

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen

Who of us has not seen something going on and thought it should be stopped or corrected?

- It can be the simpler things in life.
- And even at that, it can be frustrating.
- It can leave you asking.....doesn't anyone care?
- Is anybody going to do anything about it?
- Where is the justice in all this?

Let me give you a couple of practical examples to make sure we are all together on this.

- You go to a restaurant for a nice meal.
- And it is quiet, peaceful, and enjoyable as you expected.

And suddenly when a large family comes in and they are seated at the table next to you everything changes.

- The children at the next table are running around.
- As they get their drinks and crackers, bread, etc.—they even make a mess of that.
- The floor begins to look like a disaster zone.

And to make matters worse—one of the children is not getting their way and they start screaming.

- You went from a quiet, peaceful meal to so much noise you can't hear your guest you are with, let alone your own self think.
- You look over at the parents with eyes that say, "Aren't you going to do something."
- And they just sit there, do nothing, seeming as if they are oblivious to everything going on.

Or—let me give you another example.

- You are driving down the interstate, obeying the speed limit.
- Suddenly, a car comes dashing around you far exceeding the speed limit.
- They are darting in and out of lanes to pass the traffic.
- Making it unsafe for everyone.

Suddenly you see a police officer in the median.

- And you think, justice will be served.

But the speeding car goes right by the officer.....who sits there doing nothing.

- Almost as if they did not see what was going on.

These are examples of simpler things in life. There are scenarios far more significant and longer lasting.

- Let me give you some examples of what I am talking about here.
- You struggle and struggle and struggle.
- And you ask God for His help and it only gets worse.
- Maybe it is your health.
- Maybe it is your desire for a family member to be back in church.
- Maybe it is your desire for more people to be in church.....period!
- Maybe it is an addiction. Alcohol and drugs to be sure; but maybe an addiction to that pet sin or whatever it is that is chasing you.....or you are chasing it.

Or, how about this broken world we live in.

- It seems to be getting more and more out of control.
- Moving more and more away from Christ.

You pray to God to intervene.

- But it not only doesn't improve.....it seems to have gotten worse.
- We have gone from struggles of unmarried men and women living together to same sex relationships. And that fact being celebrated.
- And in addition to all that, we have men and women wanting to change genders.
- We pray for an end to abortion and with the overturn of Roe versus Wade, recently at the clinic here in Granite City in just one morning there were cars from 20 different states.

And we ask, why God?

- How much longer?
- Are You listening?
- Do You see it? Do You care?

We request, oh God, help and deliver me.

- Correct this. Stop it. Make it better.
- And sometimes nothing happens.....or it even gets worse.

The problems and challenges I just described and the pleas to God with seemingly no answer are not new.

- And we are given a very good account of this in our Old Testament reading for today from the Book of Habakkuk.
- It is this reading that engages us this morning.

We really don't know very much about Habakkuk. The Bible tells us very little about him.

- His prophecy is only 3 chapters long.

The Book of Habakkuk is unique in that it includes no words addressed directly to Israel.

- The first 2 chapters are a dialogue between Habakkuk and God.
- And chapter 3, Habakkuk responds with a beautiful confession of faith.

Habakkuk is raising concern for himself and all the Godly in Judah.

- The timeframe is 605 BC.
- They are struggling at the evil in their midst and to comprehend the way of God.
- Sound familiar?

Our assigned reading for today and the Book of Habakkuk begins with Habakkuk crying out to God.

- “Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help; and You will not hear.”
- “Or cry to You, “Violence!” And You will not save.”
- “Why do You make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?”
- “Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.”
- “The wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted.”

Could Habakkuk not be making that cry for us also?

- Could we not, have we not, made that cry?

Habakkuk caught in this problem, and wanting to strengthen and support the people, says what he will do.

- “I will take my stand at the watch post.”
- “I will station myself on the tower, and look out to see what You will say.”
- That is, Habakkuk will stop, listen closely, and hear what God has to say.

And the Lord answered Him.

- But before we hear God's answer, I need to give you a little more background.
- At this time there are 2 big powers in the world.

- Egypt to the South and Babylon to the East.
- And the question becomes, which of these 2 are now going to be the big power. And what exactly will all this mean for Judah?

In 605 BC, at the time of the writing of Habakkuk's prophecy, there was a decisive battle in Carchemish, north of Israel.

- There Babylon defeated Egypt and became the top of the mountain, big, bad world power.
- There is no stopping them at this point.

And so now Judah and Habakkuk are worried not only about the evil in their midst but also the Babylonians who are a real threat.

- This is no small thing.

The prophet described the Babylonians in these words.

- "A bitter and hasty nation who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own."
- "They are dreaded and fearsome." "More fierce than the evening wolves."
- "Their horseman come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour."
- "They all come for violence. They gather captives like sand."
- "Guilty men whose own might is there god."

