

2015 Summer Sermon Series
July 26, 2015
Habakkuk (Selected verses)

Habakkuk – The Prophet Who Questions God

How many of you have ever questioned God? Look at the events from the last couple of weeks. A gunman killed 2 people and wounded at least nine others in a movie theater in Louisiana. Think about those people who went to a movie theater for a night to go out and relax. In a moment, everything changed. They did nothing wrong. Why does God let things like that happen? Think of the people who have had to flee their homes, hotels, vacations because of forest fires in California and Montana. A little over a week ago, I drove some of the roads that have fires near them in Glacier National Park. Why does God let it happen? Why doesn't he just send a dump of rainfall? Look at the violence that has been going on here in Milwaukee. Multiple people gunned down in different places in Milwaukee. 88 people have lost their lives in homicides. Why doesn't God just put a stop to the violence? Why does God let bad things happen to good people? Why do the wicked prosper? When you look at your own life, not the lives of people out there in the world, do you ever question God? Habakkuk does.

When you read the words of Habakkuk, it seems that he is talking about our world as much as he is talking about his. ² **How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?** ³ **Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.** As we continue to take a look at the Minor Prophets, let us look at the answer that God gives to **"Habakkuk, the Prophet Who Questions God."**

Who is Habakkuk? Who is this prophet who is questioning God? We don't know much about him. His book is described in the first verse of the book. **"The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received."** He was a prophet of God who received a special revelation from God. That's it. We don't know where he lived. We don't know anything about his family. What is clear is that he is given a unique opportunity to question God.

The book is only 3 chapters long, 56 verses. As you read these verses, Habakkuk doesn't just seem to complain to God, but he also complains about God. He is questioning God as to why he seems to be just sitting back and doing nothing about all the evil that is going on around in Judah and going on in the world. The northern tribes of Israel have been punished because of their sin and rejection of God. They have been destroyed. It is just as bad in the southern tribes of Judah. Yet, God doesn't seem to be doing anything about it. Violence is everywhere. The legal system is a mess. The wicked were prospering. The good people are suffering. Habakkuk simply wants to know: *"Why are you not doing anything Lord? Why are you not listening to me?"*

If you didn't know that these questions were coming from the mouth of Habakkuk, you might think they are coming out of the mouth of someone in 2015. **"How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong?"** After all, Habakkuk knows that God hates sin and injustice and all evil. He is waiting for God to do something. He waits and nothing happens.

Waiting is hard isn't it? When we want something, we want it now. We are impatient people. In some ways, our culture has trained us to be impatient. We expect fast food places to be "fast." We save time by looking up something online. We put buy things on credit, and pay for it later. I want the medicine from the doctor to work now. Who hasn't been in the car with children who seem to ask every 5 minutes – *"Are we there, yet."* It was hard for Habakkuk to wait.

God hears Habakkuk's complaint. He listens and replies. **"Look at the nations and watch — and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."** Picture Habakkuk hearing those words. *Yes, God is finally going to do something!* Then he continues: **"I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor."** *What? God is going to send someone who is more evil than what we have now?*

Habakkuk knows that God is God, and he has every right to do what he decides to do. **“O Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O Lord, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.”** The wicked people in Israel deserve to get punished. But as bad as the people of Israel were, they didn’t deserve to be conquered by the evil Babylonians. The way Habakkuk saw it, God’s solution didn’t solve anything. The solution seems worse than the original problem.

This just moves Habakkuk to question God more. God doesn’t get angry with Habakkuk for questioning him. He doesn’t feel obligated to explain his big picture plan to Habakkuk. But he does respond to some of his questions with the simple words: **“But the righteous will live by faith.”** God wanted his people to rely in him – not on themselves – on him. *Don’t worry about the Babylonians. They will get what is coming to them as well. But even better than that, much more important than that, is that you will not get what is coming to you.* God is saying to Habakkuk: *Trust me! I know what is going on. I love you. I have a plan for everything going on around you.* Live your life by faith!

It doesn’t mean that this is going to be easy. It wasn’t going to be easy for Habakkuk and the children of Israel as they would be conquered by the Babylonians. But there was going to be a time that this was all going to end. There would be a remnant who would return. God was going to care for his people.

The Lord’s answer made an impression on Habakkuk. Habakkuk closes his book with these words: **“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.”**

We may not always be able to understand why everything happens in our world. We may even question God himself. We have questions. There are times that God may not give us all the answers. But he gives us THE ANSWER in Jesus Christ. May we trust in our Savior, and join Habakkuk in saying: **“I will be joyful in God my Savior.”** Amen.