

How Long Will Injustice Reign?  
Advent #2 | Habakkuk 1  
December 6, 2020

### Pre-Sermon Remarks

- The cry of “how long” while waiting for the Messiah to come
- We are in between the 1st and 2nd advents of Jesus
- Week 2 of Advent, moving from personal to the societal

## PRAYER

### Introduction

- Last week, I asked personal questions like *shouldn't I be better by now?*
- This week, let me ask some more widespread questions:
  - What is going on in our country? Has everybody lost their minds?
  - Are we really having riots and looting and burning, and armed conflict?
  - News talking like a president won't step down?
  - Hate crimes had been going down for 15 years, but now going back up?

**Justice is a core biblical theme. As Christians, we should not fear or react against this word.**

- Historical back-and-forth in US Christianity, resulting in polarization
  - Sadly: we fight about justice instead of living out Gospel-justice
- The good news is that we're not the first society to wrestle with injustice

### Habakkuk's World

- Habakkuk | likely mere years before Babylon comes to attack (contemporary of Jeremiah)
- Kings of Judah | Josiah (good), Jehoahaz (evil), Jehoiakim (evil) | approx. **2 Kings 23**
- He's looking at a society marked by sin and idolatry, but also widespread injustice

### Habakkuk's Complaint | 1:2-4

<sup>2</sup>How long, Lord, must I call for help and you do not listen or cry out to you about violence and you do not save? <sup>3</sup>Why do you force me to look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Oppression and violence are right in front of me. Strife is ongoing, and conflict escalates. <sup>4</sup>This is why the law is ineffective and justice never emerges. For the wicked restrict the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted.

### What Is Justice?

Justice is...

1. Justice is equal measures | Proverbs 11:1
  - a. Dishonest scales are detestable to the LORD, but an accurate weight is his delight.
2. Justice is related to righteousness | 1 Kings 10:9

- a. Blessed be the LORD your God! He delighted in you and put you on the throne of Israel, because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel. He has made you king to carry out justice and righteousness.
- b. True justice seeks to reflect the righteousness of God himself
- 3. Justice is extra care for vulnerable | Zechariah 7:9-10
  - a. <sup>9</sup>"Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, <sup>10</sup>do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.
    - i. "Quartet of the Vulnerable" – Nicholas Wolterstorff (Calvin College)
    - ii. Widow, orphan, sojourner, poor
    - iii. God uniquely Identifies with this group! No other gods did that
      - 1. Proverbs 14:31 – Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
- 4. Justice is inherently relational | Job 29:12-13
  - a. Westerners believe that justice is blind (enlightenment ideal)
  - b. For I rescued the poor who cried out for help, and the fatherless child who had no one to support him. The dying blessed me, and I made the widow's heart rejoice.
- 5. Justice is a baseline, love is the goal | Romans 13:10
  - a. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

### Two Important Notes:

- 1. Injustice is real | both sides acknowledge some, deny other aspects of injustice
  - a. Both are influenced by enlightenment idea of progress
- 2. Injustice is terrible | perverts the character of God, and the nature of his creation

### God's Response | 1:5-7

<sup>5</sup>Look at the nations and observe—be utterly astounded! For I am doing something in your days that you will not believe when you hear about it. <sup>6</sup>Look! I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter, impetuous nation that marches across the earth's open spaces to seize territories not its own. <sup>7</sup> They are fierce and terrifying; their views of justice and sovereignty stem from themselves.

- 1. God's response - to use the wicked to bring judgment **Babylonians**
- 2. Hosea is not happy about this! | 1:13 - you can't look at evil, why would you use them?
  - a. I get frustrated at times in our culture, *why would you use them?* **#metoo**
- 3. What if you actually knew what would happen next, like Habakkuk?
  - a. First sermon in 2020, I said "what makes you think this year will be better?"
  - b. One year from merger, one year from John's visit
  - c. What if we knew about Covid year?

### Five Warnings | 2:6-20

*\*Yes, God knows that Babylon is horrible. Here is what they are like, for which they'll be judged.*

- 1. Greedy debt | 2:6-8

- a. Woe to him who amasses what is not his—how much longer?—and loads himself with goods taken in pledge.” Won’t your creditors suddenly arise, and those who disturb you wake up?
2. Dishonesty in business | 2:9-11
  - a. Woe to him who dishonestly makes wealth for his house, to place his nest on high, to escape the grasp of disaster!
3. Exploitation and slavery | 2:12-14
  - a. Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with injustice!
  - b. American history was largely shaped by slavery
  - c. Current slavery in China, house vote 406 to 3, Nike/Apple/Coke all lobbying
4. Drunken lust | 2:15-17
  - a. Woe to him who gives his neighbors drink, pouring out your wrath and even making them drunk, in order to look at their nakedness!
5. Foolish idolatry | 2:18-20
  - a. Woe to him who says to wood: Wake up! or to mute stone: Come alive! Can it teach? Look! It may be plated with gold and silver, yet there is no breath in it at all.

Babylon/Chaldeans are unjust...Israel was unjust...we are unjust

### **Prayer of Hope | 3:2**

LORD, I have heard the report about you; LORD, I stand in awe of your deeds. Revive your work in these years; make it known in these years. In your wrath remember mercy!

- The only hope for the injustice in society and in our hearts is God’s mercy

### **God Will Come | 3:3-13**

\*Prophetic poem of praise | 3:3-12 | God’s glory, a new Exodus

<sup>13</sup> You come out to save your people, to save your anointed. You crush the leader of the house of the wicked and strip him from foot to neck.

- All this injustice and slavery is going to be dealt with, and God’s Messiah will reign

### **When? At the Appointed Time | 2:2-3**

<sup>2</sup>The Lord answered me: Write down this vision; clearly inscribe it on tablets so one may easily read it. <sup>3</sup>For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late.

### **God’s Perfect Timing | Galatians 4:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world. <sup>4</sup> When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir.

- Christmas is God sending his “anointed one” to deal with injustice

- Cross - Jesus suffered the greatest injustice of all time
- Resurrection - Jesus crushed the leader of the house of the wicked, Satan

Because of Jesus, there is actually hope that injustice can be dealt with

### Heart Work

1. Repent of injustice in your own heart
2. Commit yourself to biblical justice | actual, practical steps
3. Adjust your expectations | there will always be injustice as long as sinful people are alive.  
BUT, wherever the gospel of Jesus has flourished, justice has increased.

### Practical Ideas

Awareness and education | read widely

Foster or adoption | different things, but related

Elderly care | difficult now, but be prepared

Donate & volunteer | A lot of justice looks like generosity

Evaluate your economics | debt? Business practices? Even your purchases?

Political involvement | no, not social media

### Benediction

#### **Habakkuk 3:17-19**

**Leader:** Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though the flocks disappear from the pen and there are no herds in the stalls,

**All:** yet I will celebrate in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! The LORD my Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like those of a deer and enables me to walk on mountain heights!