

Faith in a World of Injustice

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[0 : 0 0] So Habakkuk 1 and from verse 12, are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One, we shall not die?

O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of pure eyes and to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors, and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook, he drags them out with his net, he gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad.

Therefore he sacrifices to his net, and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net and merciously killing nations forever? I will take my stand at my watch post, 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.

[1 : 1 3] This is Gosward James. Thank you, Lewis. So we're looking at these verses from Habakkuk.

If you have a Bible, please keep it open at that page. So if you were here last week, last Sunday night, the sermon ended on a cliffhanger.

If you weren't here last Sunday night, let me tell you why. So this is the one minute summary of what we covered in Habakkuk, sermon one.

Habakkuk was a prophet, he lived 600 years before Jesus, and he lived in what for all intents and purposes was quite a small and significant place, in the grand scheme of things with how people looked at the world at that time.

He was from the kingdom of Judah, a really small place, and in the background to his life in this small place, there had been a world war between the Babylonians on one side and the Assyrians and the Egyptians and the Alliance of them on the other.

[2 : 1 6] And the Babylonians had utterly destroyed the Egyptians, and the Babylonians are now the only show in town in terms of world power, military might, and cultural power as well.

And the thing with the Babylonians is that they wanted to use that might to take over the world. They wanted to be a world empire, and the way that they thought about that was that they spread by assimilating people.

Some of you are old enough, or some of you are just nerdy enough to remember Star Trek, the next generation. Do you remember the Borg, if I'm addressing you as that kind of nerd?

So this was in the science fiction series. It's a race of alien cyborgs who want to take over the galaxy. They fly around in their Borg cube, this big cube-shaped spaceship, and they assimilate.

That's how they spread. If they catch you, they make you one of them, and they plug you into their system. You lose your name, you lose where you've come from, and you are now part of the Borg. And if they catch you, if they suck your ship in with its tractor beam, the message that you receive is, we are Borg.

[3 : 22] Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated. The Babylonians were like the Borg of the ancient Near East. They come along, and they tell you very meaningfully, we are the Babylonians.

You will be assimilated, and resistance is futile, because nobody has an army to match them. Now, the thing is, that's great news for you if you're from a small country, as the Babylonians are spreading out, and you want to be a Babylonian.

If you like power, if you are drawn to money, if you are attracted to spectacular culture, then Babylon is also the only show in town in the world.

Have you heard of the hanging gardens of Babylon in Edinburgh 2024? You have. They succeeded. They were so impressive in their own way. And for a lot of people, it's, I, assimilate me.

Let me become one of you. This is an upgrade on the life that I have. But the thing with Habakkuk is, that he didn't want to assimilate, because he doesn't want to become a Babylonian.

[4 : 31] That's not just, you know, that you now eat Babylonian food, that you take on a Babylonian name. It's that you now get plunked into the collective of the Babylonian gods, and their chief god, Marduk, and you start to live by Babylonian values.

A culture that worships power, that worships wealth, that worships its own culture, a kind of consumer culture of all of those things. A culture that does not believe in forgiveness, a culture of vengeance, all of these things, a culture that enslaves people, literally.

So Habakkuk is a prophet in a small place where you can see the Babylonians coming. It's like the Borg tractor beam has already latched onto the Judean spaceship.

And the message is, we are the Babylonians, you will be assimilated, resistance is futile. So it's terrible news if you are Habakkuk, because the Babylonians are coming.

And he doesn't want to become one of them, because Habakkuk has a relationship with God, with the Lord, with the God of Israel. And that shapes how he lives.

[5 : 39] And it means that he doesn't want to become a Babylonian. He can't just unbelieve the things that he believes. He can't just become a different kind of person. He wants to be faithful to God.

And all of that is about to make his life exceedingly difficult. So in chapter one, before the verses that we read, Habakkuk begins by praying over and over, how long, O Lord, why do you let this happen?

Why do you sit by and do nothing? And God gives him a response. Okay, Habakkuk, here is my answer. And God begins by saying, you would not believe what I'm going to do even if I tell you.

And then what comes next is, here's my plan for how I'm going to save you. I am raising up the Babylonians. I'm actually sending them to you. And here is my description of just how awful they are, and they're coming.

