

*Habakkuk: The Just Will Live by Faith*

Good morning, and welcome to CHC.

Thank you for being with us today. We say this a lot around here...your presence matters.

We sincerely mean that. We want this church to feel like your church. If you need connection, prayer, community...we want to be that for you.

Last week was a wonderful time as we rolled out God's vision for the future of CHC. We launched the hope project (**show graphic**). Please go back and listen if you were not here. We are asking all of you to pray about investing into the future of City Hope.

We've already had some gifts come in. I mentioned this last week, if you want to set this up as a recurring gift or a one timer, you can all of that through the website.

Quick reminder...Mother's Day is 1 week from today. My wife, Shira is going to be speaking!

Did anybody come to church today ready to receive something from the Lord?

My heart today is to encourage someone who came to church a little frustrated about a situation in your life. To motivate someone who has some questions about their circumstances.

I'm here to declare to someone today, you are closer than you think you are to something God has for you.

I know there is potential in this Word to change someone's life.

It's all based on whether you came here ready to receive something from the Lord.

We are starting a new series today. We are going to be studying through the book of Habakkuk for the next few weeks. This is one of the last books in the Old Testament.

Habakkuk is one of the Minor Prophets. The last 12 books of the Old Testament are all considered minor prophets. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> one.

These are referred to as minor, not because they are less important. What they write is generally shorter.

A little study into Habakkuk and we see that he is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. These 3 chapters are all that we get.

This book is unique in that rather than speaking to the people on behalf of God like most prophets do...Habakkuk spoke to God on behalf of the people.

This whole book is a conversation between Habakkuk and God.

Let stand in honor of the reading of God's Word.

**Habakkuk 1.2-4 | How long, LORD, must I call for help, and you do not listen or cry out to you about violence, and you do not save? <sup>3</sup> Why do you force me to look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Oppression and violence are right in front of me. Strife is ongoing, and conflict escalates. <sup>4</sup> This is why the law is ineffective and justice never emerges. For the wicked restrict the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted.**

Pray

These words of Habakkuk start out strong. He starts his prayer to God in attack mode. Why aren't you listening to me? Why haven't you done what I've asked. Why are you allowing these wrong things to happen? I just cannot believe you would make me go through this.

How many of you have ever asked God why? Anyone ever given up hope? Maybe some of you are here right now. You're in a stuck place. You don't really understand what God is doing.

The question has been asked for years...Why would a good God let bad things happen to good people?

Let me go ahead and caution you here...We don't know all the answers. We may not ever know all the answer this side of Heaven.

But let's talk about some of the things we can learn from Scripture. I believe that the Bible is what helps us make sense of evil and suffering.

So why would God allow suffering? **If love is a choice, suffering is an option.**

For all our Bible scholars in here, let me give you the theological term...Free Will.

**Free will = the ability to choose.** You and I have the ability to choose love or to choose hate. To choose good or to choose evil.

That is what makes evil and suffering possible.

God gave us the free will to choose because that's the only way love can exist. If He didn't give us the ability to choose, we couldn't choose to love Him.

If he did not give us free will, there would be no love. We would all be robots. He does not want robots, He wants relationships.

God is love and wants us to choose to love Him back.

Freedom to choose love comes with freedom to choose evil, or what the Bible calls sin.

When we do choose sin, it always leads to pain and suffering.

Suffering isn't evidence of a lack of love. Suffering is evidence of free will.

Lets keep digging a little more. When we ask, why do bad things happen to good people...we have to understand people.

**Romans 3.23 I For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

I'm a big sinner. You're a big sinner. You and I and everyone we know is a sinner. In other words, there are no "good" people.

I know the things Ive done. You know the things you've done. If you knew my sin, youd be looking for another church. And then if you knew the next Pastors sin, youd be looking for another church.

There has only ever been 1 person who we can say is good, and that is Jesus.

Jesus came and lived a sinless life, a good life, and was crucified. He was sent to the cross because He knew that we weren't going to be "good" enough.

Bad things happening to good people only happened one time in history...Jesus.

Even Jesus asked why. **Matthew 27.46 I ..."My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"**

All of this teaches us...**Suffering isn't a lack of love.**

And I can't answer directly every question to every single situation.

Why are you going through what you're going through? Why doesn't God do what he could do in your situation?

Why did someone do what they did to you when God could have stopped it? And the answer is, I don't know what it is.

