

Habakkuk 2:1-20
(John 17:20-26; 2 Corinthians 4:5-10, 16-18)
“The Knowledge of God’s Glory”

Introduction

Last week we heard the prophet’s heart-cry: Where is God when our world seems to be falling apart? Why does God remain silent in the face of violence, injustice and oppression? Why does he not answer our prayers by sending revival to his backslidden people and reformation to a nation in decline? God’s answer is more terrifying than his silence. He tells Habakkuk that he has heard his cry and is going to bring about what the prophet desires, but not by the means the prophet had imagined. God will discipline his people by raising up Babylon, whose army will conquer Judah, plunder their treasures and carry their leading people into captivity, destroying Jerusalem, and burning the magnificent temple built by Solomon.

What are we to do when God’s solutions seem far worse to us than our problems? The answer is given: Watch and wait for God to act. Write the vision – it is not just for you, but also for those to whom God will send you. And trust him, your sovereign God and King, whatever comes. Know that he is working out his purposes in history.

This morning, we will look more closely at the vision that Habakkuk faithfully recorded, and which we know (from recorded history) came true as predicted. The essence of the prophet’s question was the problem of how God can use the wicked to discipline his people. In the vision is God’s answer, and at the heart of God’s answer is a clear statement of the contrast between merely human religions and the religion of the Bible.

In this second chapter, we see and hear the heart of the vision: God’s definition of the difference between the righteous and the wicked. It is different from what we find in most religions, where the righteous have cause for pride because they have achieved by their own religious exercise and goodness what others have failed to achieve. But in the Scriptures, the righteous are humbled by the grace of the One who alone can redeem the mess we have all made of our lives, and give us hope of a life worth living, of loving intimacy with the One who made us for himself.

This is followed by a five-fold warning to the wicked, five “woes,” which are curses. Biblical sentences beginning with the words, “Blessed are” are clearly words of blessing and benediction, good words of promise and hope. Sentences that begin with “Woe is” are curses, stern warnings of destruction to those to whom they are addressed.

Finally, the chapter closes with a two-fold promise to those who trust in the Lord. These blessings and curses, promises and warnings, are as relevant today as they were in the days of Habakkuk, and call us to wait and watch, to trust and obey.

Body

1. The heart of the vision: the wicked versus the righteous (1:1-5).

- *The wicked proudly trusts in himself, and lives to please himself (2:4&5).*
- *The righteous humbly trusts in the Lord, and lives to please him (2:4)*

2. A five-fold warning to those whose trust is in themselves (2:6-20):

- *Who build their wealth through dishonesty (2:6f).*
- *Who build their house through injustice (2:9f).*
- *Who build their city through violence (2:12f)*
- *Who betray their neighbor for physical pleasure (2:15f).*
- *Who betray their Lord for spiritual pleasure (2:18f).*

3. A two-fold promise to those whose trust is in the Lord (2:14, 20):

- *Encouragement in mission: One day, all will know that God's glory fills the earth (2:14)*
- *Encouragement in worship: One day all will know that God's glory fills the heavens (2:20)*

Conclusion

We see injustice and violence and our hearts cry out. But God sees it too, and the day is coming when he will bring down the wicked and expose them for what they are, destroying them forever, giving justice to the oppressed, lifting up those who have been cast down, wiping away tears and making all things new. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory. All shall know at last that the Lord is in his holy temple, and in that day, this noisy earth will be silent before him, as every knee bows. Then will break forth the mighty chorus of heavenly worship as every tongue joins in the great confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And he shall reign forever and ever.