

# Behold, Upon the Mountains

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn in your Bibles to Nahum, chapter 1. Nahum, chapter 1. I'm tempted to do a sword drill, but that would be kind of mean in the book of Nahum.

It's right after Jonah and Micah, near the end of your Old Testament. We're going to be reading from verse 9 to the end of the chapter.

And verse 9 starts out, whatever they plot. And if you look back a verse in the context, you'll see that they is God's enemies, his foes.

Specifically in this context, the Ninevites. Let's read the word of God. Whatever they plot against the Lord, he will bring to an end.

Trouble will not come a second time. They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine. They will be consumed like dry stubble. From you, O Nineveh, has one come forth who plots evil against the Lord and counsels wickedness.

[ 1 : 15 ] This is what the Lord says. Although they have allies and are numerous, they will be cut off and pass away. Although I have afflicted you, O Judah, I will afflict you no more.

Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away. The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh. You will have no descendants to bear your name.

I will destroy the carved images and cast idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile. Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace.

Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you. They will be completely destroyed. Let's listen as God's word is preached.

You've probably heard the saying before, all good things must come to an end, or nothing good lasts forever. That bowl of ice cream that you're eating has to end sometime.

[ 2 : 30 ] That vacation, you know it too, has to come to an end. College will come and go, and you'll have to part ways with friends and lose something of that sweet relationship that you had in that phase of life.

All good things must come to an end. Now, if we think about that saying, as it relates to the Christian, we actually find that God's word teaches us something very different.

For the Christian, all bad things must come to an end. That's a hope that's held out to us in the pages of Scripture. Scripture, the suffering, the hardships, the trials, the evil around us, the sin that yet still remains in us.

All of those painful realities must come to an end. Nahum is going to help us to think in this way this evening. So in our passage, in these verses, we see several painful realities come to an end.

So here's the first one. The schemes of God's enemies. Nahum teaches us the schemes of God's enemies will come to an end.

[ 3 : 44 ] So let's read a portion of our passage again, beginning in verse 9. What do you plot against the Lord? He will make a complete end.

Trouble will not rise up a second time. For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink. They are consumed like stubble fully dried. From you came one who plotted evil against the Lord, a worthless counselor.

Thus says the Lord, though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Now you might be wondering why the verse breakdown in verse 9.

Why are we starting the sermon here in verse 9? You probably don't have an uninspired heading in your Bible at verse 9. It probably seems like it's just part of the flow of thought. But verse 9 does show us something of a transition.

Up until this point, those first eight verses of Nahum, God has been speaking to us in very broad, general terms. And now His attention is focused in.

[ 4 : 50 ] And He begins to address different groupings. We see here these verses. We see the word you, or maybe your translation says they in verse 9.

God has His attention fixed on Nineveh. He is speaking to Nineveh. And we're going to see in our verses this evening that God is going to shift His attention back and forth from Nineveh to Judah. Nineveh, Judah. Your translation perhaps actually helps you a little bit. I'm using the ESV. The ESV is less helpful. It doesn't actually tell us the addressee.

The NIV does. So if you have the NIV, you have some helps with you. When you read that word you, you will see at times it will say you, Judah, or you, Nineveh.

Well, here in verse 9, the you that God is addressing, or the they that God is addressing, is Nineveh. The impending judgment against this capital city, and to a greater extent, all of Assyria.

[ 5 : 53 ] That judgment is certain. This nation who has plotted against the Lord will come to an end. The people of Nineveh won't stand a chance against the wrath of God.

Throughout human history, there have been many great military and political strategists. Some who were strategizing for good.

Some who were strategizing for great evil. Those who were most skilled at strategizing were able to think remarkably clearly.

They were able to predict the moves of their opponents. They were able to prepare for every contingency. Great strategists, whether good leaders or evil leaders, they are laser-focused, driven, intelligent, fearless.

They're able to cast a vision for where they want to go and execute it with precision. That is how Nineveh and the whole nation of Assyria was up until this point.

