

**“Hearing from God”  
Habakkuk 2:1-20**

*Introduction:*

- NEXT, Volunteer Appreciation: Tailgate Party at West Medford Community Center, which will follow our Members Meeting! Gonna be a great weekend!
- Today, Habakkuk 2, Pg. 845/6 (Table of Contents) as we continue “Questions in the Storm.”

I don't know about you, but I love a good storm. There is something majestic about the swirling heavens producing wind and rain and lightning and thunder and snow, and even (as I've learned since moving to New England) ThunderSnow, which often accompany Blizzards in the winter. Get ready to enjoy! :)

There is something humbling and inspiring about a storm, as long as it doesn't really affect us . . . But it's a different ball game if we're talking about the storms of life that knock us sideways or put us on our back. This was the case for Habakkuk in this little book called by his name.

Welcome to his Storm.

- Injustice had Habakkuk under siege. His own people practiced injustice with professional skill, and the matter would be compounded exponentially by the wicked Babylonians about to invade his land. It is little wonder Habakkuk ran to God with his unfiltered emotions and unfiltered questions and sought an answer.
- The first verse of chapter 2 gives us a fascinating picture of Habakkuk standing as a watchman on the wall of the city.
  - I find this ancient practice to be absolutely fascinating. Cities had to be on vigilant watch for the threat of enemies ready to attack their city.
  - It must have been a thrilling AND gut-wrenching experience!
- With an attitude of faith, Habakkuk says, “God, I'm like that! I'm watching with vigilance and intensity and persistence, waiting for you to answer.”
- Do you find yourself in the midst of a storm today? We cited a number of storms related to health and work and relationships and possessions and many other areas last week. Perhaps you feel even more tossed about after the tumultuous week in our country with shocking political upset and impending election of Donald Trump as our next President.
- That's why I'm sporting my purple today. Let's come together, listen to one another, love one another, stand for justice together and work toward the flourishing of our city and our land.
- Anybody on the wall? Anybody in the midst of a storm? Anybody waiting for God to come through?

T: “Let's join Habakkuk in the watchtower.” And let's listen carefully the answer comes beginning in 2:2 and he's invited to . . .

**The Point: Embrace God through a vision of God, in the midst of the storm.**

- Last week I shared the name Habakkuk means “to wrestle.” That was the theme of chapter 1 as Habakkuk wrestled with God in prayer.
- But Habakkuk also means “to embrace.” By faith, he is called to embrace God and cling to his promises.
- No matter what your storm looks like today, I want to challenge you to ask this question:  
**Am I embracing God in this storm, or am I moving away from him?**

T: The secret to surviving the storm is...

### **I. Hear God’s call to live by Faith in the storm. (2:1-5)**

When the storm is raging and the wind is howling, it is difficult to hear: “I’m sorry! What did you say?! I didn’t get that!” We must listen carefully and . . .

#### **Trust with patience (2:2-3).**

- *Read 2-3*
- God speaks, and first says: “Write the Vision down.”
  - A vision provides a picture of the future. Here, it refers to the future God intends to bring about.
  - This vision is so crucial that he who receives it must run with it, probably giving the picture of a herald, who were ancient messengers that ran from town to town throughout the land spreading news from the king.
- When we find ourselves in a storm, we need a message *from God* that gives us a vision of God.

Now, before too excited, we need to recognize **our twofold problem** that can cause us to miss this vision

- **We look for other visions** (other solutions).
  - When our minds are *not* conditioned by grace, we instinctively turn to manmade solutions and quick fixes rather than God.
  - And then, even when we turn to God, we discover God does not always work on our timetable. P.
  - Some of the three toughest words to accept are found in verse 3: “WAIT FOR IT;”
- **We are not willing to wait** (for what we know to be true).
  - If it seems slow, “WAIT FOR IT.” Anybody excited about waiting?
    - Red taillights as far as the eye can see. Placed your order an hour ago only to find yourself staring at an empty plate.
    - Your current job, pretty much stinks (to use a softer, more godly adjective), but the right one hasn’t come along. Mr. Right or Mrs. Right has yet to appear. Waiting.
  - Yeah, “Waiting is awesome. Sign me up! I can’t wait to wait some more!”
  - Pic: We’d all love it if our storms blew past in 30 minutes, but God says: this may come to pass slower than you expect, but it will come.
  - Judgment for Judah (God’s people) would happen soon (in 586 BC), but the judgment predicted in vv. 6-20 on the Babylonians would not happen for another 47 years.

