

Sermon: Cry for Justice

Scripture: Habakkuk chapter 1 and 2

One day I cut my finger and immediately, I applied a coat of liquid band aide on the cut to keep it from getting infected. I know and understand that cuts, grazes, and breaks in the skin *can* cause infection if bacteria enter the wound. The bacteria could come from the skin surrounding the cut, the external environment, or the object that caused the injury. So, it *is* important to clean and protect the wound properly to reduce the risk of *infection*. Infections can lead to a lot of health issues and/or even death. Lately, we have witnessed infection manifest itself around the world raising questions in people's hearts.

But this infection is nothing new it has impacted our land for years. The infection of racism, injustice, brutality, and pain inflicted by people against other people. Causing people to stand and say enough is enough.

Each week the news brings fresh, heart-wrenching examples of this infection and how it has impacted our world.

People treated as outcasts.

People experiencing oppression.

People hearts being broken by the news that their loved one has been killed.

People deeply wounded.

People driven into the ground and walked on.

But just like infections can affect the health of our bodies, infections can also affect the health of our souls.

Life can cut us wide open, more dangerous than the cuts of life, is the very real danger of the depth of a cut to our soul. Spiritual bacteria can infect our hearts and turn us not to God but away from Him.

When spiritual infection finds its way into one's life, it begins to multiply on the inside unless it is stopped.

Write this down: I must stop all Spiritual infection from spreading within me.

Dealing with infection is nothing new to God. As a matter of fact, He dealt with it in the life of the prophet Habakkuk who experienced it in a deep and painful way.

Listen to Habakkuk 1:1-4 from the
Message translation:

The problem as God gave Habakkuk to
see it:

GOD, how long do I have to cry out for
help

before you listen?

How many times do I have to yell,
“Help! Murder! Police!”

before you come to the rescue?

Why do you force me to look at evil,
stare trouble in the face day after day?

Anarchy and violence break out,
quarrels and fights all over the place.

Law and order fall to pieces.

Justice is a joke.

The wicked have the righteous
hamstrung

and stand justice on its head.

Habakkuk lived around 600BC when Egypt, Assyria and Babylon were the powers to be. They were very vicious, cruel and threatened the very safety of God's people in Israel and Judah. The scene back then looks a lot like today. There was racism, corruption, injustice, and immorality to the point where Habakkuk did not know who to trust, or where it was safe.

This was an awful situation. A situation that seemed hopeless.

He tried to live right, and he ended up getting stepped on and shoved to the side. Think about a time when you were trying to live and do what was right all to

be criticized, passed over, shoved to the side, abused, mishandled, and mistreated.

I was reading the other day and came across a very interesting article that discussed the decay of America. The first sentence asked the question, “What in the world has happened to the United States?” Then it made this bold statement, “What a dysfunctional mess!”

It listed some factors the author believes contributed to our country’s chaotic state, one that stands out above the rest is the belief that our culture has lost its moral and ethical roots.

I found the statistics to be remarkably interesting, the Gallup poll shows that 49 percent of Americans say the state of moral values in the U.S. is "poor."

Meanwhile, 37 percent of U.S. adults say

moral values are "only fair" and 14 percent say they are "excellent" or "good."

What is moral?

Write this down: Moral- is concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character.

Countless Americans these days are choosing to redefine the meaning of moral values to justify their self-indulgent behaviors and lifestyles.

As a pastor I have been encouraging you in the importance of thinking as a Christian. We are encouraged to process everything in the world through the view of God's Word. This is God's world, and if we want to understand it

rightly, then we must understand it on His terms, not the worlds, not ours, but HIS terms.

Justice flows from God. It is a fundamental characteristic trait of His. If we get justice wrong, we get God wrong. I believe that a lot of people are missing it. Justice is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and we can see it if we open our eyes to Him and not our opinions. Jesus came to satisfy the demands of God's justice on our behalf. So, if we get justice wrong, we will get Jesus wrong.

I believe that just like during Habakkuk time, we are suffering much of the moral decay due to our country's act of increasingly rejecting God and pushing Him out, and leaning to its own

understanding, welcoming corruption, injustice, inequality, hatred and violence with open arms.

Write this down: God, You be my moral compass. (Now that you have written that down, I invite you to pray that statement every day and be open to the direction in which God leads you)

Scripture says that there was a small group of people who were honestly trying to honor God with their lives. Nevertheless, the spirit of Habakkuk was so deeply impacted by the infection that plagued the territory that he could no longer take it. So, he throws up his hands in desperation, and prays letting heaven know exactly how he feels.

Aren't you tired? Aren't you desperate and in need of answers?

The infection is so bad that it breaks his heart. Heartbroken; he looks to God for an answer.

I remember feeling like Habakkuk when I was going through a very difficult and unsettling time in my life, throwing up my hands giving it all up to God.

Frustrated in desperation Habakkuk throws up his hands and gives it all to God.

Now, write this down: When I feel helpless and out of control, I turn to God who is in control!

