



The prophet Habakkuk could see the coming onslaught. God's people were about to be overthrown by the Babylonians. Habakkuk cried out to the Lord for justice, but accepted his fate as judgment and correction. His cries are our cries today. We pray from a position of longing and hope, wanting above all that God would send his Kingdom. We watch and wait for heaven to come down. We long for the Kingdom Come.

Kingdom Come - Vision • Habakkuk 2:1-4; 14 • Tim McConnell • November 12, 2017

None of us could have possibly imagined as we were pressing through Habakkuk 1 last week that a precious community of faith in South Texas was in the middle of such evil and horror. Our prayers are for them. Our hearts go out to them and all their family and friends. I know you have been amazed and inspired as I have to see this church bear witness to hope, the power of God in times of suffering, and the eternal life found in Jesus Christ. So we pray with Habakkuk, "How long?" And we remember in Christ, no matter how long, it isn't forever. There is a Kingdom Come and it is on the way. We know the light shines brighter in the darkness, but friends, I am just about fed up with this darkness. I must admit. But today we turn to talk about vision. God knew for Habakkuk, God knows for us, that when the storm darkens the whole sky we will not survive without a vision. A vision you can run with. A vision that will stick, no matter how rough it gets. We need a vision of a Kingdom Come where violence has no power. We find it this morning in a prophet of tears. We find it when the Lord shows Habakkuk this picture: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

Vision. Come along with me now. Nike, the shoe company has a saying; they want us to "Just...do it." The Mars Corporation wants us all to know, as we experienced on Halloween, that "Snickers really...satisfies." Got it. McDonalds is sure "You deserve...a break today." Excellent. Now, let's recite the motto of our own great state of Colorado. Ready? In the Latin please. Go! No? "Nil sine Numine." It means "nothing without Divine intent." It's a Latin slogan summarizing Psalm 127:1, "Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain." Pretty interesting. But none of us knew it! Some slogans stick, others bounce right off. God told Habakkuk to write the vision, make it plain, so someone running along could get it. God knew we need vision. Vision makes the present bearable. Vision brings the future into being.

What is a vision and why do I need one? Habakkuk 2:2 is often pulled right out of its context, and not with wrong intent, but it's pulled right out of this rather dire book of warning and lifted up in conferences or leadership trainings or even business environments to talk about the importance of vision: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may

run who reads it." (Habakkuk 2:2 ESV) As I want us to understand it, vision is a **picture of a preferred future that moves you with passion**. It's a future you can see, and when you see it you are moved in your guts to make it happen. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction." Or we might lean on the old King James, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Why? Without vision there is no drive. Without a picture of the preferred future to move you with passion, you might get misdirected, you might lose track of what's important, you might waste your energies and spin your wheels doing things that don't get you any closer to the goal. Or you might just get overwhelmed by the challenge before you, the hard times. You might succumb to temptation. Cast off any restraints or guardrails. Perish. Why do we find such a strong, positive statement on the importance of vision in such a dark and dreary prophet like Habakkuk? Because it's when the darkness is at its darkest we need to remember to look up to see the light. We need vision, and God gives it to us.

We remember last week, how Habakkuk was honest with God. I only said this in one of the four services last week, but movement one—if this is piece of music or show in four movements—movement one was "Habakkuk says: Hey God, this stinks!" That's movement one. Now movement two: "I 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." (Habakkuk 2:1) Movement two: Habakkuk seeks a vision. Let's walk through how it goes, because you need a vision. Your life needs a vision, a purpose, a goal. How do we find it?

(1) Seek a vision. Habakkuk goes up on the ramparts and waits. He goes up to his station and watches. He goes to God and asks for an answer. Why does he do it? Because Habakkuk doesn't have any idea what to say. He has no idea. I have to tell you I felt very much in that same situation this week. What do you say? What words do I have after a horrific event like that shooting in Texas? Habakkuk seeks for a word from the Lord. He seeks after a vision. He says, "I Habakkuk want You Lord to tell me Habakkuk what I should say to these people; how I should answer their complaint." I want to say what You want me to say. I want to see what You want me to see. Seek a vision. God has a plan for your life. You want God's plan. God has a vision for your life. You

want God's vision. It may be very different from your vision. It may take the deconstructing of what you have built so far; it may take walking back down the road you have been traveling on until you get back to where you can make a turn toward the Lord, but hear me now, no matter what it costs you want God's plan for your life. Thy will, not my will be done. Step one to finding a vision: seek God's will for your life. Seek a vision.

"Then the LORD replied: Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it." (Habakkuk 2:2) Here are vision steps two and three in this one verse. Step two: **(2) Write it down.** When the Lord shows you something write it down. Why do that? Because you might forget. Listen, what you see on the mountaintop you might forget in the valley. But you know what else? What you learn in the valley you might forget on the mountaintop. Write it down, God tells the prophet. Don't forget what you have learned.