And that is the cliffhanger that we get to by verse 11, just before we come into where we're looking at the chapter tonight. The cliffhanger is how on earth is God going to save Habakkuk by raising up the very people that Habakkuk is terrified of?

[6 : 56] Now will God save the world from evil by raising up this spectacularly evil empire and sending them to a righteous man like Habakkuk? But that's the only answer that Habakkuk gets at this point.

This is what I'm doing, and like I said, you won't believe it even when I tell you. Now if you have, if you've read more of the Bible than just the book of Habakkuk, you might actually see the cliffhanger differently to maybe how Habakkuk was feeling at the end of verse 11.

Because Habakkuk happens in the same kind of context as the book of Daniel. Also even if you're not a Christian, a well-known story thousands of years on, have you heard of Daniel in the lines then?

Probably. Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace. Also a tremendously impactful story across the ages. So Daniel's in the same kind of context, and Daniel and his friends are people who are assimilated, who are, or there's an attempt at assimilation.

The tractor beam sucks them in and takes them all the way to Babylon to be assimilated, to be processed, to be turned into Babylonians. But what makes the book of Daniel so fascinating is that in Babylon, in the belly of the beast, they somehow manage, Daniel and his friends, to integrate but not assimilate.

[8 : 19] They manage to forge out lives in Babylon, but without being of Babylon. And the end of the book for Daniel, when he's in this kind of world that he just then lives in, this becomes his home to an extent.

The end of the book of Babylon ends with a really spectacular long vision that Daniel sees that God gives him. And it's a vision of the future, a vision of what God is going to do in this world for the Babylonians have been raised up by the hand of God.

And in this vision, which is far longer than anything Habakkuk was told, what Daniel sees is that God raises up the Babylonians. But after the Babylonian Empire, another bigger empire comes.

So you know the kind of image of a fish comes along and then a bigger fish swallows that fish and then a bigger fish swallows that fish. It's kind of like that, but with empires. So the Babylonians, they come and they go.

There's a bigger empire. There's someone else who manages to take over much more of the world. And then eventually that's Alexander the Great and the Greeks. And then after that power sweeps over the world, there's a bigger power still and it's the Roman Empire.

[9 : 30] And by the time you get to the end of Daniel's vision, the very last chapter is what God does at the very end of what God is planning to do, which is that God raises up a prince.

The prince is, it's called Michael, a Hebrew word that means who is like God. And he is the one who saves Daniel's people.

And at the end of the book of Daniel, end of this vision, this prince, Michael, who is like God. He is the one who ends history, that whole process of empire is rising and falling. And he ends it through a day of resurrection and judgment.

And Daniel sees all of this and his question to God is how long? Okay? It's like the question of how the cook begins with when will this happen? And he's been given this vision of history and a microcosm in the most spectacular grand terms.

But what he's told is you don't need to know that. That's far above your pay grade. Now go back and live your life. Carry on where you are in Babylon.

[10 : 41] You know that everything will be okay. So Daniel gets, he gets quite a lot when God shows him a vision of the way things are going. But Habakkuk only gets Act 1.

Only gets, well, here's what I'm doing. I'm raising the Babylonians, but then God stops. He just gets the, you wouldn't believe it even if I told you.

And you only hear the first part of what Daniel gets in the long form. But so if you've read the book of Daniel, you might see the already, you might already start to see God's plan to have revealed to Habakkuk.

You can see more, you can see further than Habakkuk could see at this point. But and that's if you've read more of the Old Testament, if you've read the New Testament in the Bible, think about this, if you've read the book of Acts, in Acts 13, we have Paul, Paul is the unlikely convert to Christianity in the New Testament.

He was Saul of Tarsus. He was a guy who went around arresting and killing Christians, but then becomes a Christian. And Paul slash Saul is preaching a sermon in Acts 13 in a place called Antioch.

[11 : 53] And in this sermon, he's explaining how and why Jesus is the fulfillment to everything that was promised in the Old Testament. And he's preaching it to people who don't believe it at first, and who think that his message is just madness.

That the savior of the world was this homeless, wandering Judean, a carpenter, and nobody who died on a cross, crucified like a criminal, and that this was supposed to be God.

So people who hear this and think that that's madness. And do you know what verse he chooses to preach on when he's trying to explain that this really is the truth to these people? He tells them, quotes the Old Testament, look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish.