So Habakkuk went to God crying for His help.

- Help both internally and externally.
- And he wants a clear and concise answer.
- And he got one!
- But not what he thought was just or he wanted to hear.

God told Habakkuk that He was raising up the Babylonians against them.

- Really, God. Did you hear what I asked? What I needed?
- That's exactly what we don't need. That's worse than where we are right now.

And can we not give the same response also?

- In fact, we have our own Babylon, right here, right now.

In the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, the apostle John literally identified and called Babylon the great enemy of the New Testament church.

- Revelation chapter 17 verse 5.
- “And on her forehead was written a name of mystery, “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.”

You see, it seems nothing changes.

- Our situation and Habakkuk’s situation seem to represent and symbolize each other very well.
- Babylon for Habakkuk was an invading powerhouse nation and a people stuck on evil.
- Babylon for us is this world that appears like a prostitute that is coaxing us with her constant come on and flaunting flirtations.
- Babylon for us is the present evil age that lures us into worshipping the full-length mirror we peer in to.

Babylon is our own sinful flesh that seduces us saying.....

- You have a little anger floating around? Let it fly.
- You have some juicy gossip? Let it rip.
- You have some evil fantasy? Ready. Set. Go.
- Babylon is all the brokenness and sinfulness in this world caused by the devil, all of mankind, and ourselves.

But that God was raising up Babylon against them was not all God had to say.

- He continued on, and He gave Habakkuk a vision.
- And He told Habakkuk in chapter 2 verse 2 to write the vision, and make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it.

And here we have the same Hebrew word used that was commanded to Moses on Mount Sinai.

- Clearly, plainly write this down on tablets.
- Moses wrote down the 10 Commandments.
- And now Habakkuk is called to make a new revelation that God is giving him, crystal clear on tablets of stone.

What could be as significant as the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai?

- And to that command to write the vision down on the tablets is words of comfort and strength and hope from our Lord.
- In essence, before giving Habakkuk, and us, the vision, He tells us to persevere. Not lose heart.
- Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 3.

- “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 to all that, what is that vision?

- God continued in Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 5, the last verse of our Old Testament reading today.
- “But the righteous shall live by faith.”
- That is God’s vision and answer to Habakkuk and us.
- The righteous shall live by faith.

God is faithful and, in His time, at the right time, it will happen.

- Judah did return to Israel after the Babylonian captivity.
- As He promised, one day Christ will return and we will reach our homeland with Christ for all eternity.

Why?

- Because God is faithful.
- All the way back to the Garden of Eden He promised the Savior.
- There were more words written on a tablet some 600 years after Habakkuk.
- It was a sign on the cross in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.
- Jesus of Nazareth , the King of the Jews.

And the Lord told Habakkuk to write those words on tablets so he may run who reads it.

- Habakkuk ran with those words.
- And some 600 plus years later, the Apostle Paul ran with these words also.
- Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4 is quoted 3 times in the New Testament.
- Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.
- Words preserved for us that we also, some 2,600 years after Habakkuk, may live by faith and have salvation also.

You see not only is God’s plan perfect but also His timing in accord with His love and wisdom.

- If Habakkuk’s request and desires would have been granted.....
- We wouldn’t be here today.
- We wouldn’t have had God’s Word and promises.
- And we would not spend eternity with Christ.

Man thinks he knows.

- God is the only one who really knows.
- His time and His way that is ultimately best for us.

Dear Christian friends, what do those attacked and harassed by Babylon need to know the most?

- That we belong to God. Not by might and not by power.
- We stand before Him in righteousness.

Dear fellow redeemed.....

- See through the eyes of faith.
- God created the perfect world. It is man who sinned and is in brokenness.
- But God is still in control.
- He has given us His Word. He has given us one another.
- Look beyond the things we see with our physical eyes.

See Christ present and carrying us.

- And He carrying out what is best for us in His love and wisdom. No matter how bleak it looks.
- See the vision of the Messianic feast that lies ahead for us.

We have been liberated from the guilt of bondage and shame.

- You have been given confidence and courage in your battle against Babylon.

And so, what did Habakkuk do?

- He ran with this and found strength and peace.
- Habakkuk chapter 3 is too long and we don't have time to read it here.
- But I invite you to go home and do so.
- Habakkuk here wrote a beautiful psalm of faith in the Lord's justice and saving power.
- Use it as a devotion and source of strength for you.
- As many of you know, I do a daily devotion live stream and posted each day. Tomorrow's devotion will be based on Habakkuk chapter 3.

And to all this I think it appropriate to close with Romans chapter 8 verses 38 and 39.

- "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present or to come, no powers nor heights nor depths nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- Amen. (Please stand)

And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.