Step three **(3) Make it plain.** Now, that could just mean write it down clearly. Make sure you write the letters correctly, use a good font. Pick the right color marker. Make the script clear so even someone running along is able to read it. But it's a little more than just writing the letters big on a poster board. It means take the time, spend the energy making the vision simple and clear enough that it can be understood, remembered and carried where it needs to go. We just finished the World Series. Great series. And thank God Houston won! I mean if it couldn't be the Rockies, at least it was Houston this year, right? You watch those games and there is a lot of communication going on all over the field. Most of it are these little, subtle signals—a scratch on the side of the nose, a finger pointing down or to the side, a touch of an ear. But then when the runner is turning second base and the third base coach wants to send him home, the time for subtle communication is over. He starts jumping up and down and swinging his arm all the way around like it's going to fly off! Make it clear.

A vision is a picture of the preferred future that moves you with passion. It's a picture of a future worth sacrificing for. And it is clear. President Kennedy declared in 1961, we will have a man on the moon before the decade is out. That's a picture. A man on the moon! Martin Luther King, Jr., declared "I have a dream" and painted a picture of children playing together from every race and creed judged not by

the color of their skin but the content of their character. That's vision. The forefathers of this nation had a vision that a free people should emerge on the face of this earth, empowering their own government with only the law as the king—a "government of the people, by the people, for the people," Lincoln later said. That's a vision. That's something you can hold on to. Your life needs a vision too. Seek it, write it down. Make it plain so you can carry it with you. Vision makes the present bearable and brings the future into being.

Step four **(4) Believe the vision.** Faith is trusting what God has revealed, and, as it says in verse 4: "the righteous shall live by his faith." I wonder if that verse sounds familiar. It shows up again and again in the New Testament. We are not made right with God by our deeds, or by earning a seat at His table by good works. We are restored to God through faith, faith in His promises; faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; faith, trust in God Himself. Here's verse four in the NIV: "See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." (Habakkuk 2:4) What settles out as we read is that there are two distinct ways of life and they stand in stark contrast to one another. There is puffed-up self-centered arrogance, and there is humble reliance upon God—or faith. Faith in Me or faith in Thee. I want Your vision for my life, Lord. I will write it down and make it plain. I will believe and trust in Your plan. You hold my future, and it is a future worth sacrificing to see. It's a picture that moves me with passion. Seek it. Write it. Make it plain. Believe it.

Through the chapter, God outlines for Habakkuk this other track, this prideful and arrogant track, by telling Habakkuk of the five "woes." Five ways the arrogant and self-centered track leads to destruction. I decided not to dwell with you in the woe's today! You can read those later. You can woe on your own time. I figured we had enough woe. But right in the middle of them—and we will take up the fifth woe next week, woe boy!—but right in the middle we get a vision. A picture. Verse 14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14) A vision is a picture of a preferred future that moves you with passion. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk sees something coming—a new covenant. As the other prophets spoke, they spoke of a new covenant, not written in stone but written in our

hearts. Jeremiah 31 tells us, “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’ declares the LORD. ‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34) There is a Kingdom Come, past the hard times. We trust in the promises of God and live.

How will we know the Lord? How will our sins and wickedness be forgiven? This Kingdom comes with Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again. Did Jesus cast vision? Jesus cast vision with almost every act He performed. Jesus healed the sick. But Jesus didn’t come to heal all sickness, otherwise His ministry was a failure. Jesus healed the sick to show us we are headed for a Kingdom where sickness is no more. Jesus gave sight to the blind, not to end all blindness in His time—to show us we are headed for a Kingdom where all see. Jesus subjected Himself to injustice and violence, not to end all injustice and violence, but to show us we are headed toward a Kingdom Come, and we are telling stories, and we are singing songs, and we are acting out movements and imitating character—all about a Kingdom Come, where we belong, where things like we’ve seen all week on the news...they don’t fit. And they won’t ever happen again.

Here in Habakkuk is practical advice for making it through tough times. Seek the vision; write it down; make it plain. You need a vision for your life—you need God’s vision. Put your faith in Him and live. In the end the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. In the end, heaven will come down to earth. In the meantime, make it plain, write it down and keep it before you. Remind yourself. Hold on to the truth of the vision. Jesus is coming. God will bring His victory right on time. Until then, we live by faith.

STUDY GUIDE

KINGDOM COME • Vision

Habakkuk 2:1-4; 14

UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in God’s Word

- Read our passage Habakkuk 2:1-4; 14. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Then, slowly read it one or two more times.
- What do you notice about our passage? What stands out to you? What questions do you have after reading the passage?
- What instructions does the Lord give to Habakkuk? What hope is he given in the midst of his complaint?
- In your life, where/when are you tempted to lose hope? Talk to God about those situations.
- What is a word, phrase, or thought from today’s passage or from our time together that God seems to be lifting up as being significant for you? How does it speak to a current situation in your life? How is God inviting you to respond?

IN: Connect with the Family of God

- What does it mean for a righteous person to live by his (or her) faithfulness?
- Think about people you know who live by their faithfulness. What do you notice about their life?
- This coming week reach out to them and thank them for their faithful witness.

OUT: Connect with the World around us by Joining God in God’s Mission

- Habakkuk is told to write down what God says to him and make it plain on tablets so that it can be shared. We are called to share hope. What does it look like to bring hope to the hopeless?
- Are there places or situations in your life right now where you can bring hope to the hopeless?