

Where to Put Your Faith

Habakkuk 2:2-20

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Good morning. Welcome to Christ the King. If we haven't met, my name is Penny, and I'm the senior pastor here, and it is great to be with you. If you are a guest or a visitor, we're glad that you would join us this morning as we come to worship, and our hope, our desire, our prayer, is that we all, not just guests, not just members, but that we would all know more of the love and grace of our Lord Jesus, that through our worship, through our service, that we would grow in what it means to follow Him, and that we would experience the hospitality of God's people. And so, if you are a guest or visitor, that's our desire, that's our hope, that you would know more of Jesus through this time, because He's the one that we are all in need of. He is our only hope, and for salvation for this world, that He is the one that we cling to, and so that is our desire, that He would be lifted up.

Well, this morning, as we come to God's Word, we're looking at Habakkuk chapter 2, so if you have a Bible, you can turn to Habakkuk 2. Habakkuk is, if you were with us last week you'll remember, is a minor prophet. That means it's going to be found in the back half of our Old Testament, right after Nahum, before Zechariah and Zephaniah. It's also, the passage is also found in your pew Bibles or your chair Bible, excuse me, we don't have pews, on page 785, and we project the passage you can follow along there. But Habakkuk, as I mentioned, is a minor prophet, so this doesn't mean that he's not important. Minor prophet simply means it's a smaller letter, right, smaller than Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc. And Habakkuk's ministering to the southern kingdom, so the people of God are divided. There's the northern kingdom and there's the southern kingdom. The southern kingdom, which is called Judah, and he's ministering to them, and he's ministering to them at a time where the world around them, as well as the world within the people of God, is consumed by wickedness and evil. Babylon, or the Chaldeans, is what they're called in Habakkuk. Babylon is getting ready to descend upon Judah and take it off into exile. We heard about that in our study of Daniel. And so Habakkuk sees this, he sees the wickedness, he sees the evil that is being perpetrated around him, and he looks to God, and he asks God, "do you not see what I see? God, are you idle? Will you act?" Right, that's what Habakkuk cried out last week in Habakkuk 1, and he was crying out with honesty, and we took away from that is one of the things that we can do when we are faced with suffering, with difficulty, with pain, is that we too can go to the Lord with honesty, that we can ask him the deep questions of our hearts and the doubts that fill our minds, that he invites us to come.

That was last week. This week, as we turn to Habakkuk 2, God is speaking to Habakkuk. He's responding to Habakkuk's second complaint, which we heard last week. And as he responds, it's calling us, in our pain, in our suffering, in our difficulty, to ask and reflect, "where is our faith? Where do we look in faith to?" With that in mind, let's read Habakkuk 2, beginning in verse 2.

"And the LORD answered me:

Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie.

If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.

Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. "Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His

greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.”

Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long?— and loads himself with pledges!”

Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them.

Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!

You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life.

For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond.

Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!

Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink— you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!

You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the LORD’s right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!

The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies?

For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!

Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise!

Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.

But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”

Friends, this is the word of the Lord. Let me pray for us.

Father, we ask that as we come to your word, that you would meet with us. God, we need your help. Apart from your Spirit, we would be blind to your truth. We would be hardened to your grace. We would be deaf to your word. And so we ask, Lord, work. Move. Unplug our ears, open our eyes, and soften our heart, so that what is said and done in this time would honor and glorify you. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Pilots are trained to trust the instruments and not their senses. This is particularly true when flying through cloud coverage. So, of course, when you're flying through clouds, like, you know, we're, well, some of you are pilots, but the rest of us as passengers, as we're flying through clouds, right, we can't see the mountains below, and we can't see the horizon ahead of us. And if you're a pilot, when you can't see these things, sometimes a thing that's called spatial disorientation takes over. And what this means is that when you're flying through cloud coverage and you can't see anything around you, your body, your senses start to tell

you to do things that are different than the instruments. So, you'll start to feel and think like "I'm supposed to bank", or "I'm supposed to rise", or "I'm supposed to go down." And actually, my friend was telling me that this instinct can be so strong that when they feel the need to turn, or to descend, or to rise, or wherever they're going, and the instruments say the opposite, they assume the instruments are wrong. That in the moment they think the instruments are malfunctioning, and what they are feeling, what they are experiencing - that is what is true. So, can you trust your body? Can you trust your senses? Can you trust your instincts? That's the question that the pilot needs to ask. And my friend told me that oftentimes, when they experience this spatial disorientation, when they come out of the clouds, what they find is that they are much higher than they thought they were. Or they're descending, or they're way off course, or in even extreme situations, they come out of the clouds and they're upside down.