[ 6 : 59 ] Historians have described different Assyrian kings as brilliant tacticians. They've described their military campaigns as being models of efficiency.

They were always one step ahead of their enemies. They were victorious. They were victorious.

They were conquering. They were ever-expanding their empire. Not long before the oracle of Nahum was written, Assyria had accomplished quite the feat.

They had conquered. They had invaded and defeated Egypt. Thebes had fallen. We read that in Nahum 3.8. It says, Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile?

And then in chapter 3, verse 10, Yet she became an exile. She went into captivity. Well, she, Thebes, had gone into captivity to Assyria. Assyria had defeated them.

That was an impressive defeat to bring them into subjection, to force Egypt to become this vassal nation. So these Assyrian kings, they were brilliant strategists, skillful, able to build an empire with their military might and with their cunning intellect.

[ 8 : 11 ] Now, God describes one of those kings who had done this, who had been so brilliant, in verse 11. He's unnamed, but he's said to be one who plots evil against the Lord.

Now, we have good reason to believe that the king here that God has in mind is Sennacherib. He plotted against the Lord. We see it in Scripture. He gave worthless counsel.

We see that also in Scripture. In 2 Kings, chapters 18 and 19, in those chapters, we read of his invasion into the land of Judah.

He attacked various cities. He took them. He took them, and then he went down to Jerusalem. And he was ready to besiege Jerusalem. And so he sent this delegation of officials, and he sent them to speak to the king of Judah at that time, who was Hezekiah.

And they came to Hezekiah with one message, surrender. And in that message of surrender, Sennacherib defied the Lord. He had them say this, Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

[ 9 : 26 ] No one had been able to withstand the Assyrian army. So the implication was clear. Your God won't deliver you either. Now this is worthless counsel.

This is bad advice calling Hezekiah and the people of Judah to surrender. Now Hezekiah had tried to resolve that situation with diplomacy.

He tried to talk his way out of it. He tried to negotiate peace. He offered tribute to Sennacherib. And listen to the king's reply. Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?

Sennacherib boasted in his might. He boasted in his power. He said, Look, I've outmaneuvered you. I've outstrategized you. We're past the point of negotiations.

He puts himself forward as a model of one who is strategic. Do you know who isn't very strategic? Who isn't thinking very clearly?

[10:31] Who isn't focused? A drunkard. A drunkard stumbles around. A drunkard slurs his words. A drunkard only has on his mind another drink.

A drunkard is the opposite of a skilled military strategist. A drunkard is confused and disoriented. And so too are entangled thorns.

Entangled thorns are jumbled up. They're good for nothing. They're ready to be destroyed by fire. See, these images of Nineveh would be hard for the people of Judah to fathom.

Nineveh? Nineveh, with its great and military and mighty kings who could plot and scheme always one step ahead of their enemies? Nineveh, this city, would become completely unraveled like entangled thorns or like a stumbling drunkard?

Quickly brought to an end? Destroyed? Consumed? Like dried stubble? Growing up in California, we couldn't burn anything.

[11:37] You could not burn in California. So I didn't get to burn a Christmas tree until adulthood in Indiana. And that was a shocker to burn a Christmas tree. That thing went up in flames so fast and so ferociously I had a tree that overhung our burn pit.

And I feared greatly that I was about to set this tree on fire. It just whoosh up in flames. You can picture that completely dried stubble ready to be burned.

The Lord is saying Nineveh will come to a quick end. They'll be powerless to stop God. They will be like tangled thorns and drunkards staggering about.

They'll be destroyed in a moment with no ability, no time to strategically react. So these words would have been very surprising to God's people.

Nahum was not prophesying at a time when Assyria's power was waning. It wasn't like Assyria was beaten down, ready to crumble.

[12:43] It was just going to be the straw that broke the camel's back. No, Assyria was at full strength and many, says verse 12. So humanly speaking, there was no reason to believe that the empire would fall any time soon.

It would have been easy to look at the size and the strength of Assyria and to say, really, Nahum? God's going to wipe out this nation? But isn't that how God so often works?

