



FIVE WEIGHTY WOES

Part 3 of Habakkuk

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Habakkuk 1:12-2:20 | March 02, 2003

We've been in Habakkuk. Habakkuk is a – it's a glorious little book. It's basically a journal from a prophet who is surveying the condition of his nation and his people. And he's very, very frustrated because people are doing what they shouldn't be doing, and they're not doing what they should be doing, what the Bible calls sin. There's injustice and carnage and mayhem and all kinds of wrong. And so Habakkuk grows so weary and frustrated that he goes to God and he prays and he asks God, "God, why is the world this way? What is your plan to fix it? And when do you intend to execute that plan?" God then responds to Habakkuk and answers his questions and says, "Well, there's this people group called the Babylonians. They're ruthless, vial, nasty, mean warriors. They've been wanting to crush you guys for a long time, so now I'm going to let them. That's my plan (Laughter)."

Habakkuk says, "I don't really like that plan. That's not the plan I was hoping for." You can imagine if you lived on a block filled with terrible people, and you went to the police department and you said, "Well, what are you gonna do?" You asked them, "What are you going to do?" And they said, "No problem. We're going to drop a bomb on that neighborhood", you'd be like, "But I live there. Can't we do something else?" "Nope. That's the plan." Habakkuk then obviously has some follow-up questions for God. "Wait a second. I have some more questions." So then there's another conversation where Habakkuk asks God a lot of questions, and God answers them. And that's where we pick it up today. We pick up the second conversation between Habakkuk and his God, starting in 1:12.

Habakkuk says, "Oh, Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die." Habakkuk says, "Now, this can't happen. It can't be this way. We're your people. We're on your side. Bad things can't happen to us." Lots of Christians still think that. "I can do whatever I want. I can live however I want. As long as I believe in God, then nothing bad should ever happen to me." And they're wrong. Habakkuk is wrong. God will forgive you of your sin. God will let you into his kingdom if you are his child, but if you decide to sin and you are God's child, that does not mean that he will just take away all the consequences. Okay?

You could said, "Well, I'm a Christian, so I get to spend all my money and have sex and get drunk and be weird and nothing will happen to me." Well, of course it will. You'll be a drunk, perverted Christian. And that's what you'll be. You will have consequence. When you decide to do something, there's consequences for it. Now, God can and does forgive people, but the consequence still remains. And Habakkuk is saying, "Well, we're your people, so we should never get any consequences." And God says, "No. In fact, there are consequences for what you do." That's why many of you, you have committed sins up to this point in your life; and when you become a Christian, you still have to deal with the consequences of those sins. If you racked up all your credit cards, you can't send a letter to your creditor and say, "Well, I met Jesus, so we're even now." You still have to pay the money back. Right?

If you killed somebody and you're in jail, you can't just say, "Well, I met Jesus. Somebody let me out now. I'm gonna go do Evangelism." You got to pay your time. If you do something, there's consequence. They've been sinning, they've been killing, they've been stealing, they've been lying. There's consequence even if you're God's people. He goes on then, and he asks this curious question. "Oh, Lord, you have appointed them", sort of a question, "to execute judgment? ____, you've ordained them to punish?" See, there's God's people and the Babylonians. And God is frustrated with his people, so he's gonna let the Babylonians come and knock 'em around. But who's worse in their moral conduct, God's people or the Babylonians? The Babylonians.

And Habakkuk's like "How can you use these guys? They're worse than we are." It would be like literally if God showed up to your house and said, "Okay, that's it. I'm sick of it. I sent ya to the Bible study, to church, I gave ya a Bible. You know what it says, you know what you're supposed to be doing. You're not paying any attention. You're completely ignoring me. I'm sick of you. Now, what's gonna happen is there's a couple of people that really don't like you, and I'm gonna let them all come over to your house and rough you up 'cause I'm sick of your perversion. You're a real sicko. You think you're all alone. I see everything. I see all the perverts. I know what you're doing. Also, I don't like your mouth. You're always cussing people out and making fun of people. And you don't have any self-control. You lose your temper. You got a real nasty streak in you. So – and it's just sort of shameful. The way you conduct yourself is wrong.

And here's the point: Does God expect more out of people who claim to be Christians or people who don't? He expects more out of people who claim to be Christians. Habakkuk's saying, "They're worse than we are." And he's like "Yeah, but they don't claim to know me. You do. So it's worse." And this is what we do, people love to do this. We find people that are sicker than us and then we compare ourselves to them and then we feel good. All right? That's how half of you choose your friends, right (Laughter)? That's how it works. "Oh, you're sick. You wanna be my friend? I get around you, I feel good. I feel better. When I get around good people, I feel terrible. But I'm not committed to changing, so I'm trying to find someone sicker

than me. And you're a candidate. We could be friends (Laughter)." And that's how it works. That's what Habakkuk's doing. "These guys are worse than us." God says, "Yeah, they are, but if you claim to be one of my people, I expect more from you." All right?

And so we can't just compare ourselves to like the worst people we can find or people that don't know God or people that are doing what they shouldn't do. We should compare ourselves to whom? Jesus. Jesus is God. Jesus is a perfect human being. Jesus is our example. We compare ourselves to Jesus, we always feel convicted and humble (Laughter). You compare yourself to the lowest guy, you know, plankton on the moral food chain, and all of a sudden you could get feeling pretty good, which is the wrong way to go.