Many people today are looking to God for answers. **The problem is are we listen to Him for our answer.**

Crying from their hearts about the rampant injustice and brutality inflicted upon them. The pain that characterizes so much of the world today.

And Like Habakkuk we join Christians around the world, and we cry out! We cry out to God for righteousness and justice.

We cry out to God for those men, women and their families who suffered as a result of this infection of inequality and injustice.

Injustice and brutality will not be allowed to swallow up and destroy the Body of Christ. Because God has planted vision in the hearts of His people - a vision that speaks of the end of racism, injustice, brutality, and pain inflicted by people against other people.

A vision that we carry and wait for. A vision that will surely come - that will not be delayed.

It is a vision that we are called to hang on to in faith.

The vision that the Body of Christ is called to embrace. Unified! Oneness! Oneness that is summarized in Ephesians 4 when the Apostle Paul says:

One Lord

One Faith

One Baptism

One God and Father of all

Who is above all and through all and in us all.

God is alive.

God is real.

God is in His holy temple.

And we are called to be ONE with
HIM!!!

Believe that.

Wait for that.

Have faith that it will happen.

The Lord says to Habakkuk – *I want you
to put faith in me.*

Write this Down: Lord God, I have faith
in YOU!

God says to us, “Have faith in Me!”

God faces the issue of injustice and evil
head-on. The Lord tells Habakkuk that
He has not lost control. God is telling us
“He is still in control!” The reins of the
world have *not* slipped out of His holy
hands. He is still on course.

God tells Habakkuk:
You may not understand it.
You may not see the big picture.
But you will have to trust Me on this.
And so, the call comes to us too.
God is saying to us that we may not
understand it.

We may not see the big picture.
But we must have faith in Him on this.

Write this Down: I trust God!

As we wring our hands in confusion at
the scope of injustice and atrocity that we
witness far too regularly.

Remember these words: I trust God!

We must have faith that God is still in
control.

That His sovereignty remains intact.

That the final word still belongs to Him.
We must have faith as we consider the
cross of Christ.

The Cross of Christ is the greatest sign
given to us that there is something
greater than injustice.

It is the victorious power of God who
loves us so much that He sent His one
and only Son, that whoever believes in
Him will NOT perish but have
everlasting life.

We Will NOT perish.

Racism, injustice, brutality, and pain
inflicted by people against other people
will NOT prevail. Immorality does not
have the final word over our lives!

Evil does NOT have the final word over
God's creation!

For the saving power of God in Christ,
the extent of His victory on the cross and
through the empty tomb, not only saves
individuals, but will restore all Creation.

God says there will be Restored Order!
Jesus is our hope. A very present help in
our time of need.

Because of the cross, where Christ
defeated evil and death,
there is hope -
refreshing, bright, renewing, life-giving
hope.

Which is what we are called to -
As people who live with Christ.

We live with Him as the center of life,
the Center of faith, hope, and love.

We are called to live as people who bring refreshment, renewal, and life where others may willfully work for injustice, domination, and oppression.

This is not some message where I am asking you to sit and waddle in despair. But I pray these words are stirring something on the inside of you. I pray that this message is causing you to examine yourself. I pray that this message is speaking to the very depths of your Soul and causing your Spirit to stir.

This is not a political statement but a moral one. How can you close your eyes and see injustice happening and running rampant? How can you say you love God who you can't see and watch your brothers and sisters mistreated who you can see?

God calls His people to watch out for, to care for, to help the poor, the widow, the orphan, the little children, the least, and the oppressed.

Again and again and again and again and again.....

Jesus – Came to bring justice — He came to roll out righteousness.

As “The Body of Christ” we are called to follow His example. We are called to be Christ witnesses throughout the earth.

“When we act, it is Jesus who is acting. When we speak, it is Christ who is speaking. When we serve, it is the Lord who is serving.”

So - even as our hearts ache for justice and mercy, what are our hands doing?

The United Methodist Church has said racism is sin, “that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ... it denies the redemption and reconciliation of Jesus Christ,” and “that racism robs all human beings of their wholeness.”

So, how can we watch and justify the mistreatment of our brothers and sisters?

A few months ago, Bishop Bard sent out a bold statement addressing the issue of the infection that has plagued our country. If you have an opportunity, I encourage you to go back and read the entire letter.

The following words resonated with me and stuck with me and I want to share them with you.

He said, that these are difficult days. I understand that in speaking as I have, I run the risk being labeled politically and therefore risk having my best advice about responding to the coronavirus pandemic ignored (he spoke to the unjust treatment of people of color). But I had to take that risk or risk losing my prophetic heart, which is also a pastoral heart, and right now, often a broken heart.”

As we see racism, injustice, brutality, and pain inflicted by people against other people this should break our hearts too.

But just like there was hope for Habakkuk, I believe that there is hope for us today. Our Hope is not found in politics or systems. Habakkuk didn't find hope in the governmental system.

He found Hope in God and that's where our hope comes from too. So, I leave you with these words: Have HOPE in God.