

When The World Is Falling Apart, We Live By Faith

A Sermon on Habakkuk 1:1-3, 2:1-4
Year C - Pentecost 20
2 - October - 2016

JJ¹

A man walked down the streets of his beloved city, and didn't recognize it any longer. He could say the same of his nation as well. The economy wasn't the worst it had been, but it could have been better. But that wasn't the problem. He walked down the streets of his city and observed his nation and he no longer saw a government and judicial system serving the people, but serving themselves and the highest bidder. Among it's rulers and citizens he saw case after case of violence in all forms: murder, robbery, theft, fraud, embezzlement, rape, adultery etc. If there was a law, it was broken, especially one of God's laws. The fabric of his society was tearing apart. And to make things worse, his society was unwilling to punish evil and violence. Right and wrong were a fading memory. People's lives were in shambles, and it didn't matter whether they were rich, or not so rich.

You might think I've just described someone walking down the streets of Washington D.C. in 2016, but I'm not. The man I've just described is the prophet Habakkuk. Even though this description is nearly 3,000 years old, it sounds so familiar because this sinful world never changes. Habakkuk felt like **the world was falling apart** around him! He cries out: "O 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."

How easy it is for us to feel the same way! We see the same immorality around us. We see a justice system so often unwilling to enforce it's own laws, especially if those laws are unpopular or the lawbreaker is an affluent politician or star. And when you or I refuse to be accepting of evil we are mocked and persecuted. We are then labeled as the corruptors of society and the evil that plagues this world. We watch the news, we open our eyes and listen with our ears and it seems that **the world is falling apart!** And that's not even to mention all the struggles, hardships, heartaches and temptations we each face individually! We find ourselves crying out with Habakkuk: "O 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 LORD's response to Habakkuk's first complaint of the wickedness of his nation

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

was that he was going to send a nation more wicked still to carry out his justice on rebellious Judah! (Hab. 1:5-11) Habakkuk couldn't wrap his mind around it. God's plan to solve wickedness was more wickedness! It didn't make sense. He complains again (Hab. 1:12-17). Once, it seems, Habakkuk has a chance to calm down, he comes to his senses and says, "I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint." Essentially, "I'm going to stop, wait and listen."

Often times when my dad and I would get to talking about the state of things in our nation and world, we'd get to the point where we'd just be sitting there in a moment of silence, shocked at how the world was falling apart. Yet he would always end up saying, "but God is in control." God has a plan.

And friends, isn't that what our LORD through Habakkuk is leading us to do today? **WHEN THE WORLD IS FALLING APART** the LORD calls on us to stop, wait and listen to what he has to say because he always has the answer.

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."

The LORD tells Habakkuk, "I have a plan, and here it is. And I want everyone to know what it is, so write it down on tablets in plain and clear language so that all can read it as it's carried by the messenger. What I promise, will happen. It may seem slow in coming, but that's just slow for you. I'm working according to my perfect timetable."

The immediate timetable for Habakkuk was the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah—70 years of captivity in Babylon—and then the destruction of Babylon and the return home for the remnant. But the bigger plan went much further than that. Doing that wasn't just for Judah. It would be for the entire world. And

you notice this every time God has to step into history in a major way. God is always directing human history to carry out his purposes, but you really see it on the occasions where God must bring destruction in order to save the world. The first time this happened was banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after they sinned. Then it happened on a global scale when the LORD destroyed the world with the Flood in order to preserve faith on earth. God delivered the Israelites from slavery to bring them to the Promised Land. When his people rebelled, the tribe of the Promise, Judah,

✿ WE ARE ✿

**UNWORTHY
SERVANTS**

WE HAVE ONLY DONE

OUR DUTY

was carried off into captivity for 70 years. And then when things were just right, when that which seemed so slow in coming, when thousands and thousands of years of waiting were over, God stepped into human history in the most amazing way—he became one of us! “The LORD our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6), became man!

Habakkuk and the other believers could only look forward in faith to that day. And they did, only by God’s grace. Just as Paul writes in our second lesson today: “[God] has saved us and called us [with a holy calling]—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:-10).

Friends, all this is why **WHEN THE WORLD IS FALLING APART, WE LIVE BY FAITH.** Faith in what? The One who makes us righteous! We live by faith in things yet unseen. How? Because God is faithful to his promises. When God promises, it’s as good as done. Most of God’s promises have already been fulfilled. We have the privilege of being able to look back and seeing God’s faithfulness. Basically all that is left is for God to continue to keep his promise to use all

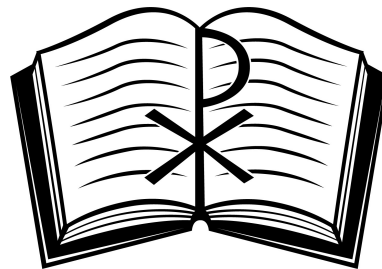
things for our eternal good (Rom. 8:28), and then to send his Son again on the Last Day. Our duty now as his children is to trust him and live in the confidence he gives. Friends, when we do this we will not, we cannot be disappointed! He gave his life for us! He gives us his righteousness and takes away our unrighteousness! He has destroyed the power of death for us and made it the doorway to life eternal!

Yes, when it looks like **the world is falling apart** it can be hard for us to do our duty, especially when that world is at-

tacking us or we may feel like there isn’t any point in fighting the good fight of faith any longer. But remember, you aren’t the first and you won’t be the last to feel this way and endure these things (unless of course the Lord returns today). Like

Habakkuk, step back, gather yourself and your emotions and worries and listen to God. Keep watch, living by faith and praying the prayer of the disciples: “Increase our faith!” (Lk. 17:5)

Friends, **live by faith** so that you don’t get caught up in this world that is falling apart! This world is falling apart because it is puffed up with man’s wisdom. Their ways are not righteous. And even if God’s justice isn’t carried out on them in this life, rest assured God will carry out his justice on the Last Day. But you, friends, you who are righteous through



God's grace in Christ, **live by faith.**
Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.