

THE BIG IDEA: Who is ruling is greater than what is happening.The Take-Off

This morning, I want to give you what I believe is a very prophetic, “now” word from God for us - and for the many who will hear it by podcast or watch it by video later.

Like many of you, I have watched this week as news streamed out of Louisiana, Minnesota and Texas of violence and deaths, and all of us have had moments when we have probably thought questions that we dared not give breath to. I am no different, and as I worked on the next message in our “Breathe” series about how we need to have margin in our calendars, I knew that the Holy Spirit was telling me that the perfect way to teach that would be to place margin in our calendar as a church to breathe and try to process what we’re experiencing as a nation and in the world.

So I decided to put that on hold, even before I knew what God wanted me to say.

I pulled back on the schedule, I made space in my calendar, and I prayed.

And God did what he always does - he gave me the perfect word for today, and it all comes from a small, 3 chapter book written by the only prophet who never spoke to men - his name is Habakkuk, and the book has the same name.

While you’re finding it, let me set the backdrop of what Habakkuk was facing in his time.

The best king since David - King Josiah - had died at the age of 39 and had been replaced by his son, Jehoiakim, who was an awful king

The Babylonians were on the rise and a real threat to God’s people

Things were not good, and the book begins with Habakkuk complaining about it.

Let me read you 3 verses from chapter 1 and let’s see if the culture Habakkuk found himself in was anything like what we find ourselves in.

Sound familiar? Violence, strife, fighting, law that seems paralyzed, no apparent justice. Seems a lot like LA, MN, TX, TN, GA, and MO, right?

The book of Habakkuk is the account of how the prophet Habakkuk dealt with the same issues we are, and we can learn a lot from him.

He didn’t panic. He prayed, and I think we can learn a lot about how to pray when we question everything.

1. Pray with honesty

- a. Most scholars will sum up Habakkuk like this: Habakkuk complains, God replies. They do it again and then Habakkuk wraps it all up with a prayer.
- b. But it’s ALL a prayer because it’s all a conversation between Habakkuk and God.
- c. In fact, it’s the only book in the Bible by a prophet that doesn’t contain words from the prophet to the people. It’s all one big prayerful Q&A between Habakkuk and God.
- d. Basically, Habakkuk asks God 3 very honest questions in his prayer:
 - Do you care? (1:2)
 - Do you see all the evil?
 - Do you hear all the suffering?
 - Does it even bother you?
 - Are you fair? (1:12)
 - God’s response to the first question wasn’t what Habakkuk was expecting (or us, either)
 - “You’re holy; how can you use evil to accomplish something good?”
 - Habakkuk came back with more honesty and questioned God’s fairness
 - Are you there? (3:2)
 - I’ve heard about the things you’ve done in the past
 - Are you there now?
- e. Habakkuk may have been the most honest -and courageous - prayer ever, and God didn’t strike him down for honesty in prayer. Pray with honesty.

2. Pray for clarity

- a. It’s good to pray with honesty, but if that’s all we’re doing, then prayer becomes a one-sided puke fest
- b. We need more than just to voice our doubts and questions to God; we need his response
- c. There was a purpose in Habakkuk’s prayer, and it was this: he was praying for clarity.

- d. Habakkuk hoped to gain understanding about what God was or wasn't doing
- e. Instead, he gained understanding about WHO GOD IS:
 - Timeless (1:12)
 - Holy (1:12)
 - Strong (1:12)
 - Pure (1:13)
 - Purposeful (2:3)
 - Faithful (2:3)
 - Glorious (2:14)
 - Savior (3:18)
- f. Prayer allows us to see clearly that WHO is ruling is greater than WHAT is happening (Big Idea)

3. Pray in authority

- a. How did honesty and clarity impact Habakkuk?
- b. It filled him with the confidence to pray in authority!
- c. Think about it - nothing had changed. The evil that existed still existed. Violence was still there.
- d. Habakkuk didn't try some Jedi mind trick and act like everything was kosher.
- e. Listen to how the honesty and the clarity result in authority at the end of the book:
 - 3:17 // HONESTY - no blossoms, no fruit, no produce, no food, no flocks or herds
 - 3:18 // CLARITY - still rejoicing in the Lord because he knows WHO God is
 - 3:19 // AUTHORITY - God IS my strength - not might be - he WILL BE
- f. One of the most famous prayers in Habakkuk is found in 3:2, and it was prayed in authority because he knew who God was
 - A holy God who must punish sin, and
 - A merciful God who desires to save the ones who must be punished
- g. And so he prayed 4 words that we need to pray today: "in wrath remember mercy"

The Landing

Our confidence in prayer must be based in the character of God, not the circumstances of men, and Habakkuk knew that. We can know it even more for one simple reason.

Habakkuk viewed the events of his time looking forward to the cross, but we can view the events of our time looking back to the cross.

He hoped for mercy; we know that - through Jesus on the cross - we've been given mercy.

God's wrath was poured out on Jesus so that his mercy could be poured out on us.

That is the message that we carry to a world that is jacked up.

That our world may be shaken, but God's throne is not, and WHO is ruling is greater than WHAT is happening.

Let's pray.