I can't wait till I get in the new building. In the new building I can actually move (Laughter). It's like I'm in prison. It's like I'm a dog on a short leash up here. If I move at all, the thing feeds back. I got one step. I can't go Pentecostal, otherwise I'll spit on people (Laughter). It's totally frustrating. At the new building I'm putting down a line of red tape and the whole front of the stage is gonna be mine, the no fly zone. And I'm just gonna scream and yell, and I'm just gonna march up and down (Laughter). It's gonna be great (Laughter). So see ya on the 16th (Laughter). What else does he have to say? Verse 13. Here's what Habakkuk says: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil. You cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?" Here's his question: "God, you're so good. How come you let the bad guys win?" Do you ever feel that way? You ever look out in the world and say, "The bad guys always win. The good guys they never win. How come, God?"

First of all, is God too pure to look on evil? God looks at evil all the time, right? God sees everything. It's not like God's in heaven going, "I just can't tolerate it. It's just way too much. I made the man and the woman. Next thing I know, they're naked and doing crazy things. I had no idea it would come to this. I just can't bear it." God sees everything. Habakkuk's wrong. God sees everything. God comes to earth. He doesn't walk around like this: "I just can't handle it. It's just way –" God sees everything. If God didn't, God couldn't put up with us, God couldn't deal with me. If he wants to hang out with me, he's gonna have to see evil and folly, as you know.

"Why then are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" You and I live in this world where we think there's two kinds of people, good guys and bad guys. All right? My son still thinks this. He's gonna be a super hero when he grows up, and he's gonna kill all the bad guys. There are not good guys and bad guys in the world, but we do play this game, black hat, white hat, good guys, bad guys. Right? Who gets the black hat? Everybody else. Who gets the white hat? Me. Who does this? Everyone. Which means everyone thinks that everyone else should get a black hat except for them. It's interesting how self-deception is so common. We all think that we're good and everybody else is bad. We think that if we ruled the world, it would be better if everyone would just shut up and do what we want. Then it would be a better world. That's why we get very frustrated when people impinge upon our sovereignty and don't recognize that we are a God that sits on a throne and has a right to do things like put on our blinker and actually have people move so that we can get into the lane that is actually ours 'cause this is our dominion.

And there the court jesters just totally ignore us and don't pay any attention to our sovereignty. And we're better than them and they don't know it. So then we collide into each other, and we're arguing over black hat, white hat, who's at fault. And this is how the world works. "I'm good. They're bad. How come the bad guys win?" And the bad guys are looking at us saying, "You're bad." And the truth is this: We're all bad. We're all bad. There's bad guys and really bad guys, but there are no good guys. Dark black hats, black hats, and Jesus. That's all you got (Laughter). Some people are bad, some people are really bad. Some people aren't that bad, and they think they're pretty good, and they're proud and they're proud, and they're really, really bad (Laughter) 'cause that's the worst sin of all.

And that's what Habakkuk says, "How come the good guys win, the bad guys lose?" God says, "There's no good guys. You got this all wrong. There's bad guys and me." He goes on then. He said, "You have made men", Verse 14, "like fish in the sea. Like sea creatures that have no ruler." Right? We're like plankton on this food chain of earth. "We're like", he says here, "fish who get pulled up in a net. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks. He catches them in his net. He gathers them up in his dragnet, and he also rejoices and is glad. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net, burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury, enjoys the choicest foods."

Here's his question: "God, the bad guys win. They get rich, they take advantage of the good guys. And when they make it, they're successful, they get a company, they get lots of money, they sit there and pat themselves on the back. 'Aren't I smart? Aren't I good? I know how to pick good nets. I have a good degree. I started a good company. I'm really, really smart.'" He says, "God, how come you let that happen? How come you let the bad guys succeed and then take all the credit for it, and the good guys don't get any success, and they live in suffering and injustice and misery and sometimes poverty and shame? How come? That doesn't seem right."

And he says in Verse 17, "Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?" Basically, "God, how long is this gonna keep going before you finally get sick of it like I am and you jump in and you do something to fix this huge, messed-up world that we live in? God, when are you gonna show up?" That's his question. And I'll submit this to you: There is a difference between questioning God and accusing him. I hit this last week. Questioning God is when you say, "God, I know you're good. And I look at the earth, and I don't understand what you're doing." Accusing God is saying, "God, you say that you're good. I look at the earth, and you're a liar or you're a failure. You're not doing your job." When we accuse God, what we're saying is, "I'm smarter than you. You should come to me for advice. You obviously don't know what you're doing." Right (Laughter)? Which I would just submit to you that could be, per chance, arrogance. Just something to think about (Laughter).

And when we have questions, we come to God and we say, "God, I just don't understand. Help me understand." That's actually humility, and that's faith. And I would submit to you that Habakkuk is a good example for us all. When he's struggling, when he's got frustration, when he's got questions, where does he go? He goes to God. He says, "God, I don't understand." I'd tell ya the same thing. If you're struggling, you're frustrated, you got questions, open your Bible, pray, take it to God, and wait for God to give ya an answer. Wait for God to give you an answer. And God does that to Habakkuk. He answers his questions twice because Habakkuk is a guy who's asking sincere questions, not giving accusations. And so then he makes

this great statement of faith. In 2:1 Habakkuk says, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. I will look to see what he will say to me and what answer I am to give to this complaint."

What Habakkuk basically says is this: "God, here's where my questions are. You know the answers. I'll just sit here, wait patiently and quietly until you tell me what you want you want me to do, till you tell me what you want me to say, till you tell me what's gonna happen. And whatever you say, whatever you want, that's fine with me." Is that faith? It's total faith. He's like "God, I'm confused, but you tell me how it's gonna go and I'll be fine with that. I love ya, I trust ya. Just tell me what's up." So then God answers his question. And he answers the question by saying, "Okay. You guys are bad, I'm gonna discipline you for your sins. There's gonna be consequences. Those people that are gonna discipline you, the Babylonians, they're wicked too, but don't worry. I'll deal with them as well. I deal with all people. I deal with all sin. I have a big plan."

