

Habakkuk 1:1-3; 2:1-4 *The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. 2How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? 3Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds...1I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. 2Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. 3For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. 4"See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

Why mommy? That little question can be the hardest for a parent to answer. Sometimes you don't know the answer why. Sometimes the why is far beyond the young child's comprehension. Sometimes there is an ulterior motive the parents just don't want the child to know about. So the easy answer for a parent at times like this is: "Honey, you'll just have to trust me." Trust me. That's how parents can stem the swell of questions from a little questioning child. No explanation. Not even an attempt to unravel what is most likely beyond the child's understanding. Just a simple: Trust me. And often that's all it takes. That simple answer can often quiet the child and stop the questions because they do trust their parents. Little children trust that mom and dad always have their best welfare in mind. They trust that mom and dad won't let anything bad or evil happen to them. They trust that mom and dad will always look out for them in all things. So when mom or dad respond with a simple, "Trust me"...they do.

If only it were that simple for us. It's not just little children who ask their parents the question, "Why?" God's people of every age have asked and still do ask that same question of our Father in heaven. If God is a just God who hates evil, then why does he allow evil to fill the earth? Why does he allow the wicked to go unpunished? If the Lord is a loving God who cares for his people, then why does he allow them to suffer? Why does he allow the people he loves to experience evil in this world? Why does God allow wicked and evil people to commit such horrible and horrific crimes? Why does he allow innocent people to be victims of those crimes? If God is the defender of the helpless and the refuge of the oppressed, then why isn't he doing anything about this?

Here's the hard part about questions like these: God doesn't fully answer them for us. He doesn't fully answer those questions in a way that helps us to fully understand his reasoning behind what he does. His answer is simply a call to faith: Trust me. Trust that I know what's going on. Trust that I care about you and am watching over you. Trust that I will be faithful to my promises to you and always act for your eternal good. Trust me...I've got this. With simple faith, we wait patiently with Habakkuk and rejoice in God's goodness and promise as he encourages us and reassures us today as he says, "**Trust me.**"

Habakkuk understood well this frustration with God. All around him he saw violence, injustice and wrongdoing. Immoral and criminal behavior was evident on all levels of the society in Jerusalem: murder, robbery, theft, fraud, embezzlement, rape, adultery, idol worship and many other flagrant violations of God's moral law. These are the sins that flow out of godless minds and unregenerate hearts. On top of that, the judicial system was corrupt. For the right price you could buy whatever verdict you wanted. So the people with money took advantage of the system to oppress and control the majority who did not. So not only was there violence all around but an unwillingness of the society to react to or punish the violence in their midst. God's law appeared to be helpless and God appeared to be doing nothing about it. Habakkuk had on numerous occasions pleaded with the Lord to do something about it. Yet despite his many pleas, he still saw violence, injustice and wrongdoing all around him.

So in our text, Habakkuk again brings his complaint before the Lord. He did not speak these questions with a mean-spirited manner to challenge God or start a debate with him. He wasn't thirsting for vengeance over the wrongs the wicked had done to him. He is simply seeking understanding. He is asking the Lord when he was going to defend his honor, act justly against the wicked in the way his holiness demands and deliver his saints in the way he promised. He didn't understand why God appeared to have his hands in his pockets and took no action against those who willfully reviled and ignored his will. He didn't understand why God permitted the haughty wicked person to slap him in the face and make the godly people view such behavior or even worse become victims of it.

Because he approached this complaint from this perspective, God graciously responded and shared his future plans with Habakkuk. Yet these were not quite what he expected. God assured him that evil of the people in Judah did not escape his notice. He was certainly going to bring judgement on his people. He would do that by sending the Babylonians to conquer Judah and take a remnant of people into exile. While he was thankful for God's action, he was perplexed as well. Why would God allow people who were less godly and righteous than the Jewish people, people who were arrogant and full of pride in themselves, be the agent he would use to punish his people? God answered this complaint in much the same way as the first: Trust me. The evil of Judah will be punished by Babylon. The evil of Babylon will be punished by another nation of evil doers. God's people will continue to suffer in this world. But be patient and trust that all of this is in my hands and I will control all things for the good of the members of my eternal family. God said in our text, "*Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. 4"See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the*

righteous person will live by his faithfulness." In other words, just wait patiently and trust that in my time and in my way I will take care of everything.