Idk why things do happen, but I can tell you with certainty what its not...It's not that he doesn't love you.

The Bible is ridiculously clear about Gods love for you and me.

In a moment, you may not see it, you may not feel it, but over a lifetime you will experience. God is good.

So Habakkuk has some tough questions for God. But I want you to notice where Habakkuk went with his hurt.

He took his struggles to the Lord. His questions drew him closer, not further away.

What do we typically do when we have questions. ----- We stop praying. We stop reading. We stop talking to others who can help. We stop going to church.

Now we have a disconnect.

**The disconnect isn't because we have unanswered questions. The disconnect happens when we put distance between us and God.**

The disconnect is always because of distance. **Check your distance.**

God doesn't move. He stays the same. We are either moving closer or further away.

Check your distance. (This works in our earthly relationships as well)

If you find yourself with a disconnect between you and God, listen to this...

**Deuteronomy 31.8 I <sup>8</sup> The LORD is the one who will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged."**

The disconnect is on me, not Him.

In the midst of our disconnect you have an enemy fighting against you as well.

Maybe the enemy has even been trying to convince you...if you had a real God, you wouldn't be going through that mess. That struggle. That hurt.

Trusting God doesn't mean you're not going to have questions. Trusting God doesn't mean life is perfect and your marriage isn't going to struggle. Trusting God does not mean your kids are going to be well-behaved every single day...someone say amen.

Here is a habit I want to encourage you to build...**Move forward in moments where it doesn't make sense.**

Take your questions to Him.

Habakkuk turns to God with his hurts...let's look at Gods response.

**Habakkuk 1. 5-11 | Look at the nations and observe—be utterly astounded! For I am doing something in your days that you will not believe when you hear about it. <sup>6</sup> Look! I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter, impetuous nation that marches across the earth's open spaces to seize territories not its own. <sup>7</sup> They are fierce and terrifying; their views of justice and sovereignty stem from themselves. <sup>8</sup> Their horses are swifter than leopards and more fierce than wolves of the night. Their horsemen charge ahead; their horsemen come from distant lands. They fly like eagles, swooping to devour. <sup>9</sup> All of them come to do violence; their faces are set in determination. They gather prisoners like sand. <sup>10</sup> They mock kings, and rulers are a joke to them. They laugh at every fortress and build siege ramps to capture it. <sup>11</sup> Then they sweep by like the wind and pass through. They are guilty; their strength is their god.**

God answers...I am working. As a matter of fact, I'm doing something that you won't even understand. (sending Babylonians to conquer Judah)

Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it's not happening.

We may not like the answers or even agree with them...but these are the moments that faith is for.

**It's not faith if you only have it when you understand.**

God's desire for us is to have life abundantly, and God's will for humanity is community, joy, security, and righteousness.

Habakkuk prays, God answers. Habakkuk didn't like the answer so he prays again.

(Vs.12-17) – He questions God again...(didn't like or understand God's answer, why would you allow them to do that?)

**Habakkuk 2.1 | I will stand at my guard post and station myself on the lookout tower. I will watch to see what he will say to me and what I should reply about my complaint.**

Changed position, changed perspective...(focused on God, not problem)

Before Habakkuk speaks for God he had to see God---Went to his lookout to get his eyes on Jesus.

**Where you position yourself determines what you can see.**

Where have you positioned yourself?

-in front of your phone, computer, amongst vampires, etc.

Habakkuk was focused on the problems and how impossible they seemed.

Impossible situations are not intimidating to God!

Conclusion:

**You have been so busy trying to figure out a reason, and God is trying to give a revelation.**

He does love you. He wants you to feel and experience his love, and he wants you to choose to love him back.

What's our problem? Why is it that it's so difficult? Well, our problem is sin, that just like Adam turned away from God when he became sin, God is so holy that sin separates us from God.

And here's the good news. This is how much God loves you, that he sent Jesus, his Son, to become sin.

The innocent, perfect sacrifice died in our place. He paid the penalty for our sins, and God raised him from the dead, why? Because God had something better coming.

The way that you're made right with God is not by you being good enough, but the fact that Jesus was good enough.

He was perfect. He gave his life and he rose again so that you could know God, so you could be forgiven, so you could love God back in the way that God loves you.

Move forward... whatever's holding you back, say, "Jesus, I trust you. "I give my life to you." When you call out to Jesus, he'll hear your prayer.

God will forgive your sins right where you are. He'll make you brand new