So here's God's answer in 2:2 to all of these questions. Then the Lord replied "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that the herald may run with it. For the revelation waits in the appointed time, and it speaks to the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it. It will certainly come and not delay." First of all, what you see here is this is how we got the Book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was written 2,600 years ago. You're dealing with an incredibly ancient piece of literature. Very, very ancient. And the way that we got this book is that God spoke to Habakkuk, told Habakkuk to write down exactly what he said, and then hand it to a messenger like one of those crazy guys on a bike down town, and tell him to deliver it right to the appointed destination.

That's what God says. That's how you and I got our Bible. That's how it got all the way from this place 2,600 years ago to Seattle, Washington 2,600 years later is that God speaks to his prophets, the prophets write down what God says, and then that message is delivered. Because God doesn't just speak to a prophet. He speaks through a prophet. God wants everybody to hear from him, and so he'll speak through one mouthpiece, through one megaphone called a prophet. And then that information is written down so that after the prophet is gone and years and years later as we find ourselves here, we can still hear from God by reading exactly what God said to the prophet. That's how we hear from God. He calls that revelation.

All else that we are left with is speculation. Sociology, psychology, anthropology. All of the different disciplines are people taking all the information that is on the earth and trying to connect the dots about life and death and life after death and God and sin and conduct and morality. Some do a pretty good job, some don't do such a good job with that general revelation, but there's lots of things that we wouldn't know like what happens after you die because we haven't been there. We don't know who God is because we're not God. We don't know where we came from because it all began long before we got here. There's lots of questions we just simply don't have any answers to.

And the way we get those is through revelation. God breaks through human history and he tells us. Sometimes he'll speak it to his prophets and they write it down. That's exactly how we got our Bible. And then God ultimately shows up as Jesus, just comes right into human history, and tell us "I'm here. I'm God. Here's where you came from. Here's why you're here. Here's where you're going. And you need to trust me. I'm God." And so God does that so that he breaks through our fog and he breaks through our folly, and he lets us know who he is and what he wants. Otherwise, we're all left just throwing our speculation and conjecture up in the air, hoping that we're getting close to the right answer. And it's written down. That's how you got your Bible. And so when you pick up your Bible, you're not just reading human opinion and philosophy and speculation. You're reading God speaking right here. God speaks.

So when you read your Bible, you are hearing from God. It is being no different than if God came down and spoke directly to Habakkuk. You have the exact same experience when you just read the scriptures because the spirit of God that inspired the writing also illuminates our understanding. And God uses the scriptures to penetrate our hearts and to teach us and to speak to us. And so that's how you got your Bible. It tells us right here. And what he says is this: "Send out the message to all the people, and there will be, in the end", Verse 3, "judgment. There'll be consequence for sin. But it won't happen right away. It will linger. There will be a period of time." All right? Here's my question: Why do you think God says, "There's judgment and consequence and it's coming, here's the message, but I'm not gonna judge you just yet. I'm gonna give a long period of time in the middle"? Why would God do that? To give you an opportunity to repent.

God says, "Here's where you're at, here's where you're going. Here's what happens." And he leaves time in there so we can realize "Oh, I'm running the wrong direction. I'm running towards sin and death, not God. I need to repent, which is turn around. I need to stop going that direction and by grace start going this direction. I need to stop getting further from God, and I need to get closer to God." God does that so that we would repent. It says in Peter that some think that God is slow. "God's not slow", Peter says. "He's patient. Wanting people to repent." As well, we read – Verse 3 says about the end – we know the end. The end is that there will be judgment and there will be consequence and there will be hell for those who do not turn around and come to Jesus.

And some people think "Oh, well, there – that's not true. It hasn't happened yet. It's been such a long time." God has waited this long because he's really patient and he's wanting to give lots and lots of people an opportunity to repent. That's why he has you here today. He loves you, and he's speaking to you through his word, calling you to repentance. To turn from your sin and trust in him. That's exactly what he's doing. That's the whole function of the Bible." Some people think "Well, these things have never happened. The Bible must not be true." They will be true. God's just waiting because he loves you, and he's giving you time. But that's no reason to wait. That should be further incentive to move quickly and to turn from sin and to turn to him.

He says then in Verse 4 that there are basically two kinds of people in human history. We studied this particular verse the first week as our introduction, as the theme of the book, namely faith. He talks about two kinds of people. "See, his – he is puffed up." This is a person who isn't in right relationship with God. Puffed up there is pride. "His desires are not upright." If you're proud, your desires get all crooked. "But the righteous will live by his faith." It says – "There's two kinds of people", God says. "People who trust themselves and people who trust me. People who trust me they're humble. People

who trust themselves they're proud." And your life is either bent out to God or it's bent into you. That's your life.

And what he says here is very, very, very important. Some people think "Well, I'm not a bad person. I have lots of self-esteem, and I'm very successful." Okay? That's pride. We call it self-esteem. The Bible calls it pride. We call it a good thing; the Bible calls it a bad thing. People think "Well, if I just thought more of myself, then I would be more." True. And then you would have more pride and you would be further from God. We get our dignity by being made by God as his image bearers, and our value comes from the fact that God loves us. We don't need to be proud. We could be confident, actually, without being proud. We could actually be more confident than proud people. Humility is stronger than pride. Humility says that "God loves me, God made me, God empowers me, God enables me. I'm, therefore, confident, but confident in God's work in, through and in spite of me."

People that are proud are very arrogant about themselves. "I'm very smart, I'm very healthy, I'm very experienced, I'm very successful, I'm very wise, I'm very strong." And we forget the whole time who gave you wisdom, who gave you strength, who gave you success, who created the day you were born, who created you to live in a particular place, and who brought the opportunities along. When you and I start taking credit for all the goodness of God, we become very proud and puffed up, very full of ourselves, bragging and boasting about ourselves." Paul and Jeremiah both say, "Let he who boasts, boast in the Lord." We should be a people who brag, but we brag about how nice God is to us. So you'll say, "But I came up with this great idea." But God made your mind. "I made this wise investment." But it is God who illuminated your understanding. "Every good and perfect gift", James says, "comes from God."