And then he quotes this verse, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if someone tells you. It's Habakkuk 1.5.

So Paul knew that when God begins describing his plan to Habakkuk, with you won't believe this even when I tell you, the Babylonians are just the very first part of all that God is doing.

[13 : 05] They're not the sum total of God's solution to the evil in the world around us and the injustice. They're just the very first part. There are steps though. And however terrifying they looked, they're a pawn in God's hand.

But the most unbelievable thing about God's plan was that however mighty the Babylonians would be, they would lose out to a bigger empire, like the Greeks and the Greeks would lose out to a bigger empire still like the Romans.

And all it would take to destroy their empire, to save the world, to change things forever would be a baby in a manger, would be a refugee child, would be a carpenter who has no place to lay his head.

And ultimately it would be one naked man with nails in his hands and feet dying on a cross, crucified like a criminal.

And then one lifeless body laid in a tomb. That was what God was going to do. And Paul knew that.

[14 : 17] But the thing is Habakkuk was hearing this 600 years before Jesus came. And all he knew was that God was coming next.

The Babylonians were coming. Their tractor beam had you in its sights. So the question then at the cliffhanger is what do you think Habakkuk is thinking?

What's he about to say next? Based on all that he knows. Now to a lot of people in our culture, the natural reaction, what would be instinctive to us, what would be intuitive to us would be just to walk away from whatever God this was.

Because in our culture we tend to think like this, a lot of us, you know, God, I will continue to believe in you. I will associate with you if you are good for me.

But you better answer me as I want or I won't believe in you anymore. You better make sense to me. Because in our culture the place for God that a lot of us have is that really, you know, I am the main character.

[15 : 24] And God has this important supporting role maybe, but it has to be on my terms. And the moment that it doesn't fit into the tiny box that I think God should fit into then, well, goodbye God, I don't need you anymore.

So we have tremendous confidence in our own ability to make sense of the world, to make sense of God. And we find it counterintuitive to think about a God whose plans for the world or plans for our own lives go so far beyond our ability to comprehend them.

So far that he has to begin telling us you are actually not going to believe or understand this when I tell you. And we treat God as possible insofar as he fits within the way that we think possibility can happen.

But to a lot of people though, and a lot of traditional religious cultures, non-western cultures, it's very different. And if that's you, you might come from a very different place where your intuition is probably more like God owes me no explanation.

I'm not that important. You don't question God, you just accept your fate. So if you're a westerner and you face impending disaster, it's probably more likely that your gut reaction is, God, I am too important to be in this position, and I deserve better from you than this.

[16 : 47] So you need to shape up or ship out. Or if you're from a lot of other traditional religious cultures beyond the West, you might assume that you as an individual are not that important. God owes you no explanations.

So the right thing for you to do is just to submit, accept your fate. But the thing with Habakkuk is, which we're going to see, is that he doesn't do either of those things.

He doesn't react like either. Now what I want to show you tonight is that Habakkuk responds to impending disaster, to realizing, I, right now, am in the worst imaginable of times.

The way that he responds to that is by faithfully wrestling with God. And that is such an unusual combination, because to wrestle faithfully with God like this says to God, I am not going to walk away from you, but I'm also not going to let go of you.

But I'm not passive in my relationship with you, but we have a relationship. And you're not a statue. You're the living God. You're not silent.

[18 : 03] You are the God who speaks. You're not unknowable. You're the God I know. So what does it look like when you have that combination of things, that kind of relationship with God, and it looks like disaster has struck?

What it looks like, we've seen Habakkuk is that you wrestle faithfully with God, not walking away from him, but also not just treating him like he's unknowable, like he doesn't care or he's not meant to care or he has no relationship with you.

If you were here last weekend, you were really paying attention. That's what the kids call when they talk about films these days. There was an Easter egg for you at the start of the sermon if you're really paying attention.

So Easter eggs in films, I'm told, are when people put tiny little details in for the folk who really love watching details and really opens up the story. So there was an Easter egg at the start of the sermon last week.

If you'll remember this if you were there, hopefully. I was saying at the start of last week's sermon that Habakkuk is really mysterious in lots of ways. We know very little about him as a person, even to the point that we're not sure how to say his name.

