

November 22 & 23, 2025 – Last Sunday of the Church Year

Habakkuk 1:1–3, 2:1–4

Dear friends in Christ Jesus:

Violence, injustice, toleration of wrong, destruction, strife, conflict. Ever seen that? Just look around us. Sometimes I'm almost afraid to see what headline pops up next on my phone. Another shooting at a mall or a school, another city rioting and causing senseless destruction. Conflict and strife in families when parents care more about themselves than they do about their children. Toleration of and pride in sin, and persecution of those who will not promote or participate in it. Violence is all around us.

The prophet Habakkuk saw terrible violence in his day. The streets of Jerusalem were just as bad as the worst streets in Chicago. Habakkuk laments, **Devastation and violence confront me. There is strife, and tensions rise.** Why didn't the Lord do more to stop the violence happening to his people? The Lord had chosen these people to be his special people. The Savior of the world was to be born from these people. Where was the Lord who breaks the bow and shatters the spear and burns the shields with fire?

Questions like these will come to us as the end of the world draws near. Why doesn't the Lord step in and stop the violence? Why doesn't he do more to keep his holy precious Word from being violated? God's Word has an answer to all these questions. He says to us today, **"The Righteous One Will Live by His Faith."**

We are living in the time that Jesus prophesied, when the love of many will grow cold. Our TVs, newspapers and internet tell us that. With all of this strife around us every day, it's tempting to think that times have never been worse. And yet Habakkuk saw a world as filled with violence and evil as ours. And he complains to the Lord: **How long, LORD, must I cry for help, but you do not listen? I call out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save! Why do you cause me to see injustice? Why do you overlook misery? Devastation and violence confront me. There is strife, and tensions rise.**

Habakkuk was a man who saw the world for what it was, and wondered what was taking God so long. The kingdom of Judah always had to be on guard against attacks from their enemies in Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. And the threats from the outside weren't the only danger and evil. His people were constantly mistreating each other. Merchants and businessmen cheated their customers, and those in power oppressed the weak and were so corrupt. The people of Habakkuk's time had forgotten what God had commanded them.

And so, seeing all of this strife and evil, Habakkuk couldn't help but ask: Why? **Why do you cause me to see injustice? Why do you overlook misery?** And in the midst of all our strife we might very well ask God the same question: Why? Lord, why don't you bring judgment on the wicked? Why don't you save your faithful people? Why won't you show your power and make yourself known like you used to? Why aren't you listening to me? Lord, I know you *could* do something about all this, if you really wanted. You're God Almighty! You have all the power in the universe, and you could fix all of this with nothing more than a word.

So why won't you? And Lord, you have the *right* to do something about all this too! You're the King of Kings! It's not like anyone would criticize you for using your power to carry out your will. So why won't you? And Lord, I know you really *want* to do something about all this. I know you don't like violence and injustice and wickedness any more than we do. You're holy, you're righteous, you're perfect, and you hate sin. So why won't you do something about it? Why won't you at least listen to me?

Maybe it's natural for us to doubt whether God is really listening, when again and again we turn to him in prayer and never seem to get results. Maybe it's just the human thing to do. But it's sinful. No matter how human or natural that doubt may seem, we can't deny that it is sin, sin that condemns us to hell.

Habakkuk knew that all too well. He knew it was wrong to doubt God and to question his ways, but he did it anyway. And after he questioned God, he could do nothing but wait to see what God would say to him, fully expecting that he was going to be punished for his doubts and complaints. We shouldn't expect anything less from our Lord, because the God who condemns violence and injustice and strife is the same God who condemns our sinful doubts and complaints. It doesn't matter how natural it is for us. It doesn't matter how human it is. It is our sin, and punishment is the only thing that we should look for from God.

The truth is we have no reason to doubt God, no reason to complain to him or question what he does, because he has always been trustworthy to his people. Down through the long ages, there has been no revelation that God has given, no promise the Lord has made, that he has not fulfilled no matter how unlikely they seemed.

Remember Abraham and Sarah? He revealed to that elderly couple that he was going to give them a son, when they were well past the age of childbearing. Humanly speaking, it was impossible! But God made it happen, and Abraham and Sarah rejoiced when their son Isaac was born.

Or what about the people of Israel when they were trapped in slavery in Egypt? God revealed to Moses that he was going to free the Israelites and lead them into the Promised Land of Canaan. Who would have thought that they could escape from the most powerful nation in the world? But God was telling the truth. He brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and made them into a great nation of their own.

And of course we can't forget the greatest promise of all: how God revealed to his people down through the ages that he would send a Savior to take away all of their sins. And though they had their moments of doubt and their complaints against God, just like Habakkuk did, just like we do, God's revelation did not prove false. At the appointed time, and not a moment later, God revealed his Savior to the world in Jesus Christ, who gave himself up to the violence and injustice of this world, so that he might die a death that was violent and unjust, and so wipe away all of our sins of doubt and complaint. He has covered us with his perfect life of never complaining or doubting God. That is the faithfulness of our God. He has saved us from our sins by the perfect life and innocent sacrifice of his own Son. In Jesus you have eternal life. In him you are forgiven.

God has promised to take care of us and to take us home to heaven on the Last Day. Sometimes these promises seem like they're going to be impossible for him to keep. But they're not. As God revealed to Habakkuk, **Indeed, the vision is waiting for the appointed time. It longs for fulfillment and will not prove false. If it seems slow in coming, wait for it, because it will certainly come and will not be delayed.** God always has a specific time in mind for his promises. Abraham and Sarah were waiting for 25 years before Isaac was born. The Israelites were in slavery for a long time before God freed them. And how many generations of faithful believers lived and died before Jesus came? God waits for the time that he has appointed to fulfill his promises. And that's a hard lesson for us to learn. We never know when the appointed time is going to be. We know that the Lord Jesus could always return on the Last Day at any moment, but we also need to be ready for the long haul.

Do you remember what Habakkuk did when he grew frustrated with this world's wickedness? He remembered where he was standing. **I will stand at my watch post and station myself on the city wall.** No matter how frustrated he became, he knew he wasn't just standing by himself, alone against the world. No, he had the city wall of all the revelations of God under his feet helping him to stand against everything that came his way. He stood on the Word of God, his promises. We too stand on the foundation of God's revelation in the Bible. When we quake at the sight of never-ending violence, God's revelation holds fast beneath us. When we grow frustrated with injustice after injustice, God's revelation keeps us strong. When we are tempted to doubt, God's revelation in the Bible builds our faith so that we can live with patient endurance.

That's the thing about that famous verse: **"The righteous one will live by his faith."** Usually, we use that verse to show us how God grants us eternal life through faith. He certainly does. But it also shows us how we face our lives on earth—we do it *in faith*. The same faith, through which we receive eternal life in Jesus, also equips us to live each day for God. Our faith guides us in all our temptations and strengthens us in all our doubts.

There is no denying that this world is filled with violence and injustice. It is a wicked place filled with wicked people. There is no denying that it's going to be this way until the time appointed for Christ's return. That's exactly what Jesus himself revealed would happen. And there is certainly no denying how upsetting and disheartening this is to us. But as we pour out our hearts to God and endlessly pray, "Lord, come quickly," we will not fall into thinking that God is not listening to us. No, whenever we pray, God has already listened. And the Lord will come at the appointed time. Until then, stay in God's Word. Regularly attend church. Be in Bible Class and Sunday School. Read your Bibles and devotions. Station yourself on the city wall of God's Word. Be **The Righteous One who Will Live by His Faith**. Amen.