The mighty in their pride are brought low. The plans of men who are wise in their own eyes, no matter how well crafted those plans may be, when God determines to bring them to an end, they come to an end.

Job 12, beginning in verse 23, says this, He makes nations great and He destroys them. He enlarges nations and leads them away.

He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a trackless waste. They grope in the dark without light and He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

[14:01] So the fate of Sennacherib, it foreshadowed the fate of the entire Assyrian nation. Sennacherib had plotted against the Lord.

And what happened to him back in 2 Kings? The Lord brought swift judgment. In one night, 185,000 of Sennacherib's troops were completely killed by the angel of the Lord.

And so Sennacherib, instead of besieging Jerusalem, taking Jerusalem, he flees back to Assyria. He goes to Nineveh, of all places. And what happens to him in Nineveh?

His sons kill him while he's worshipping in his temple. He was like one entangled in thorns. He was like a drunkard, quickly consumed like dry stubble.

So though the wicked plot, though the wicked scheme, and there are times that we look upon the actions of those who are opposed to the Lord and we say, they're pretty successful. We can begin to despair as we look on that.

[15:06] Here's the Lord's reminder to us. I will bring them and their plotting to a quick and complete end. They will soon grope in the dark without light.

They will soon stagger about like a drunken man. Because you see here, the wicked are not simply plotting against God's people. The wicked are plotting against the Lord himself.

Think about Sennacherib. Think about his army at Jerusalem's gates scheming to take the city and discounting the city's God. The Lord can't save you.

Don't believe that he can. Those who plot against the people of God are at the same time plotting against God himself. Just as Isaiah said of Sennacherib in 2 Kings 19, verse 22.

Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel.

[16:12] So the Lord is like a mother bear that has been aroused to defend her cubs. What did Nahum already tell us? The Lord is a jealous and avenging God.

God is protective of his people. He's going to defend his people. You seek to hurt them, you are ultimately seeking to hurt the Lord. Those who wrong God's people are seeking to wrong God. But the plans of the wicked will fail because they have set themselves against the Lord of hosts. So now, this is true for the physical enemy nations described to us in the Old Testament, like the nation of Assyria.

This is also true for spiritual enemies as well. Satan schemed against Jesus from the wilderness to the arrest of Christ all through his ministry.

What did Jesus speak of before his arrest that Satan would enter into Judas? So we have the scheming evil one plotting against the Lord and he continues to plot against the Lord and his church today.

[17:26] He continues to spread lies, to try to inject false doctrine into the church that we might, as Ephesians 4 says, be tossed to and fro by the waves, carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

It's why Paul commands us to put on the armor of God in Ephesians chapter 6 to equip ourselves with the defenses, the spiritual resources that God has provided for us so that we might stand firm against the devil's schemes.

So we face trials. We face spiritual battles against Satan. And he opposes us. He opposes the Lord. He is working hard to bring God's people down. But Nahum reminds us, as we look to the physical enemy of Assyria in this oracle, he reminds us, one day, the schemes of God's enemies will cease. They will plan and plot and strategize no more. That's the first painful reality that will come to an end.

[18:40] The schemes of God's enemies. Let's look at the second. The yoke of God's enemies will come to an end. We'll pick up the reading where we left off in the middle of verse 12.

Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more. And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart.

So here in the middle of verse 12, God now shifts his attention from speaking to Nineveh to speaking to the people of Judah. It's the first time in our passage here that God is now directly addressing his people.

And it's a bit surprising how he addresses them. We might expect him to say, Assyria has afflicted you. Your enemy has done harm to you.

But that's not what God says. Not at first. He begins by saying, I have. I have afflicted you. I am the one who has brought this trouble upon you.

[19:47] This was the Lord's loving, needed discipline towards his people. The focus of Nahum's oracle has been on the sins of Nineveh. And we're going to see a lot more of that to come.

But we can't overlook the sins of Israel either. What Israel had suffered at the hands of Assyria was God's doing because God was disciplining Israel who had sinned against him.