You see, the instrument said one thing, but their senses said another. And they put their faith, their trust, in the wrong thing. They put their faith and trust in what they thought they were experiencing, in what their senses were telling them. And so, these young pilots, they need to be trained to put their faith in their instruments, to put their faith in the right thing. And that's what Habakkuk 2 is helping us with this morning, because we need that help as well. You see, Habakkuk 2 is God responding to Habakkuk's cry in chapter 1. And he's calling Habakkuk, he's calling us to put our faith in the right thing. We see it in verse 4, "Behold, his soul is puffed up." Now, the "he" there that is being referred to is the wicked, right? The wicked Chaldeans, the wicked Babylonians, as well as the wicked people within Israel. They're puffed up, they're arrogant. And God goes on, he is puffed up. "It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. The righteous shall live by his faith."

Where Not to Put Your Faith

And so, what is our faith supposed to be in? Well, that's what Habakkuk 2 is doing. It's helping us to see where we put our faith, by warning us about where not to put our faith, and then telling us where we should. So, we'll begin with where not to put our faith. So, Habakkuk has these warnings in verses 6 through 19. They show up in five woes, five woes. Now, a woe in the Old Testament is a judgment. So, judgment is coming upon these people. So, these five woes, we see it in verses 6, 9, 12, 15, and 19. Each one of those verses begins with a different woe, a woe to him. So, in verses 6 through 8, "woe to those who engage in unjust economic practices." So, these are those people who are plundering or building their financial strength by taking advantage of others. Verses 9 through 11, "woe to those who pursue selfish gain." This is the person taking advantage of the laborer, building their power on the backs of the poor. Verses 12 through 14, "woe to the violent." They bring bloodshed and iniquity to the city. Verses 15 through 17, "woe to those who engage in debauchery and abuse, who use others to satisfy their own sexual appetites." Verses 18 through 19, "woe to the idolatress." He creates his own god and looks to it for help.

So, in each one of these cases, God is saying, woe to these evil and wicked behaviors. Woe to these people who are perpetrating these sinful things. Now, as we hear these, you might be thinking, well, what does this have to do with me? Because I know most of you and I can say with a fair bit of confidence that you are not engaging in financial impropriety and that you're not violent, right? You didn't bring bloodshed to the city this morning on your way into church, right? Nobody. We're good, right? You're not getting drunk. You're not taking advantage of the weak or the needy, right? I know that this is who you are, and so you might be wondering, why do I need to hear this? Why do I need to hear about the woes? And that's

a fair question, so let me give you a couple reasons why. The first is that it's easy to look at the world around us and we see evil, we see wickedness, we see sinful behavior, and they get away with it. And it's easy to think, well, maybe it really does pay. Maybe I really don't need to worry about purity or goodness or pursuing the Lord, because it seems like the wicked and the evil, they get away with it and they live lives full of comfort and prosperity.

I mean, that's what we witness to some degree around us, don't we? That's what Habakkuk was saying, that's what the psalmist saw in Psalm 73. The psalmist said, "I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no pangs until death. They are not in trouble. They are not stricken. They scoff and speak with malice. These are the wicked, always at ease. They increase in riches." And to some degree, that's Habakkuk's complaint. He's looking at the world, he sees evil and wickedness, and nothing is happening to them except for prosperity and comfort and ease. Wickedness grows, and so does their prosperity. But y'all, that's trusting our senses and our perceptions and not reality. Because what God is telling us is, I see what you see. And what he's telling us is that though there may be moments of comfort and moments of ease and days of prosperity, their end is woe. Their end is judgment. You see, God is helping us to see with reality.

And so that's the first reason we need to hear these woes, is so that we would see the world as God sees it, that we would see the world as it truly is. Now, the second reason is that we need to hear this is because though we're not engaging in these extreme versions, we have temptation and propensity to engage in lesser ones. I mean, just think about the last woe. Idolatry. Idolatry. Right now, I don't think any of us are making things out of wood and metal and overlaying them with gold. Right? I don't think that that's a problem for probably most of us, but that is actually something in the world. That is a problem within the world. I mean, and not just in other countries, right? I mean, the last couple of weeks has shown us that there are people in our own country who have no problem building golden statues and praying around it. And so this idolatry is not just out there, it's in our own land. And even we may not be engaging in this extreme behavior directly, but we are indirectly. We fashion for ourselves idols and we store them up in our hearts, those things that are most precious to us. Things like economic security and family stability and the image that we portray to others and the power that we long for and the influence that we desire and our appearance and our intelligence. Any of these things can be idols for us. They can be those things that we cling to and we hold fast to and we serve.

Now, of course, we would never say that we serve these things, right? We know better. We would never serve the image of our bodies, but our behavior betrays us, doesn't it? We would never serve our finances, but our behavior betrays us. We would never serve the image that we are cultivating and that we are putting forth before others, but our social media feeds betray us. Right? We do these things as well. We hold on to these idols, we cling to them, we serve to them, we put our faith in them, and what God is saying is that is not the way of life. That is not the way of life. That is the way that leads to woe. And so God brings us out of the clouds. He brings us out of the clouds and he shows us not just where not to put our faith, but where we are to put our faith.

