (vv. 1 - 2). In Zephaniah 3:1 - 7, the prophet zeroes in on Jerusalem for its corrupt leadership. But verses 8 - 20 show how God’s eternal hope rises out of the ashes of judgment. “Wait for me,” God says (v. 8). After His judgment is complete, God will enable the people to call upon His name (v. 9). “Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,” He tells them through His prophet. “The Lord has taken away your punishment” (vv. 14 - 15).

– By **Tim Gustafson**

Used with permission