- [Often, when we bring God our questions in the storm, we do not hear “Yes, I’m coming through.” Or “No, I’ll have no part of that,” but “WAIT.”]
  - **“Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14**
  - **“If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.” (Habakkuk 2:3)**

T: Waiting takes faith. That’s why waiting challenges and pulls and stretches our faith like few other circumstances. Verse 4.

### **Trust with humility (2:4-5).**

- As often happens in Scripture, you have the dichotomy between those who love God and do not love God.
- The first part of the verse speaks to Babylon, and specifically (perhaps) to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. What does it say?
- **“His soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him.”** He is PROUD. He elevates himself before God and others. And, consequently, his soul is crooked, not upright.
  - Pride “twists [people] inwardly.” (Wiersbe)
  - Pride says, “Look at me. I’m the baddest Man or Woman around. I’ve got this. You can take the backseat. God, I know you are supposed to be on the highest level, but right now, you need to get on my level.”
  - Though it feels preposterous that anyone could think like this, we all have been there and we will be tempted to go there 1000 times over.
  - Charles Bridges said, *“Pride is contending for supremacy with God.”*
  - Pride never ends well. Verse 5 shows that his pride leads to craving more and feeling restless.
- The second part of the verse are some of the most important words in Scripture: **“but the righteous shall live by his faith.”**
  - What is faith?
    - Pride depends on self. Faith depends on God.
    - Pride depends on self-salvation. Faith “banks our hope on God [to save and come through] no matter what.” (Piper)
  - Faith is how the righteous live. And “the righteous” are those who live by faith.
    - To be righteous is to have a right standing before God. This is one of the closest verses to what the New Testament teaches on concept of justification.
    - Justification: is God counting a person righteous in his sight who has no business being counted righteous, if not for faith in Jesus for salvation.
    - When we look to Christ in faith, a GREAT Exchange happens: Jesus takes my sin and consequences for that sin, Death. He gives me his righteousness as a gift and the consequences for that righteousness, Life.
  - This is the greatest deal on the planet! You can be brought home to God, now and for eternity, because of the gift of Jesus simply by placing our faith in him.
  - It’s not surprising that the New Testament writers quote this verse three times: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38-39.

- If faith is where life is found, the question we should all be asking is: “Do I have faith in God and what he has offered me in Jesus?”
  - If you’re not sure about where you ultimately stand with God, our job is *not* to judge you in any way, but to help you make it home back to God.
  - But let me say lovingly, don’t let a puffed up soul keep you away from his gift of life. (The path home begins with the words: I need you.)
  - Let us know! **Connect Card graphic...**
- Faith clings to, embraces God’s promises, even when the storm rages around us.

T: You might say, that’s great but how can we have the strength to move forward in faith? The answer comes in the following verses. We discover that we can...

## II. Trust God in the storm because God is God.

In verses 6-20, God assures Habakkuk that he will execute justice. He will not let the wicked go unpunished. We have what scholars call, and I love this, a “taunt song.” Think Muhammad Ali on God’s level!

Because who is singing the song? GOD is singing this song, and others will sing it with him! “It may appear that you are winning now, but I will have the last word.”

This “*taunt song*” (*I like saying that*) contains five woes.

- A woe declares a state of coming doom. They typically tells: 1) What people have done wrong, and 2) the consequent of judgment for their wrong.
- Brace yourself for these strong words, but let’s not make the foolish mistake of saying, oh, that’s for the Babylonians, I don’t need to worry because they don’t apply to me. That would be a false assumption. Why? Because traces of all of these sins can be found in our hearts. They should serve as a warning for us.
- But in the midst of these five woes, we have two God-sized statements about the God-ness of God (you follow me?).
- These God-sized truths are what faith embraces in the midst of the storm!
- So when we get to verse 14 & 20, I want you to listen up and feel the weight of those statements in the midst of your storm!

T: Read 6-8

### **First woe: for their Exploitation & GREED (6-8)**

- They were rapacious: Aggressively greedy. They stole and plundered that which did not belong to them.
- That’s not how God rolls. Remember: All evil is a distortion of the beauty of God. He is not greedy but generous.

