

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JUNE 21 - 25, 2021



COURSE SERMON SERIES
5/9 - 8/1
CORRECTIONS

THE MINOR PROPHETS

MONDAY

Habakkuk 1:1-4

The book of Habakkuk was written by the prophet Habakkuk around 605 BC to the people of Judah who were struggling to comprehend the ways of God. It contains a dialogue between the prophet and God. The prophet argues with God over His ways, which appear to Habakkuk as unfathomable. After receiving replies from God, Habakkuk responds with a confession of faith.

Habakkuk's first complaint: Why does the evil in Judah go unpunished? *"How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? ... Why do you tolerate wrong? ... justice is perverted"* (1:2-4).

Habakkuk's description of conditions in Judah would easily fit our country and our world today. We see evil openly taking place all around us. Mobs rioting and burning buildings; people openly gunned down in a grocery store, massage parlors, churches, and on the streets; elderly people being beaten to death. We could without difficulty routinely cry out, "Where's God?"

This same picture is seen throughout the world. In February of this year in Myanmar (Burma), the military took over the government in a coup. The soldiers were firing live bullets into unarmed crowds of protestors; 114 people were killed in one day, including children and a six-year-old girl. So far, more than 700 people have been killed and

thousands arrested. The military has been hiding the dead bodies to keep the body count low. Again, we could easily cry out, “Where’s God?”

Many other evil events have taken place in the world. In 2019 in the country of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), 290 people were killed and 500 injured by terrorist bombs. These bombings occurred simultaneously in three churches and three luxury hotels on Easter Sunday when churches were crowded with worshippers. “Where were you, God?”

This is how Habakkuk felt as he voiced his complaints to God.

QUESTIONS

What complaints have you uttered to God?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organization partnering with local justice systems to end violence against people living in poverty. Pray for IJM’s African and European bases that are experiencing national lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Pray that children would be kept safe at home and that medical facilities would not be overloaded.

TUESDAY

Habakkuk 1:5-11

Here's God's answer to Habakkuk's complaint: God will use the Babylonians as His tool to punish wicked Judah. The Babylonians are a "ruthless" people who are "feared and dreaded," "bent on violence," "a law to themselves and promote their own honor," "they laugh at all fortified cities," and rely on their own false gods (1:5-11). God will use evil idol worshippers who are full of pride to inflict justice upon Israel. God will use a group that is even more evil than Israel to punish Israel.

Sometimes God uses evil governments to carry out His work. For example, Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, 1979-2003, was a ruthless ruler. In one Iraqi village he ordered the massacre of 140 people after their failed assassination attempt. Against another village he ordered a chemical attack, which was the largest chemical attack directed against a civilian-populated area in history, killing 3,000-5,000 people and injuring 7,000-10,000 more, most of them civilians. He was so evil! What use would God have for such a wicked person?

Hussein did not persecute the Christians. Instead, they were protected and allowed to meet openly. Even a select few were part of the political elite, like the one who served as foreign minister and deputy prime minister under Hussein.

After the U.S. toppled Hussein, many Muslims turned on the Christians, killing them and evicting them from their villages. A large number of Christians had to flee the country. The estimated population of Christians in Iraq before the war was 1.5 million. After the war their numbers dwindled to only a few hundred thousand. God had been using the evil Hussein to protect the Christians.

QUESTIONS

As you look around the world at all the evil taking place, do you see any small glimpse of God's hand at work? What might you see?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Pray for IJM's Latin American facilities that are training up leaders and church members to recognize the signs of sexual violence and to serve as points of contact with IJM. Pray that this cohort of churches can boldly step into action to help protect and restore victims.

WEDNESDAY

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

Habakkuk's second complaint: How can a just God use the wicked Babylonians to punish a people more righteous than themselves? (1:12-2:1). *"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"* (v. 13).