[19 : 13] Some of us say Habakkuk, some of us say Habakkuk, people probably say other things, but we don't even know which language his name is. If you have a really good memory last week, I said the two main theories are, it's a Hebrew name and it means embrace or it's an Akkadian name and it's the name of a plant.

So there was a guy a long time ago, a commentator, a Bible translator called Jerome. He lived way back in the fourth century and he thought a lot about what words mean in the Bible and whose name is in which language and that kind of stuff.

He was really into that. And he had this really thought provoking argument, let this settle in your mind, just in terms of thinking about what the sermon means for you and the kind of person that can direct you to be.

This was Jerome's argument. When you hear the word embrace, and there's this Hebrew word, it sounds like the name Habakkuk and it means embrace, maybe your first thought is, well, that's someone who gives you a hug, right, and then they let go.

But this was Jerome's argument. That's not the only way to embrace someone. Even someone embraces you and it just carries on. And you start to squirm and you want to get out of the embrace but they just don't let go.

[20 : 34] Then you realize that the person who's embracing you, this is a particular kind of embrace, what do you call someone who just won't let go of you and who's trying to make sure that you just can't get away?

Now, Jerome's description of Habakkuk was that he is a strong and unyielding wrestler.

So you hear embrace, don't think someone who's just giving you a hug for five seconds. Think of someone who actually just will not let you go. And that is what he is like to God, someone who's wrestling with God.

So Jerome said that in the book of Habakkuk, it's even baked into the main character's name that he is a wrestler. That's what it means in Hebrew about a wrestler with God, someone who just will not let go of God, who has a tenacious grip, an unyielding grip, who won't let God get away.

And when you start to see that, that's there in his name and that's how he relates to God in a moment of disaster. It starts to help us think about the kind of people that the gospel can make us in lives, in the kind of world that we live in.

[21 : 44] Not people who just turn their backs on God because God makes no sense, or people who submit very passively to God as though we have no real relationship with him.

What you see in Habakkuk is a real relationship with God, not with fake platitudes, but a really authentic openness, a rawness of his soul, what that looks like to have that kind of relationship with God.

So we're going to think about what that looks like for Habakkuk in the verses that we read. So chapter one, verse 12, down to verse one of chapter two, thinking about what it looks like to wrestle with God for Habakkuk.

And the sermon just has two points to help us think about this. And they're both points of comparison that really help us get into what it looks like to wrestle faithfully with God.

So the first one is that he wrestles with God by praying, and in the prayer he compares God, directly to God, he compares God to a Babylonian king.

[22 : 46] So there's a comparison between God and the alternative. And then towards the end of the section, these verses, Habakkuk compares himself to someone who's standing up at the top of a watch tower and waiting and keeping watch.

So let's start off with the way that he compares himself, or the way that he compares God in his prayer to the Babylonian king. So at this point in the chapter, we're in verse 12, at this point, God has answered Habakkuk's first question, how long, oh Lord, until you do something about this world?

God responds to that with, well, you're not going to believe it, but it's going to make no sense to you, but I'm raising up the Babylonians and they are on their way, I'm sending them to you. So what's Habakkuk's first response?

Now it's probably very hard for us to imagine ourselves into what Habakkuk felt like at this moment, in part because the kind of desperation that he probably felt, well, he felt that in a very different world to ours.

And that's probably just far into most of us in our experience, I guess. Like what's it like to live in the ancient Near East, in a tiny kingdom with a tiny military when you know that the world's greatest military might have just defeated everyone else, are coming?

[24 : 06] And they have this express plan to assimilate your people, to take all of your most promising young people and take them away to Babylon and change your religion and change your names and change your language.

Probably hasn't happened to most of us, something like that. So it's hard for us culturally to imagine, but I think what makes it even harder for a lot of us to imagine ourselves into his position is that the way he responds to God in verse 12, superficially it looks wild and uncontrolled, but actually the way that he responds is the product of a tremendously secure relationship to God.

Ezekiel verse 12, are you not from everlasting? This is a rhetorical question. If you know what a rhetorical question is, it's not the kind of question that you ask because you don't know the answer.

Rhetorical question is a question you ask because you know the answer, but nobody's willing to say it. So you ask the question to force the person you're asking to come clean.

You ask a rhetorical question for dramatic effect. You ask as a way to highlight that you know that the person knows the answer and you're trying to get them to say it.