Wayward Israel needed to be chastised, chastened. And God's chosen means for this was Assyria. God had afflicted Israel through Assyria.

First, we see it with the northern kingdom. For over 100 years, the kings of Assyria had forced the kings of the northern kingdom to pay tribute. Not like pay tribute like a tribute of a compliment. Not to praise them, though I'm sure they did that. But to actually pay money, the tribute, in order to not be invaded. This was simply one nation exerting its might upon a weaker nation.

[20:54] They were bullying the northern kingdom. Pay up or else. And so the northern kingdom did this for over 100 years until King Hosea decided, we're going to stop.

He said, no, we're not going to pay tribute to Shalmaneser. And it didn't end well for him. This upset the Assyrian king. And so he came and he besieged Samaria.

And after three years, the northern kingdom fell. So that is the reason for this from the human perspective. He had upset the king of Assyria and so the northern kingdom fell.

That's the human perspective. Here's the spiritual perspective behind the scenes. And it's given to us in 2 Kings 18:12. It says, Because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded, they neither listened nor obeyed.

So Israel was afflicted by the Assyrians. The northern kingdom fell. The people of Israel were carried into captivity in Assyria. Not ultimately because King Hosea had upset King Shalmaneser, but because Israel had sinned against God.

[ 22 : 15 ] So God had used Assyria to accomplish his purposes for his people, as painful as those purposes may have been. First with the northern kingdom of Israel and then with the southern kingdom of Judah.

Assyria was the means that God used to discipline his people. As the Lord says in Isaiah 10:5, Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger, the staff in their hand is my fury.

Assyria's staff was the vehicle through which God's fury was released upon his people. Now, unlike the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom did not completely fall to Assyria, but they would still be in a form of bondage to them.

It's true that Sennacherib relented from his siege of Jerusalem, but the Assyrians continued to exert power and authority and dominion over the people of Judah.

And so the southern kingdom was a vassal nation to Assyria. They would regularly pay to Assyria in order to keep Assyria from overtaking them completely.

[ 23 : 31 ] But now here, in verse 13, Nahum is showing us God's discipline of his people, it's going to come to an end. Assyria is going to be conquered.

It's as he says in Isaiah 10, 25, For in a little while, my fury will come to an end, meaning my fury against you, Judah, and my anger will be directed to their destruction, meaning Assyria.

The yoke that God had ordained to be put around Judah's neck would be broken. A day is coming when Nineveh will be destroyed and you, Judah, will be freed from your bondage to them.

Now the words of verse 13 here, they should remind us of Psalm 2, where God's enemies say something very similar about God's dominion over them.

In Psalm 2, God's enemies say, let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. That's God's enemies saying, let's break free from God's rule over us.

[ 24 : 46 ] Let's break free from God's yoke on us. And of course, God's enemies fail. But here, God says to his people, and now I will break his yoke from off of you and will burst your bonds apart, meaning, I'm going to break you free from Assyria.

And of course, this comes to pass, which reminds us that what God sets out to do, no man can stop. He will break the bonds that he decides to break.

But what man sinfully sets out to do stops with God. No man will break the bonds that God decides to fasten. So God binds the shackles of his enemies and he breaks the shackles of his people.

He delivers his people. Now we must see how this points forward and how this points forward to us and God's deliverance of us from an even greater enemy, our sin and the punishment of death that we deserved.

We were once shackled with the yoke of sin around our neck. Titus 3 talks about how we were once slaves to various passions and pleasures.

[ 26 : 08 ] We were held captive by sin. We were living under the crushing burden of it. We were living under the dominion of sin and we deserved condemnation for it.

And yet, we were redeemed. We were brought out of our slavery to sin. The shackles of sin were broken. By whom? The Son.

The Son who sets us free. And so we are free indeed. Bought with his precious blood. Redeemed from a cruel master.

Spared the just sentence of death. So are you a slave to sin this evening? Does sin still have dominion over you?

Are you still being made to obey sin? Here in our passage, God describes the burdensome rule of Assyria as a yoke on the people of Judah.