The word that is translated "faithfulness" here is perhaps better translated "faith" in this way: The righteous person will live by faith. The focus here is not on God's people doing anything but rather simply depending upon the Lord to act faithfully according to his promises. Faith is holding firm to the God who can be trusted, even though it can't always understand his ways. Faith believes the visions and revelations God gives to his prophets, trusts in the promises God makes to his people and in the face of trouble, difficulty and calamity, finds its assurance there. Faith trusts that all things are in God's hands. In contrast to the arrogant, puffed up, boastful, self-reliant wicked person, the person of faith simply trusts that God is in control and will be faithful to his promise to watch over us and protect us through the trials and troubles of life and bring us safely to our heavenly home.

God says the same things to you and to me. We understand Habakkuk's frustration. He had complaints against God and I suspect we do to, at times. We hear about remorseless evil against the weak and helpless week after week. Hearing various news stories of heinous acts both local and around the world lead us to wonder, "What kind of monster would even think of such a thing, much less act on it?" I heard a story this week about 2 brothers who ran back into a fire to rescue their meth lab but left their grandmother to die in the fire? What? Hardly a week goes by when we don't hear about some mass shooting somewhere or a story of a kidnapped or abused child or other equally malicious acts of violence against children. From our limited perspective it often seems as if God is not in control of all things and is not directing the course of history in a way that is right. Our world is marred in violence, destruction and strife. The governments of this world, which are God's representatives often use their authority to promote wickedness rather than uphold justice. The escalating murder rate, gang activity and injustice in the courtroom as well as the acceptance of abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia are a few indications that the nation in which we live is characterized by violence.

Even worse, when we lay all of this before the Lord in prayer, it may seem as if he isn't listening. We pray, "Lord, please do this, please act here, please set this right, please make this well, please right this wrong, please stop this evil, please heal this damage, please end this conflict, please change this heart." Yet no matter how much we ask, we see little action against it. Too often these unanswered prayers can lead us in frustration to lash out at God: "Please do something! Act like God. Take Care of us! Can't you see we are weary of fighting against wrong and trying to do good? Why do you let this go on? Why won't you answer?"

Today, God does answer us. He says, "Trust me!" What comfort God shares with us. Today he reminds us that nothing escapes his notice. He is all knowing and present everywhere. He's not aloof and cold, watching us from a distance, as if he doesn't care. He's right here with us. He sees all. He knows all. He is in control of all. What a promise from God: no one will escape God's judgement. The wicked will be punished. We simply need to wait patiently and trust God that God will act in his time. He doesn't give us a direct answer to the question why. He simply encourages: Trust me. Trust that I notice everything and am well aware of what you are facing. Trust me that no one will escape my judgment and wickedness will be punished. Trust me that all of this is in my hands and that I will be faithful to my promises to watch over you and use this for your good. Trust me that I am using my almighty power to control all things for the eternal good of my family.

We can be certain that God will be faithful to these promises because God always has been faithful to his promises. He promised to send a Savior into the world that would crush the devil and rescue his people from sin. Though it was a promise that was a long time in coming, God kept that promise when he sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior. When Jesus shouted, "It is finished," he proclaimed that God's promise had been kept in full. Every sin of doubt in our minds and failure to trust in God's goodness was punished in Jesus and paid for fully. We were rescued from hell and given the certainty of life in heaven. God who took care of our biggest problem of sin and death will not drop us through these other challenges we face. We can live by faith, trusting that God will be faithful in all things. We can trust his words and promises, starting with the promise of forgiveness through Christ and including all of his promises to watch over and protect us, despite the things we see in this world around us which seem to contract it.

When this assurance rests in our hearts (that God will be faithful to all of his promises to us), then, even in the midst of tragedy or calamity we can wait patiently like Habakkuk and say with him: "*I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*" These tragedies may happen, the wickedness may abound, but they cannot stop or even delay the coming of our Redeemer and the salvation which God promised us. No matter what hardships and trials we may face as Christians before our Lord returns in glory, his promises to us will not fail. For his elect's sake, he will shorten the last days and preserve us in his heavenly kingdom until he returns.

"Trust me." Those are words little children take to heart which lead them to put all of their faith in mom and dad to watch over them through whatever may come. May we have that same child-like faith in our heavenly Father. Though wickedness and violence abound, though injustice and strife seem to rule, hold tightly to the promises God has made to us. He encourages us simply: Trust me. Amen.