And we can be a confident people without being an arrogant people. And he says, "You know what? Arrogant people. That's the problem." And Augustine says that "All sin is rooted in pride, that pride is the sin." "It comes down to me or God. Which one will be God? I'm gonna worship myself. I'll be my own God. Pride. I trust me." And all sin comes out of this pride. It is the greatest sin. It's the fountain of all other sins. It's the tape root from which sin springs. And it is the sin that got Satan kicked out of heaven because he thought he was better than God. When it came down to God and Satan, Satan decided that maybe he should be peers with God or that perhaps he should be a ruler over God. And we all do the same thing, particularly when we sin. That's exactly what we're doing. "God says this, but I think this. I'm smart enough. God should bend his knee to me. I have a lot of wisdom."

And out of this issue of pride then he gets into the different ways that pride manifests itself out in life. He's got a list of common sense here beginning in Verse 5. "Indeed, wine betrays him. He is arrogant and never at rest because he is as greedy as the grave and, like death, is never satisfied. He gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples." Here's what he says: "Proud people perennially dissatisfied." That's his point. That's his point. Proud people are always unhappy and dissatisfied. I'll prove it to ya. We think that stuff leads to satisfaction. Right? That's why we have so much stuff. Most of you thought that when you were this age, you would be satisfied.

Most of you thought when you had this amount of education, you would be satisfied. Most of you thought when you had this income level, you would be satisfied. When you bought the car that you drive, when you moved into the residence that you now reside in, when you entered into the relationship that you are now in, you thought when you obtained that, that you would be satisfied. And the next day the place you live isn't exactly what you wanted, you're not happy. The relationship you're in isn't exactly what you wanted. You're unhappy. The sex that you're having isn't exactly what you wanted. You're unhappy. The money you make isn't quite enough. You're not happy. The alcohol you drink isn't enough or it's not good enough. And this goes on and on and on and on and on.

So we go from a TV to a black and white TV that become a colored TV that becomes a large TV with a remote control and surround sound and a DVD player and a nice chair to sit in. And it goes on and on and on. And that's why the world is filled with new and improved. And that's why everybody continually trades up because they're not satisfied with that that they already possess. And here's the secret: Stuff doesn't lead to satisfaction. It doesn't. You ever looked at people who have amazing amounts of money and success and they're depressed or they blow their head off or they go in for drug and alcohol rehabilitation because their despair and despondency is so deep that they're trying to escape from their life of luxury? Is that perplexing? It's because stuff is an illusion. We are a people of stuff. You and I have junk we don't need bought with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like. That's what we do.

And we're greedy like the grave. Never get enough. Never enough power, never enough experience, never enough sex, never enough drugs, never enough alcohol, never enough entertainment, never enough power, never enough fame. Whatever it is that our thing is, there's never enough. We want better and we want more. Thinking that "Well, if I just get a little more of whatever it is, I'll be satisfied. I'll be satisfied with that." And we're not. Why? Because stuff comes from the earth and satisfaction comes from God. They're two totally separate things. That's why one kid can sit in a million-dollar home and play video games on a big screen TV and be bored. Do you know that boredom didn't even exist as a word until fairly recently? In the history of the world, we invented our own word. Boredom. And another kid can be playing with two sticks and a rock and be happy as can be. It has nothing to do with what's in your hands. It has to do with what's in your heart.

It's like this: I might have one piece of chocolate and this other guy buying a whole chocolate factory. Who's happier? It really depends on which one of us has a mouth. You don't have a mouth unless you know God. That's the point. You can have all the stuff you want, but you can't taste any of it, and it doesn't satisfy and there's no joy. That's why you know what? You may have a little and if you love God, you'll actually be a satisfied person. You can have a lot and if you don't know God, it'll never be enough. It's true. It is totally true. That's we'll hit when we hit Ecclesiastes. That's what he's saying here. "Proud people, they're never satisfied." Why? Proud people believe that's satisfaction comes when they have enough. When do you have enough? Never. You never have enough power till you rule the earth. You never have enough stuff until everything under the sun is yours.

Basically, if you are a proud person, you are never satisfied until you're God. Until you own everything and everything is at your beckoning command

and your disposal. And you'll never get there, so you'll always be unhappy. That's what pride does. Welcome to America. Welcome to America. Self-esteem leads to depression. We just run around this cul-de-sac as fast as we can, and then we spend more money. There's got to be a way out. God talks about the fact that there's consequence for pride, there's consequence for sin, there's consequence for life. And he decrees now a series of five woes. "Woe, woe, woe, woe, woe." When God does that, that's bad. Okay? Just so you know (Laughter), that's bad. When God looks at you and he's like "Woe", that's real bad.

A woe here names the sin and the consequence or judgment. So we'll jump into these. Here are sins that offend God that greedy, proud, dissatisfied people tend to go toward. We tend to think we're so enlightened and we're so evolved unlike these primitive societies. You'll find that we are no different. Verse 6. "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn saying, 'Woe to him - ', first woe, '- woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion?' How long must this go on? Will not your debtors and perhaps your creditors suddenly arise and will not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim because you've plundered many nations. The peoples who are left will plunder you for you have shed man's blood, and you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them."

The first woe is to rich people. Okay? Two things I'll hit on this. First thing is who are the rich people? Everyone thinks that the rich people are the people that make just a little more or a lot more than them. It doesn't matter how much you make. The rich guy's always the guy who has a lot more than you. Now, in the world - let's just not compare our society, let's compare the world. Let's compare the world. In the world who are the rich people?