### **Second woe: for their False Protection (9-11)**

- They built their kingdom through the bloodshed of innocent victims.
- Their wealth enabled them to build “archetectural marvels.” During this time, they built one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. BUT all of their work will be for nothing, because...

- God will bring justice: (I love this) the very stones you built your homes with will cry out against your injustice.

T: You do all this in vain. Why? You are NOT glorious. I AM Glorious.

### **God's God-ness: HE IS GLORIOUS.**

- Let these words sink deep into your soul. *Verse 14.*
  - The world is full of brokenness and corruption. One day, it will be just the opposite.
  - (13) The glory of man, tries to cover the earth (From Babel to Babylon to Today)
  - One day the earth will be wiped clean of all the glory of man. Only the glory of God will remain.
  - **Ocean Picture:** "As the waters cover the sea." (Ogunquit, ME)
- Glory not just existing (it exists now!), but known and seen like never before and enjoyed by all people.

This is why we should read the prophets: God is holy and glorious. We are sinful, and sin is serious. We need to turn back to God, be holy as he is holy in order to enjoy his glory.

### **Third woe: for their Violence & Injustice (12-13)**

- *Read 12-13*
- God says, "If you build your empire through destruction, you yourself will be destroyed."

### **Fourth woe: for their Exploiting People (15-17)**

- *Read 15-17*
- The Babylonians shamed people in ruthless ways. God says, "You enjoy glory and power now as you exploit innocent people, but shame will come back around."
- In fact, "utter shame will come upon your glory!"
- God will execute justice. (Rw)

### **Fifth woe: for their Idolatry (18-19)**

- *Read 18-19*
- This may sound the most benign, but it is actually their greatest offense.
- All other treason was directed against man. This is against God.
- They trusted in lifeless idols to guide them and satisfy them in a way that only God could.

T: But look at verse 20.

### **God's God-ness: HE IS HOLY.**

- This is a "tremendous contrast." Silent, lifeless idols vs. the awesome, living God."
- Verse 20 is saying: God alone is God. God alone is Holy. God alone is Majestic, so "Let all the earth keep silence before him."
  - Silence: Hard to come by in our culture. Plus, we live in Boston, which magnifies the difficulty.
  - Silence can be so foreign it feels awkward, but sometimes silence is exactly what we need.
- When is the last time, you got away in solitude and silence before the living and majestic God? Can I suggest: the only one stopping us from solitude and silence is us?

Conclusion:

*Silence before God in the midst of the storm can be faith's greatest posture, and it may be what we need the most.*

### **Silence in the Storm**

- **In silence, be stunned by God's majesty.**
    - Let me read that one more time: *Verse 20: "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."*
    - Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? Or feel free to visualize one of the most beautiful, stunning, majestic moments of your life.
    - When your eyes meet something majestic, do you want commentary? Do you want someone giving you a play by play of what you see?
      - NO! Just let me enjoy this.
      - When the bride walks in (you with me?), the groom does not need his best man to come up behind him. "Dude, the doors just opened. You can see her. Wow. Just beautiful bro. And look at that dress. How did you pull this off?" No. Sshhhhh. P.
      - Silence reigns before grandeur.
    - And if you could see God reigning in his holy temple, you would not have a word to speak.
      - You would be wordless.
      - Shocked, stunned, astonished in 1000% awe.
    - God is Holy. God is majestic. Be stunned and amazed, and while you're there...
  - **In silence, draw near to God.**
    - If you want a parallel chapter to read beside Habakkuk, I know none better than Psalm 73. There a man named Asaph wrote a song lamenting how the wicked prospered.
    - He cries out to God in confusion and disbelief, and says, "Nothing added up until I got a vision of God, when I went into the sanctuary of God, then I discerned their end and my end."
    - He ends that stormy Psalm by confessing:

**"Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.  
My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
But for me it is good to be near God;  
I have made the Lord God my refuge,  
that I may tell of all your works."**
- (Psalm 73:25-26, 28)**
- We draw near, because he is our greatest treasure. We draw near, because he is good. So good that as we move forward in faith, we are going to want to tell of his works.

This is my invitation for us today. Storms are sure to come. We need is a majestic refuge in the midst of our storm. Jesus is that refuge. Draw near to him!

PRAY. Sing of our great refuge... JESUS PAID IT ALL.