[25 : 26] And if you're learning how to use rhetorical questions as a young human being, it's a thing you have to have a lot of care in doing because it's very easy to ask rhetorical questions in a way that just slips into cynicism and rudeness and arrogance and sarcasm as a way of pushing people around.

So some commentators have said about Habakkuk, oh well, his rhetorical question is really directed towards himself. It's a way of him reminding himself, yes, yes, it will all be okay because I've reminded myself that God is eternal.

But I don't think that's actually what's going on. Where Habakkuk is talking to God in a moment of utter desperation, and he manages to talk to God in a way that is utterly honest, that's real, but above all, it presupposes a relationship between the two of them that can sustain that kind of desperate honesty where Habakkuk is absolutely at the limits of his sanity, where it feels like his life is being torn apart at the seams and things are just clinging together.

For God has told him, I will be your God, you will be my people, you are my sheep, I am your shepherd. But in that moment, Habakkuk is really struggling to feel like that God is being true to himself.

He feels more like a lamb that's about to be slaughtered. And in effect, he's crying out, aren't you my good shepherd? Aren't you supposed to be good? Aren't you supposed to be infinite?

[27 : 22] But he doesn't, here's the thing, okay, so it looks wild superficially, looks rude, a human being saying this to God, but here's where it's not completely uncontrolled.

It's a very desperate rhetorical question that doesn't quite slip into, I'm walking away from you.

This is the thing that's implied that I'm waiting for you to say is, yes, I'm not those things and I failed you. He doesn't quite go there because of the way that he ends his rhetorical question.

Look what he calls God, my holy one. So there is an astonishing kind of desperate frayed edge honesty and there's affection.

Okay, this is what it looks like to wrestle faithfully with God. So here's the key thing that you need to grasp when we're asking, how do we learn from Habakkuk, what it means to wrestle faithfully with God in bad times?

- [28 : 32] Well, on the one hand, Habakkuk challenges God bluntly, directly with all of the fragility of a human life that feels like it's about to tip over the edge, but on the other hand, not for a second do we see Habakkuk as someone who thinks about giving up on God or walking away or stopping praying, stopping serving God.

Now, Habakkuk has a relationship with God that can do both of those things together, not an either or, but a both and.

As I said before, some people in the world, a lot of people in the world from traditional religious communities, they believe in an almighty power, they believe in our God or God's and in a lot of those cultures, you just don't question God.

Those gods don't have a relationship to you. There's no relationship to call on to say, why are you doing this? I don't we have a relationship, but they're also in our part of the world, there are lots of people, modern Western people who have this enormous confidence in themselves.

And if we can't understand what God is doing, we don't believe in God as a consequence because we set our own standards for what's plausible about God. But what you see in the book of Habakkuk is that the gospel is different.

- [29 : 53] Look at how Habakkuk is different. Now he both challenges God and couldn't in a million years imagine walking away from God and the gospel produces those two things together.

That's the kind of relationship with God that it gives you, which you start to see. That's a fruit of the gospel that you see in bad times. Okay.

Like that lump of coal that starts to become a diamond under pressure. The way that I've heard, once heard another preacher put this, that I thought was really thought provoking is that the position Habakkuk's in at this point is like he's saying to God, if I can't figure out life with you, how on earth will I figure it out without you?

Where else can I go? You have the words of eternal life. So here I am praying like this, wrestling with you, holding onto you and not letting you go.

So he shows us what it's like to wrestle faithfully, unconditionally with God. And the way that he does that is in a prayer where he talks to God about what God is supposed to be like and where he compares God with the Babylonian King.

- [31 : 06] So you see this in verses 13 to 17, wherein his prayer, he starts off saying, God, you are pure. You are perfect. Your eyes cannot look at an evil.

They cannot look upon iniquity. So why are you looking idly at evildoers? You are good.

But as the prayer goes on, he says, you created a world of people who ignore you. They don't treat you as their ruler. They live in chaos. Why?

So that's the effect of verse 14. But then he moves into his comparison, where he starts off the comparison by saying, God, you create people and they're like fish in the sea.

There is numerous as the fish of the sea, but the King of Babylon is like an evil fisher of men who comes along with a net and he takes the people you've created and he catches them and he devours them.