[ 27 : 09 ] Kids, do you know what a yoke is? A yoke is like this wooden frame that would go on an ox and you would pair a couple oxes together, other animals, and it would keep them from wandering off.

They couldn't just do whatever they wanted because now they had a yoke on them. A yoke would restrain them. They would have to do what the farmer wanted them to do. They would have to obey the farmer as he guided them.

So Judah bore the yoke of Assyria. And if you are not in Christ tonight, you bear the yoke of sin. You are under the mastery of sin, the dominion of sin. But Christ came that he might bear the burden of our sin on the cross, that he might break the yoke from us, and that we might be free from slavery to sin, and that we might then serve a far greater, kinder master.

Jesus said, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[ 28 : 36 ] So come to Christ, even tonight, that you might find freedom from sin in him, and that you might serve a new, gracious master.

sin. Now for the Christian, we are no longer slaves to sin. We are no longer under sin's dominion. Just as God had broken the yoke of Assyria off of the people of Judah, he has broken the yoke off of you if you are in Christ.

So yes, we must still fight against sin, but it's by the power of the Spirit who now lives in us. We who once could do nothing but obey our sinful desires now can overcome sin and live to the glory of God, because sin's power has been broken over you.

We don't answer to its command. We can live to the glory of God. Sin doesn't have dominion over us. Well, that's the second painful reality that must and has for the Christian when it comes to the power of sin come to an end.

the yoke of God's enemies. Let's consider the third together. The line of God's enemies must come to an end. We'll begin reading in verse 14.

[ 29 : 55 ] The Lord has given command about you. No more shall your name be perpetuated from the house of your gods. I will cut off the carved image and the metal image.

I will make your grave for you are vile. the names of the kings of Assyria as they ruled were well known. Assyrian kings boasted in themselves.

And we're going to see that God would not overlook their pride. Isaiah 10 12 says this, When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, meaning when God has finished carrying out his judgment against his discipline of his people in Jerusalem.

Then Isaiah says this, He will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.

So the king of Assyria thought highly of himself. The tool in God's hand boasted in itself and failed to see that it was wielded by God.

[ 31 : 06 ] Kids, have you ever seen a shovel? Dig a hole all by itself. Have you ever seen a rake get a pile of leaves raked up together all by itself?

No, that would be crazy, right? The shovel can't do that. The rake can't do that. How much sillier would it be if the shovel did it and said good job to itself after a job well done?

Good job, rake, for getting all those leaves together. No, that would be crazy. who dug the hole? Was it the shovel or was it you using the shovel?

Who got those leaves together? Was it the rake or was it you using the rake? So should the shovel tell itself good job after you dug that hole?

Should the rake tell itself good job after you got those leaves together? The king of Assyria was acting like a shovel telling itself good job.

[ 32 : 06 ] Listen to what the king of Assyria said about himself in Isaiah 10. By the strength of my hand I have done it and by my wisdom for I have understanding.

I remove the boundaries of peoples and plunder their treasures. Like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. My hand has found a nest the wealth of the peoples and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken so I have gathered all the earth and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped.

What's the king of Assyria saying there? I did whatever I wanted and no one stopped me. I

conquered the peoples. I took their treasures like eggs found in a nest and nobody stopped me.

The mother bird didn't flutter her wings. Her mouth her beak didn't chirp. No one tried to stop. Look how powerful I am.

And now God is saying to the king of Assyria not anymore. You who are so mighty and proud and powerful you're going to be brought to nothing.

[ 33 : 22 ] Verse 14 says the Lord has given commandment about you. No more shall your name be perpetuated. That literally says no more of your name will be sown.

Or your translation might say no more descendants will come from you. You and your line are done buried in the ground to be remembered no more.

And not just the Assyrian kings but their gods too. their objects of worship in their houses of worship would be destroyed. The representative king of Assyria Sennacherib he had mocked the people of Judah saying to them in essence no god has been able to stand up against me.