Response: We are.

You are. You're the rich people. You are. There are 90 countries in the world where the average citizen spends less on all of their goods, food, housing, transportation, everything, 90 countries where the average person spends less on those things than you as the average American citizen spend on garbage bags to throw out your junk. You're the rich people. Central heating. So you say, "I don't have a nice place." You have a place (Laughter). For some people that would be nice. You're doing pretty good. You say, "But my car's not very nice." A car? You ever been to a third world country? You ever seen an open sewer? We don't even understand poverty as most of the world does. We are the rich people. Let me ask you this as well: Is it a sin to be rich? No. No. It depends on how you get your money. Okay? I'll tell you this: You can draw two lines on a sheet of paper. You can put together four quadrants. You can take all the rich and poor people in the Bible, you can especially do this in the Book of Proverbs, and you can put them each in one of four categories. Two are rich, two are poor.

In the rich, there are righteous people who are rich. They got rich because God blessed them. Okay? What we tend to do, we tend to break it into prosperity and poverty theology. "Oh, if you make a lot of money, it's 'cause God loves you. Or, no, it's better to have no money 'cause then you'll be closer to God." Both of which are lies. You will see rich and poor people in the Bible who love the Lord. The question is how did you get your money? Righteous people that are rich got their money by working hard, being honest, investing wisely, spending smartly, and not being foolish. If you are very cautious, if you're very smart, if you work very hard, if you spend very little and you invest very much and you become rich, is that okay? Proverbs says that "God gives a man wealth and possessions and adds no trouble to them." It's a good thing.

Can you also be rich and get your money in an unrighteous way? He lists them all here. You can steal your money, extort your money. You could charge exuberant interest. You could stiff your creditors and not pay off your bills. You could plunder, you could kill people, and you could destroy the environment, and you could cause urban and social decay to get yourself rich. Yeah. So the issue isn't are you rich? The issue is how'd you get your money? Also, in the poor column are there people that are poor and righteous? You bet. Some of you don't make as much money as you could because you're honest and you won't lie and you won't steal and you won't back stab and you won't gossip. So you keep getting passed over for promotions, but you're not gonna compromise your ethic just to make more money. You'll probably be poor for a long time 'cause the system is crooked.

Is it a sin to be poor? Not necessarily. But is it a sin to be poor if you're unrighteous? You don't show up to work, you show up late, you're always drunk, you do a terrible job, you steal stuff. All right? Or you're just a slugger, which basically means you started out as a human being, you're on the devolutionary chart, back to the place where you and slug are sharing the same line on the food chain. Your couch is shaped like you because you've been there so long (Laughter) that you've sort of molded into it as a secondary piece of furniture. If you're poor under those circumstances - Paul says, "If you don't work, you don't eat." Getting skinny becomes incentive to get up. So it's not are you rich or are you poor. The issue is are you righteous or are you unrighteous? That's the issue.

So many of us like to make it into a money issue. It's not a money issue. He says here "Woe to those who are the unrighteous rich." Not just the rich. The unrighteous rich. All right? As well, he goes on. He woes some other people in Verse 9, 2:9. "Woe to him who builds his realm, this is his fortune, by unjust gain to set his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin. You have plotted the ruin of many people, shaming your own house and fortifying your life. The stones of the walls will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it." What he says is this: "Woe to you who get rich and make lots of money and make a living in sinful ways and then move far, far away and build yourself a nice fat house like a nest far out in the wilderness away from harm and consequence." There are many people that come into certain countries and pillage them for wealth, and they will not live in those countries because they don't want to live in the environment that they've created. All right? It's corporate sin.

There are people who will do things in a city to make themselves rich that undermine the value of peoples' lives and the quality of living in that urban center. And when they build their big fat house, it's far away from that place where their business is. It's the same reason why, you know, petty thieves and crooks and thugs and criminals tend to commit crimes outside of their neighborhood. People don't want to live around crime, but they like to profit from it, so they do their crime elsewhere. He says woe to people who conduct themselves in places that aren't their home in ways that they would never conduct themselves close to home. That's just wrong. That's just wrong.

And some people say, "But I've covered it. I've got a good attorney. I understand investment and brokering and law, and I've got a good tax guy. And we've got shelters, and I've got it all figured out. I've got it all covered." And God says, "You know what though? At the end of the age there's gonna be a trial. I'm gonna sit on a throne. You're gonna come before me, and I'm gonna call in some witnesses. The rocks that serve as the foundation of your home and the wood out of the ceilings are gonna come in and they're gonna testify. And I'm gonna ask them 'So where did you guys come from in fat nice house?' and they will say, 'He stole us.'" Seriously.

Everything belongs to God, and God can bring testimony from your house. Can you imagine that? You stole all the wood for your porch. You show up before God at the end of the age and you think "Nobody saw me. He can't bring in anybody to testify. I ripped off the wood. Nobody saw." And the porch comes in (Laughter). And God says to the porch "Porch, how did you get on the house?" And the porch says, "He ripped me off. He stole the wood." And the nails say, "Us too (Laughter)." You know, God can do that. God can do anything (Laughter). Don't mess with God. That's the moral of the story. All right (Laughter)?

Okay? And the Bible says that if we don't preach the Gospel, what will cry out?

Response: The rocks.

The rocks will cry out. Right? That's what he's doing this morning. Stupid rock preaching a sermon. He can do anything. Verse 12. Here's the third woe. "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime." Is it possible to build an economy in an urban center on sin? Tuesday is what? Fat Tuesday. Do you think that per chance some businesses may have increased profits in sales? Yes (Laughter). Bead companies, liquor companies. They make profits. Do you think that some towns let bad conduct go on knowing that even though it's unhealthy, it becomes a revenue stream for taxation? A big debate right now in Nevada – we're in a big economic crunch. Everybody's poor.