Where to Put Your Faith

And where are we to put our faith? Well, of course, we're to put our faith in him, right? "The righteous shall live by his faith, and the righteous puts their faith in the Lord." And we're told why we're to put our faith in the Lord. It's because his plan is sure.

a) His Plan Is Sure

That's how our passage begins, right? Write this vision. Make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. And so what we're hearing is that God has made a plan. He has a way. He sees the evil. He sees the injustice, and he's going to bring it to an end. It will come. And he is not delayed in his coming. I love that he says, he says, "there may be a time where you think that I'm delayed." Where you think that I forgot. Like, did you notice that? He said that. That might happen. You might think I'm slow. But in those moments, don't, don't think that. Right? Like, he's helping us. He knows the propensity for our hearts. Because we want God to act, not just when he wants to act, but when we want him to. And we believe when he doesn't act the way we want him to, that he must be delayed. He must be slow. He must have forgotten. But God is telling us no. That he will come at just the right time.

You see, when we perceive that he is slow, we are like that pilot trusting our senses. But God is saying we can have faith in him because his plan is sure. He will bring judgment against evil and wickedness. He will remedy sadness and pain at the appointed time. Every time the Bible talks about God's timing, his appointed time, the fullness of time, that sort of language, I always think of what Gandalf said to Frodo. He said, "a wizard is never late, Frodo. Nor is he early. He always arrives at precisely the right time." Y'all, God isn't early, and he isn't late, and he isn't delayed. At just the right time, he will bring woe on evil. And he's promising this so that we can run. Right? That's what he said. Did you see that? Write the vision down. Make it plain so he may run who reads it. So that we can run. This means so that we can remain in his ways. That we can run in his ways. That we can walk in his ways. That we can follow and trust him. He's given us this. This assurance that his plan is sure so that our faith would be in him.

b) His Glory Is Extensive

And we put our faith in him because his glory is extensive. Did you see it in verse 14? "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge and the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The glory of God will fill the earth. God's glory filling the earth. What that means is that his truth and his beauty, his goodness and righteousness, those things that Habakkuk and we long to behold, that those things will reign throughout the earth. Every part of the world. North America and Africa and Australia and Asia, right? And Europe. Every part of the world will be filled with the glory of God. That is what he's promising us. And what's amazing is that that glory spreading into the world has already begun. Because we know that at just the right time, at the fullness of time, that's how Galatians 4 speaks of it, God sent forth his son who was born of woman and he sent him to live under the law to redeem those who are under the law. You see when the fullness of time had come, Jesus came and inaugurated the kingdom of God. And he declared that he would one day return and when he returns he will consummate the kingdom of God and God's glory will come in full. The glory of God filling the earth is another way of saying his kingdom comes. His will will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. God is telling us put our faith in him because he will wipe away evil and suffering forever. It's the picture of Habakkuk but it's also the picture of revelation. Because in chapter 21 we're told of this beautiful coming of Jesus when the kingdom will be consummated and every tear will be wiped away and death will be no more and there will be no more crying nor mourning nor pain. All will have passed away. That is the glory of the Lord filling the earth.

Y'all can you imagine that? Can you imagine that? A day when greed will be replaced with generosity. A moment when selfishness will give way to service. A place where the violent will be wiped away and only peace will remain. A world where licentiousness will be blown away like the mist and purity will take its place. A time when idols will be shattered and the true worship of God will last forever. That is the knowledge and the glory of the Lord filling the earth and that is what God has promised us. That is what he's telling us. Do not trust what you see in this world instead trust and put your faith in him. Put your faith in him because his plan is sure, because his glory is extensive, and because his word is true.

c) His Word Is True

Our passage ends. "The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him." Now this final statement is made in contrast to what is said about the idols. In verses 18 and 19 right what are idols? They are teachers of lies. They are the creation of man. They have no breath. In other words they are lifeless and dead but God. But God sits in his holy temple. That means that he is sitting in the place of power, the place of rule, and he speaks from that place. That's the implication of let all the earth keep silence before him. He's saying y'all it's time to be quiet and it's time to listen not to the idols that can't even speak but instead to listen to the Lord. He is saying we are to be silent and hear the living God and what he says is don't put your faith in the things of this world. Do not put your faith in yourself. Do not put your faith in your flesh. No hear his true word whether you are flying through the clouds or you are in clear skies. Our faith is to rest in him. That that is where we place our faith. That is what he is declaring. The idols are silent. They are dead but the living God calls us put your faith in him because his plan is sure. Because his glory is extensive. Because his word is true.

Friends, the clouds have parted and we trust in the Lord. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father we thank you that your word is true and that you have revealed it to us. We thank you that the plan that you have put forth to bring salvation and bring an end to evil it is sure it will come about. You have begun it and it will be consummated and so we thank you and put our trust in you. We turn in faith to you clinging to you and not the idols of our hearts or this world. We turn our gaze to Jesus knowing that he is the one who will spread your glory throughout all the earth and so father we ask help us. Help us to trust you. Help us to have faith in your true and abiding word. We pray that you would meet with us and lead us in this way so that we would run and follow you and we pray all this in Christ's name and God's people said together, Amen.