

Vision Sunday (Habakkuk 2:14)

Big Idea: God has put us here to ache for what's wrong, long for his glory, and take action so that we, and others, get to start enjoying God's glory now.

Once a year, I try to remind us why we exist as a church. It's important for a couple of reasons:

- First, it keeps us on track as a church.
- Second, it helps us when things get hard. It reminds us why it's worth paying the cost even when it's not easy.

Unfortunately I made a bit of a scheduling error. I picked a Sunday that is still part of the Christmas break. But that's okay. It's still important that we remember why we exist as a church, and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that everyone has a chance to listen to this message.

Why are we here? Why do we bother to exist as a church? There are much better things we could be doing!

To answer this question, I want to look at a verse that was written 2,600 years ago. Let me set it up for you. These words were written in the final decades of Judah. It was a

time of idolatry and injustice. The Babylonian empire was on the rise. Things did not look good. Habakkuk wrote this book. It's one of the most challenging and complex books of the Bible. There are no easy answers found in this book. And yet it's so helpful and relevant for us today. We need the message of Habakkuk.

Questioning God

Unlike the other prophets, he didn't address the people. Habakkuk had some tough questions for God:

- Why does God allow injustice in this world?
- How can God use wicked people to accomplish his purposes?
- How long would God allow evildoers to dominate the world?

Habakkuk is basically a book of questions for God because life didn't make sense to Habakkuk, and he had questions for God.

The verse I want to look at today is part of Habakkuk pronouncing woes on Babylon. Habakkuk pronounces five woes on Babylon for their wickedness.

It's here that we have to pause and say that Habakkuk's questions are just as relevant today as they were 2,600 years ago. Where is God amidst the overwhelming wickedness of this world? And what do we do with our questions for God when life and the world seems overwhelming? Habakkuk is so valuable to us because it helps

us deal with the evil in the world, and it gives us permission to come to God with our questions and complaints. Habakkuk gives permission to the church to wrestle and lament. It gives us the boldness to cry out to God in our own questioning and even our confusion. It helps long for justice. It protects us against evil answers.

You need to know that the Bible speaks to the complexities and evils of life. The Christian faith is strong enough and deep enough to deal with this very evil world and the brokenness that exists all around us.

Hope

It's in the middle of one of those woes that we read this verse that's so full of hope:

For the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
(Habakkuk 2:14)

Here's what this verse says, and why it's important to us as a church. Three points.

First, ache for what's wrong around us.

I want us to learn from Habakkuk's example. Habakkuk is an example to us of how we should respond to the conditions that we see around us.

We do not live in normal conditions. We've already seen this. Habakkuk has already complained to God because he's looked around and noticed that things aren't right. He's seen the injustice and evil around him, and it makes him sick. He longs for more. He cries out to God for more.

I want to invite you to do the same. Look, really look, around you. What do you see when you look at Liberty Village? What breaks your heart about conditions here? What evils do you see present? Who do you see struggling? What do you think God sees as he sees our community?

Sometimes we get used to things as they are. Sometimes we get used to the brokenness around us and think that it's normal. Don't settle for things the way that they are. Today I want to invite you to ache again for Liberty Village, and to bring your longing to God. What this community needs is a church that aches for the injustice, evil, and brokenness around us, and brings these aches to God.

Second, long for what this world will be.

God's glory is amazing. I've been reading the book of Exodus lately. Exodus begins with Israel in captivity, the people oppressed, and God seemingly absent. It's as bad

as things can possibly be. It ends with Israel freed, and with God present among his people in all of his glory. We read at the end of Exodus:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

(Exodus 40:34-25)

Imagine that scene. Imagine God being so present that you could see it: his radiance, his supernatural, awe-inspiring presence. Exodus tells us about the time that the intensity of God's glory was present in one particular place, and it was overwhelming. Not even Moses could get close in because the tabernacle was so full of God's presence.

Habakkuk says that this will be true not just at one place but over the whole earth.