So the big debate in Nevada is should we tax the prostitutes? The question is not should we have prostitutes (Laughter), which seems like a better question (Laughter). The question though is, you know, they – we don't have enough money – the government says, "We don't have enough money. The prostitutes have enough money. Let's tax 'em (Laughter)." And the issue is, is that really the best way to move like Kindergarten classes into the future is to tax all the prostitutes? Couldn't we come up with a plan B? Isn't there another way to do this? That's why we allow things to happen in a city that aren't good for the city, but they're good for taxes and profit. Like the lotto. Oh, it's just the lotto. It's legalized state gambling.

You know what we found out? This was curious. We were thinking – see, we have to con you into buying chairs 'cause you're all so pathetic and apathetic. So we're trying to find a way to get you to buy chairs for this church. So we thought "Well, let's do a raffle." You know, we can't. It's against the law (Laughter). But you can play the lotto, which means you can gamble with the government and not with your church. That doesn't seem fair. If they're gonna rip you off, I should be able to rip you off (Laughter). That seems fair. But I can't. I'll go to jail. But if you play the lotto, you won't. See, and it's just – and people say, "Well, but the lotto generates so much money." It's kind of an idiot tax really. I mean, if you actually think you're gonna win – but we do. Why do we do that? Because the city's built on bloodshed and crime and all kinds of mayhem. We just tax things.

We don't say, "That's bad." We just tax them really, really high or we find a way to get revenue for our causes. And God says, "Woe. Woe to that. That's just wrong. That's not the way it should work." Verse 13. "Has not the Lord almighty determined that the peoples' labor will be fuel for fire, this stuff just flames up hell? And the nations exhaust themselves for nothing." We'll come back to Verse 14 at the end. "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Number four. Here it is. Some of you this is your weekend. "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pouring it from the wine skin till they are drunk so he can gaze on their naked body." You say, "Oh, that was sin?" Yes, that was a sin (Laughter). You shouldn't have done that on Friday. That was wrong.

Now, we say, "Oh, we're an enlightened, evolved society. We're not so primitive." Anybody – you don't have to raise your hand, but anybody notice that there's a general equation like human being plus alcohol equal nudity, and the more alcohol, the more nudity? It's sort of like a corresponding scale. I'm sure some geometry whiz here could figure it out for us exactly how many drinks it takes to get complete nudity and what variables are involved, but basically that's how the world works. I buy you alcohol until you're naked (Laughter). Right? Right? That's why cheap guys buy cheap alcohol and they're looking for an inexpensive shortcut, but still it's the same principle. How many ladies, you don't have to raise your hand, if you dress in a nice outfit and go to a club on a Friday or Saturday night, do you need to buy your own drinks or will someone else buy them for you?

Guys that were reading Habakkuk will buy you drinks because they know it leads to nudity (Laughter). All right? That's what they're doing. No. That's not what he's saying. What he's saying is that's how people who don't love God operate. Is it okay to get people drunk to get 'em naked? Why else do you think guys buy a round of drinks at the bar? 'Cause they just like to share alcohol and they just like to give away money? No. I've been to a bar. I've never had a guy buy me a drink. There's a reason for that (Laughter). He doesn't want to see me naked. I have to buy my own drinks. All right (Laughter)? He won't even serve me. That guy, make sure he keeps his clothes on (Laughter).

But that's what people do, right? More drinks, more nudity, more sex. That's the way it goes. God says "Woe to that" 2,600 years later. All right? Frat guy surprised. God nailed it (Laughter). Verse 16. Here's what God says: "You want a drink? I'll give ya drink. You'll be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it's your turn. Drink and be exposed. Here's a cup. The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around you. It will disgrace you and cover your glory." What he says is this: "I'll get you drunk, I'll strip you naked, and I'll make fun of ya." All right? Some of you have had that weekend (Laughter). "Hey, where's my pants?" "Hey, we don't know. We hid 'em. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha." You know (Laughter). That's what God's saying. "I give you a drink, it's gonna be my wrath. I'm gonna pants you. We're gonna throw your clothes away and you're gonna – everybody's gonna sit around and mock you." Am I saying that drinking is a sin? Is drinking a sin?

Response: No.

Drinking is not a sin. All right? Jesus, his first miracle was creating upwards of 180 gallons of wine (Laughter). All right? His first miracle is bartending (Laughter). Jesus also drank. Drinking is not a sin. Getting drunk is a sin. Why do people get drunk? Usually because they want to get naked (Laughter). All right? And some people get drunk so that they can get naked and excuse it on the alcohol. Some of you have done that in the past. "It wasn't my fault. I was drunk. Yeah. I had two beers and all my clothes flew away (Laughter). I'm a total Jagermeister victim. That's what I am (Laughter)." No, you're not. Verse 17. A couple other sins. "The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you." What's in Lebanon? Trees. Beautiful forests. Cedar trees. When they went to make the temple and such, that's where they got 'em. It is beautiful, pristine, virgin forest, mature. Glorious. "Woe to you", he says, "who go into my forest lands and devastate them. Woe to you who go into my beautiful creation and clear cut and destroy."

It is a sin to chop down a tree? Nope. But should you go into – you know, should we go into the Redwood National Forest and create carpools for people? Probably not. You know, when there is majestic and pristine portions of creation, there needs to be a respect for those places. Is it a sin to kill an animal? Nope. The first person to kill an animal was God to cover his sinful children. But is it a sin to kill animals without cause or need? Is it a sin to harm an animal, to be cruel? Is it a sin just to neglect your own pet? Yes, it is. It is because God doesn't care just about us. He cares about all of his creation. And God is over us and we're under God and then creation is under our dominion. We're supposed to steward the earth and look after it as God's good creation. And so we should treat the earth in the way that God treats us, with respect and with grace and with thoughtfulness.