- [32 : 03] And now he thinks they are his. If you read more of the Bible, is this starting to ring some bells with how Jesus describes and sends out his followers in the New Testament?

I am making you fishers of men. But in Habakkuk, you see Habakkuk's prayer says that the Babylonian King is the evil fisher of men.

He's out there to catch humans. And when he catches them, he doesn't think of you and the prayer. This King of Babylon doesn't worship you. Look at what he worships.

He worships the net that he catches them in. He worships his own empire. And he treats his net as though it were a God. He sacrifices to it.

He doesn't think about you, my Lord, my Holy One. Look at verse 16. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet.

[33 : 02] And this is where Habakkuk starts to pray about what the King of, why does the King of Babylon want to assimilate all of these people? Or by them, he lives in luxury.

And his food is rich. If you wanted to find the best food from any part of the world in Habakkuk's day, you better get the Michelin guide out and go to Babylon.

Because it's this world city. It sucks in people from everywhere. And it wants to have the very best of everything. But there's an underbelly to all of that.

That it's this rapacious world empire that devours people, that enslaves the world.

So this, when he prays and he compares God to this Babylonian king, the people the Babylonian king conquers, he conquers because he wants to be rich.

[34 : 04] He sits at the very top of the pyramid. The apex predator, the richest man in the world by oppressing the world.

And he never thinks of you, my holy one. He habakkuk prays. And then he picks up again, what he prayed, as we saw last week, picks up the how long, oh Lord, prayer.

You, God who are supposed to be holy and just and eternal, how long will you let him do this to the world, your world? It's quite a prayer to say this to God, to be able to hold these things together, to be so desperately, humanly honest and not to let go of God.

And people like that are, in this world, are rare. You can only relate to God like that, if you know both God's holiness and God's grace.

If you know the grace of God, it gives you the freedom to be real in your desperation, rather than having to sort of live within preset categories that, that meet in the soul up for you like, I walk away.

[35 : 19] Or I pretend to be happy even though I'm in the worst of times or, well, I don't have a relationship with God anyway. So He doesn't have an answer for me.

So that's his first comparison. And then the second comparison, then in chapter two and verse one, is where he compares himself to a watchman on a watchtower. Now, city is in the part of the world that he lived in at that time, surrounded by a wall.

And that wall needs watchtowers. So if you're doing your duty on the watchtower, you know, you're high up, you can see far into the distance. So you can see, is there a dust storm coming? Are there enemies coming?

Invading armies, all that kind of stuff. Now, if this is your job, you're the watchman on the watchtower, is that a busy job? Well, you're probably not going to get your 10,000 steps in once you've climbed up the stairs, because you're in this enclosed space.

And probably most days, there's not a lot for you to see at one level. Not a lot to show for what you've been doing. But is it a busy job?

[36 : 27] Well, even on the days when it looks like nothing is happening. Absolutely, it's a busy job. You're busy doing a very particular thing, and that is waiting.

Your eyes are always scanning the distance, and your focus is always taken up with something, either what's happening or what's not happening. Right? But you are watching and waiting. Now, maybe a lot of us imagine waiting as waiting around, not really doing anything.

Tell that to someone whose job is waiting tables. It's a waitress. They do the opposite of waiting around as they wait upon people, constantly serving, constantly focusing on the needs of others.

And it's in a sense like that, that the Bible tells us repeatedly to wait on the Lord, like a watchman who waits. You know the expression to lie in wait of something?

Even when you're not doing something, you are doing something because you're focused on something that is going to happen, and you are always making sure that you're ready for it when it does.

[37 : 36] So in that sense, the New Testament tells us to wait on the return of Jesus. He'll come, and he'll make all the sad things come untrue, and he'll change the world forever.

And take away all injustice and evil and sin and oppression, and he'll wipe away every tear from our eyes. But now we lie in wait of that.

And there's also that other sense of waiting then. We do so waiting on others, serving, being attentive to the needs of others. The way that Jesus tells us to wait on him, serving him by serving others, knowing that when he comes, he will serve us at a great feast.

So what does that all look like? We take this back to Habakkuk himself. As he imagines, he compares himself to someone who climbs up to the top of the watch tower to look, to wait.

Well notice this, that with impending doom, he doesn't freak out. Habakkuk doesn't panic.

