

I Will Rejoice Habakkuk 3:17-19

February 24, 2019

17 Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation. 19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights.

Habakkuk is a 7th century BC passionate prophet. He may be known to some for one particular phrase that was quoted by the apostle Paul. It is a biblical theme that is often repeated in various phrasing "The just shall live by faith." One of Habakkuk's main concerns was a lack of justice. He saw Judea full of corruption and injustice and so he cries out passionately against the miscarriage of justice in the political, judicial, and economic realms. His personal challenge was to hold on to a belief in God as the ultimate power of justice in a world that was overwhelmingly unjust. So, he wrestled with a common problem that we all may be familiar with. Why does God allow evil? This is a question that any religious person might struggle with. Habakkuk concluded that God brings judgment and punishment on all evil doers in the end. The book Habakkuk is about the realization of God's will for the world. Therefore, the scriptures speak to us today as we discern God's will. Habakkuk prophesied the invasion by Babylon is the demise of an unjust society. The defeat of Judah and their enslavement by the Babylonians is God's judgment. Then, in turn, the fall of Babylon is due to their own wickedness and idolatry.

Chapter 3 contains a prayer to God, a description of God's appearance, and the prophet's response. In the Scripture for today we see a very important personal characteristic of the prophet. Even when things are real bad - there is no fruit, no food, and all the animals are gone - I will rejoice in the Lord. Within this imagery of despondency the prophet gives his testimony that he will rejoice in the Lord. Even if things are as bad as they can get he proclaims "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength.

When faced with hardship and uncertainty Habakkuk cried out to God and put his trust in God. The prophet Habakkuk put complete trust in something greater than himself. To do so can be difficult when you are faced with uncertainty. And we must admit, life often presents us with uncertainty. There is plenty to be uncertain about - job, health, loved ones, bills, etc. Habakkuk set a good example for us to be loyal to God in difficult times. In life we tend to depend upon the self. Depending on something greater than yourself is a matter of choice and confidence. When you have confidence in God, you can choose to put your trust in God. You can depend upon the omnipotent God in the midst of uncertainty. The lesson is more than that. The lesson is discerned from Habakkuk's attitude. Habakkuk says "I will rejoice." It is not only a matter of loyalty in difficult times but a joyous response to God. Habakkuk's attitude comes from his faith. He knows he can rejoice, even when things are bad, because of his faith in God.

I want to be careful and make sure I do not to teach you to have blind faith. I will put it in perspective with my own personal life experiences. I admit that when I was a teenager I was a difficult child. I gave my mother plenty to worry about! One day I overheard her say "I just gave up and turned it over to God." Well, excuse me, you can't just give up and turn everything over to God. That would be like a man that wanted a garden. He got a section of land and prayed for a garden but only got weeds. You have to plow, sow seeds, fertilize, and harvest. God provides the soil, sunshine, fertilizer, seeds. You still have to use your hands. You still need to be proactive. God does not do it for you. God helps you.

Even if the food is gone and there is no fruit on the trees, nothing in the fields, and no animals, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength. That is because rejoicing is based on trust. Being able to rejoice is a matter of knowing, not just having hope, but having full faith and confidence that the glory lies in the future. Rejoice because God lives and God provides. I will rejoice because I put my trust and confidence in the promises of God. What we all need to remember is that God's grace is abundant and our response to God's grace is a joyous response.