And just littering and dumping and sewage into streams and over consumption and filling of landfills and – something to think about. Something to think about. The environmentalists aren't all wrong. Now, most of them worship the wrong God. They turn creation into their object of worship and they forget all about the creator. But as God's people, we should still, out of this admonition, have a concern for creation. Psalm 19 and Romans 1 says that "Creation is a sermon that God's preaching to us about him." We see that God is glorious and beautiful, powerful and lovely. And as we destroy God's creation, we're taking away a lot of the great sermons that he's trying to preach. Beautiful sunsets and clean water and fresh air and glorious fall days where the colors explode from the hand of a gracious God.

And God says, "I do love my people and I care about them, but I also care about the animals and the trees and the environment that they're destroying 'cause I've given it to 'em, and they need to be good stewards of it." This has huge implications for your environmental affect and for your social affect that God says it's there. Even if you don't take your dog out for a walk (Laughter), don't let 'em get any exercise, you feed your cat till they're super duper fat (Laughter), you think God cares? Yeah. God cares about the fat cat and a lazy dog (Laughter). God cares about everything. God's a gracious God. Everything he made is important to him.

He says, "For you've shed man's blood, that's murder. You've destroyed lands and cities and everything in them." He then transitioned to this concept of idolatry. "Of what value is an idol since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation. He makes idols that cannot speak." And here's the fifth and final woe. It's on idolatry. "Woe to him who says to wood 'Come to life' or to lifeless stone 'Wake up.' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver, but there's no breath in it." Where he starts is this: He says, "All sin comes out of pride." And what pride leads to is idolatry. Everything he's just talked about is idolatry. And that is this: Your whole life belongs to God. Your pets, your dollars, your diet, your friendships, your job, your sex life, your alcohol. It all belongs to God, and you're either using it in a way that is idolatrous or worshipful. Either it's bent out toward the living God or it's bent back in toward you. That's all that it is.

Peter Kreeft, the great philosopher, says that "The opposite of Christianity is not atheism. It's idolatry." Every single one of you, Christian and non, is a worshiper. You're built to worship, and so you do. Some of us do that for a sports team. We raise ourselves to a great height of frenzy to give glory. Some of us do that for a rock band. Some of us do that for a hobby, a golf game, a Bass boat. Some of us do that for an education, a relationship, an experience. We all have something that our intentions and our motives and our desires and our dollars and our energy and our passion gravitates towards. You know, Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is." Basically, if you follow your schedule and you follow your wallet, you'll end up at your God.

AW Tozer says that "Idolatry is worshiping anything other than God, or God as anything less than he's revealed himself to be", which means you may still believe in God or be spiritual or worship Jesus, but you may have cut out all the things that you don't like about him and diminish God down to a point where he doesn't have judgment for sin or he doesn't have hell or there isn't consequence. You end up with this sort of diminished, neutered, limp-wristed, sky fairy you call Jesus, and you bow down to him because he's backed down to the scope that you are willing to accept. And that's idolatry too. And worship is saying "That's who God really is, and all that I have and all that I am is bent toward him because we all and our stuff is his." And what perennially happens is this: You and I pick terrible gods.

And we read this and we say, "Yes. Thank God we're not so primitive as these people who would carve a little thing out of wood, and then bow down to it and wait for it to save them and make them happy and fix their life." All right? You go into a Buddhist home or you go into a Hindu home or you go into an Animistic home, and usually you'll see a little altar that they've made with their own hands. A little tiny box. And the box costs a lot of money, and they put money in the box, and they put food around the box and incense around the box, and there's a false god on the box. And they spend time giving devotion and homage to the box. And we walk in and we read this, and we say, "How silly."

And we go home and we turn on our freakin' TV (Laughter) and there's our stupid manmade box. And we give it homage a couple hours a day. We give it a tithe, \$39.95 a month for basic plus whatever movie channels you want to add on top of that (Laughter). We hook it up to all its auxiliary additional gods like surround sound and amplifier and video game player and DVD receiver. Right? And then we sit there all day just sort of offering ourselves up to this God, waiting for him to bless us and make us happy with a remote control. Right? "God, please answer my prayer. I want to see a

naked woman. I want to see an automotive race. I want to see two fat men in the ring beating each other up and pretending it's real. Whatever it is God, I'm now just seeking out the answer to my prayers. Thank you, Lord, there's enough channels so that I could sit here and worship in utter devotion." That's what we do. Their box is wood. Ours is steel and plastic and glass. No different. No different.

I've got a good friend in East India. 89 churches in East India. He runs an orphanage. I went down there. It was crazy. Go in everybody's home, a little box, a little God, a little shrine. You go by the side of the road, ___ we were there, you'd duck into these little huts and there's chicken feathers and blood everywhere. They're slaughtering animals, and there'll be fruits and offerings to these little gods all over the place. Talked to his wife. I say, "Your husband comes to the United States of America a lot." We're having dinner at her house. "How come you don't come to the United States of America very much?" She says, "I can't handle all the idolatry."

See, and that's the way it works. When you're in your culture, you don't see idolatry. You just see hobbies and events. When you go into another culture, you see all their hobbies and events as idols. "Man. You're giving all your money, all your time, all your talent, all your treasure, all your passion. You're whole life is for this thing. This created thing, this stupid car that you want to get 17-inch rims and a big sound system in or this stupid band that you're willing to chalk down all your money to chase them around the country or this stupid TV show that you skip Bible study and rearrange your whole life so that you never miss an episode. Or you drop hundreds of dollars on a TiVo to make sure that you can worship repeatedly and watch it over and over and over."