Your god won't be able to either. And now here in Nahum 1 the tables are turned and Assyria's gods are actually the ones that are shown to be weak and helpless themselves unable to save the people of Assyria from their defeat at the hands of the one true god.

So Nahum's oracle here concerning Nineveh just points forward to a greater reality. All of those who oppose god will be brought to a swift end.

[ 34 : 42 ] Psalm 37 10 in just a little while the wicked will be no more. Though you look carefully at his place he will not be there. Those who hate god will stand before him one day in judgment and they will face his wrath.

And it is a fate that is worse than the grave which is the first death. Revelation says that they will be thrown into the lake of fire which is called the second death.

They will be cast into hell where they are going to endure torment for all of eternity. We have seen tonight three painful realities that must come to an end.

But Nahum isn't quite yet done because one blessed reality will not come to an end. The joyful celebrations of God's people that will never cease.

read with me beginning in verse 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him who brings good news who publishes peace keep your feasts O Judah fulfill your vows for never again shall the worthless pass through you.

[ 36 : 01 ] He is utterly cut off. So the schemes the yoke the line of God's enemies will be no more discontinued cut off brought to an end but not so the joyous celebrations of God's people.

Those will continue. The Lord says to Judah keep your feasts he says fulfill your vows that's just another way of saying continue your patterns of worship life has returned to normal why is that? Why is it that the people of God can continue their worship without hindrance? Because God's enemies have been defeated. You face no more looming threats no more fear of another siege or another attack your enemy has come to an end.

Trouble will not rise a second time. Doesn't trouble always seem to rise a second time in every story involving good and evil? Like the villain is arrested and you already know the villain is going to escape and he's going to find a way to rise up again and cause trouble once more or he's passed out on the ground and you know you should not walk away from him he is going to get back up but they do they walk away from him there's a twist in the story it makes it a that once was that great city there now lies a small village with dilapidated houses and in the same way that Nineveh did not rise up again so too will be the final sure defeat of God's enemies God determines to cut off those who oppose him and it will happen the devil and all of his forces of evil wicked men who rebel against him there will be no twist in this true story he will make a complete end of them how do we know how do we know that that is true because we've heard the good news the picture here in Nahum 1 is of this messenger who is returning from the battlefield and he's running to the city to announce the good news of victory the watchmen who are on the towers looking out they're looking to the mountains and they see the messenger running to them from the mountains and they would hear him crying out good news victory our enemy has fallen the battle is won peace has come we have received good news better news than the defeat of a physical enemy we have heard the good news that Jesus Christ has died for the sins of his people and he's risen again and we who have believed the good news now have peace peace has come peace with God himself we've been made right with him reconciled to him Colossians 1 19 tells us that in

[ 39 : 22 ] Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things we who are in Christ enjoy that peace today and we are going to enjoy it for all of eternity our joyful celebrations will be unending as we gather around the throne that we've already sung of tonight we gather around that throne and we worship God now Nahum tells us that for God's enemies they will have no descendants to bear their names their lineage their name will go to the

grave and it will be forgotten but for the Lord his name will not his name will not be forgotten his name revelation 22 tells us will be written on our foreheads it's going to be plastered on our faces you can't miss it

God will forever be known forever remembered and we who belong to him we will gaze upon him and we will enjoy him and we will glorify him for all of eternity heavenly father we do turn our eyes upon Jesus for in him our souls are satisfied our souls see light and life found only in him father we look forward to the day when you will make all things new when our joys will be never ending and father we do pray even as Paul speaks of in Romans the feet that bring good news that we would have such feet that you would make us to be a people who go from here with good news to share to tell a world that is dying that there is a savior there is a hope for sinners lost and dying that it's only found in Christ we pray father that you would give us those feet that you would give us a joy that is only found in

Christ and that we would look to you and that we would find our hope and our contentment and our peace in you we pray these things in Christ's name amen psalm 37 verses 10 and 11 in just a little while the wicked will be no more though you look carefully at his place he will not be there but the meek shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in abundant peace we are dismissed