[38 : 42] He imagines himself instead as somebody who climbs up the watch tower, somebody who is looking for a bigger perspective. That's why you go to the top of the watch tower.

And he doesn't plan to be there for five minutes, looking for this bigger perspective on what God is doing. Instead, he says, I stationed myself there, and I'm there for the long haul.

And the funny thing is though, in Habakkuk's world, if you think about it like this, normally why do you go up on the watch tower? You go up to keep an eye out for the enemy, right? This is your Scythe's security, your defense.

But Habakkuk climbs the watch tower because he actually wants God's bigger picture, God's larger perspective. And he's there waiting for God's reply because I think deep down Habakkuk knows that when God started off by telling him, you know, you're not even going to believe it when I tell you, I'm raising the Babylonians.

I think deep down Habakkuk knows, well, that can only be the start of God's plan. That can't be the total of it. So it has to be part of something bigger.

[39 : 51] So in Habakkuk's faithful wrestling with God, he's, by going up to the top of the watch tower in his mind, what he's doing is he's asking God, keep talking.

Keep on telling me your plan. I won't let go of you until you tell me, until you bless me by telling me what you're doing in this world. Imagine this, imagine how differently you'd make sense of a battle if you were right in the middle of it, in the thick of it.

You've got no time to think. You're only really aware of what's happening immediately around you. You're always reactive. Imagine how differently you would think of that battle if you were in a helicopter looking down over it.

You see the same thing completely differently, right? And that's what Habakkuk wants from God. So what Habakkuk wants is actually the birds eye view that Daniel got, but that Habakkuk didn't, hadn't got yet.

Okay. I'm up in the watch tower. Show me. There has to be more than this. And because of who you are, I know that there must be. So show me. I'm wrestling with you. Now, this is where we're going to stop tonight.

[41 : 01] But when I say this in closing, that Habakkuk climbs up to the top of the watch tower, so to speak. He asked God, keep on talking. Share your wisdom with me. Tell me what you're doing.

But God doesn't give him that whole plan. In part, I think, because God wants to teach Habakkuk, knowing Habakkuk himself, he wants to teach him how to flourish in the worst of times.

So what God does first, before giving him any bigger picture, is that God gives him a way to live, a principle to live by. And that's what we're going to look at next week, which is the just shall live by faith.

Before God gives him a bigger plan or anything like that, he tells him how to live. And that's really important. And that's what we're going to look at next week. In this world of evil and injustice and the worst of times, which is Habakkuk isn't going to be walking the face of the earth in 600 years.

He is in Babylon, or the Babylonians are coming now, and he needs to be taught by God how to live now. So that's what God does first. We'll see that next week. And after that, then God goes on to talk about, you think you know that the Babylonians are bad, wait till you hear my diagnosis.

[42 : 11] So then after having told him that you need to live by faith as a just person in this unjust world, then after that, God shows him his perspective on what's there, what's coming immediately.

And then after that, God talks about how having raised up the Babylonians, Babylon the Great War fall. So it won't be a kingdom that will last forever.

Habakkuk who hasn't freaked out yet doesn't need to freak out as it goes on. And what you're going to see in the book of Habakkuk in the next few sermons is that for Habakkuk, that's enough. He doesn't need the whole picture that Daniel gets.

Instead, Habakkuk, the book ends in chapter three. So a few verses on from where we are tonight with a psalm of praise with Habakkuk saying, yes, I can, even if things are absolutely awful in my life right here, right now, I can rejoice in God, even if things fall apart.

So that's how we're going to move through the rest of the book over the next three weeks. Next week on why you need to know what it means to live by faith as a just person in this world.

[43 : 16] Then how God sees this world and then how to let the best of times seep into the worst of times in your life as a Christian. Amen.

Let's pray briefly. Our Lord, our God, we are humbled before you when we think of Habakkuk, the rawness, the honesty, the commitment that he had to you in being able to wrestle with you faithfully.

We thank you that in all of that, he points us to Jesus Christ as the one who fulfilled Habakkuk and who was the answer to your every promise, the thing that we wouldn't believe, even if you had told us first, that by sending your own eternal Son into the world to become flesh, to live among us, to die for us, to be raised to life again, that you would make all things new.

So strengthen us in our faith, in our love, in our hope because of the good news, because of the gospel revealed to us even in the book of Habakkuk. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.