God demands perfect holiness and yet uses evil doers to accomplish His work. Why? God has chosen to use human instruments even though they are polluted with sin, even the best of them. If God chooses to use humans as His tools, He has to work through sinners. This is His choice.

Throughout history we see God working through sinners. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was an evil king; yet, God chose to use him to bring glory to Himself at the Red Sea: *"Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth"* (Romans 9:17).

God chose to use Rahab, a prostitute, to protect the Israeli spies at Jericho. Forty years after Israel had crossed the Red Sea, Rahab said, *"I know that the LORD has given this land to you ... We heard how*

the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. ... for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below” (Joshua 2:8-11).

God used evil rulers to crucify Jesus. “Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen” (Acts 4:27-28).

QUESTIONS

God uses evil people to carry out His perfect will. Do you see any examples of this today?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Pray for IJM’s South Asian partners who are providing frontline COVID-19 relief to survivors and vulnerable communities. Pray for their safety, that God would guide them to families in need, and that national policies would stabilize so that IJM and its partners can safely support even more people in rural areas.

THURSDAY

Habakkuk 2:2-20

Here's God's answer to Habakkuk's second complaint: Babylonia will also be punished; God is still on the throne.

The Babylonians are described as “*puffed up,*” “*arrogant,*” “*never at rest,*” “*never satisfied,*” and “[*those who*] *take captive all peoples*” (2:4-5). They “*have shed man's blood*” and “*have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them*” (v. 8).

However, the Babylonians will reap what they sow. “*Then you will become their victim*” (v. 7). They “*will plunder you*” (v. 8). “*The stones of the wall will cry out*” (v. 11) against you. “*Now it is your turn! ... The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you ... The violence you have done ... will overwhelm you*” (vv. 16-17).

Whatever goes around comes around. Evil doers will be punished in the end. Here are some examples: Saddam Hussein died by hanging after the new government took over after the Iraqi War. Hideki Tojo, former prime minister of Japan, experienced the same fate after World War II. The same happened to Adolph Eichmann, organizer of the Jewish Holocaust. God's Word holds true: “*Whatever a person sows that shall he reap*” (Galatians 6:7).

In the midst of all the evil taking place around us, we are reminded that God is still on the throne. *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (v. 14). *“But the LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him”* (v. 20).

We see all the evil events stirring around us; but we do not see justice prevailing. We are tempted to cry out, *“Where is God?”* But we can be comforted by the knowledge that in the end justice will triumph.

QUESTIONS

Have you been able to experience God’s comfort in the midst of this troubled world? Why not?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Please lift up IJM’s Southeast Asia base in prayer. May God grant them wisdom as they measure online exploitation and how they can address the issue. Pray for interviews as they look to hire the right candidate to head this project.

FRIDAY

Habakkuk 3

Habakkuk closes with a confession of trust and joy in God: *“His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth”* (3:3b). As God has executed His wrath upon nations in the past, so Habakkuk will wait patiently for God to do the same in the future.

“Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD.” (vv. 16-18)

In the midst of painful turmoil and rampant injustice, we must remember that God is in control, and we must be willing to say, *“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD.”* Our response is to be like that of Job after having lost his entire family, most of his servants, and all of his herds: *“The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”* (Job 1:21). In the midst of our painful losses, we need to learn to say, *“Blessed be the name of the LORD.”*

Paul and Silas exulting God while in the Philippian jail is another example of praise in the midst of pain (Acts 16:25). They were stripped, severely flogged, thrown into prison, and had their feet

fastened in the stocks. Then they praised the Lord. Instead of complaining, they sang songs of praise. What an unimaginable response!

QUESTIONS

Praising God in the midst of sufferings would usually be the last thing on our minds. What might help us to remember to praise God even when we do not see God's hand at work in the present?

PRAYERS FOR INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Pray for our upcoming Race to Rescue event with IJM on June 26. Pray that participants would be safe in their activities and that they would have a great time! Pray that they would have opportunities to share with others the work of IJM and how God desires for all people to be free.

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