For the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

(Habakkuk 2:14)

One day God's glory will fill the whole earth just like it filled his house. One day his glory will be like the waters of the sea. Stand by an ocean or lake. See how long and broad and deep the water is. The Challenger Deep in the western Pacific lies at a depth of almost 36,000 feet. You could sink Everest into that part of the ocean and there would be room to spare.

One day God's glory will fill the earth to that extent. J.T. English [writes](#):

What are God's purposes in the world? Can this really be it? Is exile going to be our final destiny? Where is all of this heading? What is the goal—the telos of the world?

This is the prophet's answer: *One day the whole earth, every single part of it—the sky, the mountains, the rivers, the canyons, all creatures, and all peoples—will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.* Not only will the knowledge of the glory of the Lord fill them, but it will fill them as the waters cover the sea. The bottomless, bottomless, infinite, and boundless God will cover all of his creation. The infinite beauty of God's presence will cover everything. This is a stunning picture of where world history is heading. In the middle of their darkest moment, a moment of judgment, the prophet reminds God's people that all of world history is heading toward the kingdom and the presence of God. This is the future of God's world—it is our future. Their greatest hope, endless enjoyment of the presence of God, would one day be a reality.

That is the future of this world. Ache for what this world is now, but long for that day when God's glory will fill the earth like the waters fill the sea.

Last thing:

This vision should inform our ministry here and now.

Again, let me quote J.T. English.

Before we get into ministry philosophies, programs, and best practices, we need to remind ourselves of the why behind the what—the glory of God ... Success in ministry is not found in building programs but in building disciples—disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Christ is the goal, not better or more impressive ministries. He is what we want...

God's desire is that one day the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover every square inch of his creation. **God is working to bring a knowledge of himself to all of creation, and his followers want in on that now ...**

We don't want to wait for tomorrow for the knowledge of God's glory to transform us. Discipleship is for today, not just for the future. We need disciples and local churches who not only look forward with eager anticipation to a future in the presence of God but who also want to be covered with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord today—now.

We exist in this broken world for this reason: to know God together and to bring a knowledge of God and his glory to as many people as possible in Liberty Village.

This is why Jesus came. Jesus came to bring us into relationship with God. He came to reveal what God is like, to die in our place for our sins, and to be raised so that we could have new life. He's done everything needed for us to know God and his glory.

God has put us here in this community to ache for what's wrong, to long for what this world will be, and to start enjoying that glory now, and invite others to know it too.

Your Part

Here's where you fit in. Three actions you can take. You're going to hear more about these in the coming year. We really need you to do these.

First, show up. This seems so obvious, even anticlimactic, but it's where it starts. Your presence here really matters.

God designed us to go after him together. Never underestimate what it means when you show up hungry for God. I really believe the message of a recent book:

What's the next step? We have good news. It's easier than you could imagine. Just show up and ask how you can help.

That's right, that's the big takeaway from the book. When I (Collin) talk with new church members, I make a big promise. And so far, no one has ever returned to complain that I misled them. I promise that if they show up consistently (in our church, that means corporate worship on Sunday and home group on Wednesday) and seek to care for others, they will get everything they want out of the church.

Many of you are doing this already. Thank you. Keep showing up hungry for God, and help us go after him together.

Second, read the Bible and pray. I want to help you take three actions so that you can grow yourself.

- Read God's Word.
- Pray.
- Worship and belong at church.

You need all three to grow. If you want God's glory in your life, get in his Word, talk to him, and worship and belong. Pursue God with your life so that you can know him and experience his glory right now.

Third, pray for three people who don't know God. This year I want to ask you to regularly pray for three people who don't know God. What if all of us prayed and asked God to save three people in the community? I am praying for 10 people to come to know Jesus through the ministry of this church this year. Will you join me? Will you join me in praying for three people in your life, preferably in this community, to come to know Jesus?

This is why we're here. God has put us here to ache for what's wrong, to long for his glory, and to take action so that we, and others, get to enjoy that glory now. That's why we're here. Let's not settle for anything less.