

Yet I Will Rejoice in the Lord

Habakkuk 3:1-20 || Pastor John Wood || 20 September 2020

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What is your favorite hymn or praise song and what do you like about it?

Worship: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13 (*Read aloud 3 times, reflect and listen for God's invitation to you.*)

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Sermon Summary for Habakkuk 3:1-20 (*Read the passage.*)

The Bible's answer to anxiety and fear isn't to stoically resign ourselves to fate; nor is it somehow working up the courage to face the future. It is learning to rejoice in the face of whatever comes – to look forward to what God will do with the messes we (both personally and corporately) find ourselves in. But how do we get there? How was Habakkuk able to sing with joy in the face of what had previously terrified him?

We must be in honest conversation with the living God (v1). Not merely talking about Him, but talking to Him. This means learning – in good times and bad – to cultivate a daily, hourly, even moment-to-moment sense of God's presence. This means talking to God more than we talk about God. Too often, we are so busy calling out to the Lord that we fail to take time to listen. God is never silent (Ps 19:1-4). As Eugene Peterson once said, we need to learn to read the Bible so that our eyes would become ears.

As long as we merely live for ourselves, we won't understand the times in which we live; we won't even understand the meaning of our own lives (v2). We live in an age that is not only self-absorbed but self-obsessed. But life must be about something bigger, grander and more glorious if it is to be worth living. God alone – who is the very source of glory and goodness and beauty and truth – is able to make our lives of eternal worth. We need to recognize that God is God and that His will is what finally matters.

We must study God's acts in the past – both His judgment of the nations and His salvation of His people – to know what to expect God to do in the future (v3-16). We must learn to celebrate God's mighty acts throughout history, and come to see how we are just like the people of the Bible.

Through these moves toward God, we begin to get excited and anticipate and expect great things of our great God (v17-19). And as we do this, we start to unlink joy from circumstances. Because joy is different from happiness, which is context specific. For a child of God, the most troubling and unhappy times may yet be filled with the joy of the Lord, which is a fruit of the Spirit – an outgrowth of faith and love. So: how might we begin thinking and acting differently in these incredibly challenging times?

- (1) Assess our prayer lives honestly. Are we actually seeking the Lord's face daily, crying out from our hearts and engaging God in honest conversation? ...and then being quiet and still enough to hear Him?
- (2) Are we studying the great narrative passages of the Old Testament, the story of God's dealing with Israel? These things took place as examples for us (1 Cor 10:11), so that we might understand the New Testament and the context of God's judgments and deliverances in such times as we are now living.
- (3) Are we learning to trust God to work all things together for the good of those who love Him as He has promised? Are we beginning to see that everything in this world is afire with the presence and glory of God?

Discussion Questions (We realize you will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like.)

- What are we to do in times of fear and anxiety to move toward a faith that sings to the Lord? (See 3:1-2)
- How would you describe Habakkuk's attitude in this chapter? How does it compare to your attitude today?
 - Habakkuk's journey is from fear to faith to praise. Give an example of a similar journey in your own life. How did it cause you to think and act differently toward God?
- What is the difference between joy and happiness?
 - How is it possible to unlink joy from our circumstances? (See 3:17-19)
 - What kinds of things did Habakkuk praise God for? (See 3:3-16)
 - What song can you sing to the Lord?
- Which of the three steps listed in the summary will you take this week?
- How has the message of Habakkuk encouraged you in our current circumstances?

Prayer: Make this a time to reassess your prayer lives. Are we in honest daily conversation with the Lord, or are we doing all the talking, trying to get God to see things our way? Are we willing to be changed through prayer? Are we quiet and still enough to hear His voice? Do we turn aside to see what He is doing? See this week's CG Prayer Guide [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: We must read the Old Testament to learn God's dealings with His people and how we might expect him to act in our day and into the future? Unless we understand the Old Testament, we will never really understand the New. Consider reading the book of Judges like a novel. Take notice of the culture of the day, the behavior of the people and God's work behind the scenes. Journal what you learn about God and His judgement, mercy and salvation.