**Hillside UMC Sermon Prep Sheet**

***Pastor Chris Neikirk***

**Date: Sunday, June 26, 2016**

**Sermon Title: Summer Sermon Series: *Words of Life***

**Hope in the Midst of Life’s Struggles**

**Scripture: Zephaniah 2:1-3 *(New International Version)***

1 Gather together, gather yourselves together, you shameful nation, 2before the decree takes effect and that day passes like windblown chaff, before the Lord’s fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord’s wrath comes upon you. 3Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger.

**Zephaniah 3:19-20 *(New International Version)***

19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. 20At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the Lord.

**Call to Worship: (8:30 only) – Based on Psalm 71**

Leader:Praise be to the Lord, for he showed me the wonders of his love when I was in a city under siege.

**People: In my alarm I said, “I am cut off from your sight!” Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.**

Leader: Love the Lord, all his faithful people!

**People: The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.**

**All: Praise be to the LORD! Our hope is in our God!**

**Basic Theme: *The Old Testament Prophets were called by God to speak “words of life” to the nation of Israel. Their message was often harsh and blunt as they pointed out the wrongdoings and sins of the people, which would eventually lead to unpleasant consequences. They often communicated the displeasure of God. However, the message was always motivated by love and expressed the desire of God to experience an intimate relationship with his people. Through the prophets, God did not just convey wrath and judgment, but always offered grace and mercy.***

**Sermon Snapshot (Key Points): Our pride will keep us from receiving words of correction and guidance and our stubbornness will hinder our ability to repent and change. Zephaniah sought to shake the people of Israel from their complacency and urge them to return to God. The people were experiencing struggles and some even blamed God. Zephaniah communicated the source of hope in the midst of the struggles of life.**

**So What? How will you receive these “*words of life*?” Will you harden your heart with bitterness and resentment or will you repent and receive the grace and mercy God offers? How will the “*words of life”* of the Old Testament Prophets influence your daily living?**