We don't see it that way because when it's in our culture, it just looks like normalcy. It just looks like regular life. You walk into another culture, you got a whole other angle. They go "Man. That car's a big idol of yours. That TV's a big idol of yours. That sex life is a big idol of yours. You know, the way you look is a big idol. You spend about an hour or two hours a day looking at yourself, sort of wading to the place where your glory shines forth so that you're a good object of worship." She starts asking all these questions. I'm like "Oh, I feel really convicted." Because in America the idol is me. And here's the key about idolatry. It is not things that you hate that will force you to bow down and worship them. It is things that you love that you will do so gladly, all the way down to a relationship where someone will chuck their faith, chuck their love for God, chuck all their convictions just so that they can be with this person that they value more than Jesus.

And worshipping created things, even people or things that people make rather than the Creator is what Romans 1 says. And we all do it. We're all guilty as charged. And what he saying here is – God's saying, "Here's the problem. My people and all people are crooked, bent, and they're going the wrong direction. They're proud, full of themselves, and they're idolatrous, chasing everything but me." And it comes out in all these ways. You can see where – their alcohol and their sex and their income. And you can see how they get money and how they spend money. And you can see it, but the question is what are you gonna do? 'Cause we read this list and we say, "Yeah, the city should be better, people should be different, sex should be different, alcohol should be different, crime should be different, income should be different, folly should be different." And God says, "I'm the only one who can really do anything about this. People need me."

And this is where morality falls down. You can tell people "Be good", but they don't have the means to become good. They need to become new people. The world is a reflection of our heart, and the world doesn't change until our heart does. Change begins inside out, not outside in. So God has to change us each individually from the inside out, save us from sin and death and folly, make us new people. That's why Jesus came, to die for my sin, past, present, and future, to rise to conquer enemies of sin and death, to make me a new creation. That's who God is. And I'll close with these two things. In 2:14 God says what the whole point of this patience and frustration is, he says, "For the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." That's what God wants. God wants his name and his fame and his reputation to go out across the earth as water covers the land, so that people will know that Jesus is God, that Jesus has come to die for their sin, that Jesus will save them, that they need not face judgment, that they need not taste death, that he alone is God.

God wants his knowledge to go out through the earth about him. That's God's point. That's God's plan. That is supposed to happen through God's people. God loves us, saves us, and then uses us as conduit through which the good news passes to someone else. But many of us fall into the same trap as these people saying, "Well, screw them. I just want more stuff. And how come I'm not happy. And, God, where are you? I thought I was supposed to get more stuff and get more joy." And God says, "You're not participating with me in the mission. If you were, you would have your joy and satisfaction. If your goal was to have people know me rather than have people worship you, you would have a completely different outlook on your existence."

I would just submit this to you guys as well: Most of you love what God has done for you. You're frustrated 'cause you wish he would do more, and you haven't even considered the multitudes that don't even know him. We're in the least church city in the United States of America. God's giving us a building where between adults and children we can house over 2,000 people on a Sunday. What that indicates to me is there's a huge church out here in Seattle, and God's sending us out to look for it. He has an intention for his name to go out and for people to love him and have their sins forgiven. And we have to be, like God is calling Habakkuk to, a consecrated people who say, "Well, you're right, God. My idols get my time, my prayer, my energy, my money. And I just go to church thinking, 'Hey, I have a right. Somebody else should pay the bills, do the work, God owes me and so do his people.'"

And what God confronts in us today is the same thing he's confronting in the day of Habakkuk and that is it's not about us. It really is about God. And until we accept that, we're never gonna be a happy, satisfied people because we're worshipping ourselves. And the bottom line is this: We're not very good gods. And only the real God satisfies. We're in the toughest season we've ever been in. Going from 200 seats to 1,700. Going from a little service to 2 services that will cost 300 volunteers just to pull off 2 services. Don't even have money for chairs. We'll sit on the floor. That's fine. Whatever. But most of you really have not even thought about the fact that you exist for the Gospel to go out to the city so that things and people change, and that you

come here like you would come to a business like a customer saying, "Well, take good care of me. Meet my needs. And if I feel so motivated, I'll give you a little bit in comparison to what I give my idols." And as a people, we just – we need a reorientation. That's what Habakkuk is being called to.

And so the key then, and I'll close with this, is in Verse 20. "But the Lord is in his holy temple. God sits in heaven. We're down here on earth. So let all the earth be—" what? "Silent. Silent before him." He calls Habakkuk to a season of silence saying, "Habakkuk, I've answered all your questions. I've come to be with ya. I love ya. I have a plan. Just trust me. Don't fight with me, don't yell at me, don't argue with me. Just trust me now. There's nothing left to say. There's nothing left to say." In silence – it says in the Bible that "Jesus often went through to lonely places to be alone with the Father." Sometimes you just need to be quiet. Most of us don't need a lot more information. We just need a lot more faith. We don't need to know anything more. We just need to trust what we already know. And that comes in silence. In silence you can confess your sins, and God will forgive you and love you. In silence you can meditate and ponder on who God is and what he's done for you through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

In silence, as well, you can learn to trust God and grow in faith with the things that he has for you. And in silence God will give you a heart for those people that don't know him, so that you don't just look at them and say, "I like having them around 'cause they're so sick that they make me look good", but it actually breaks your heart that people are ensnared in sin, and that they need God's grace as you've obtained it. It's a reorientation of our hearts as we get time with God. And what Habakkuk is looking for is "God, where's the blessing?" And what God is answering is saying, "Look. Just get close to me." God brings it right back to relationship. Just get quiet and get with me, and from there things will move forward and things will work themselves out. Okay? That's what we're gonna call you guys to this morning. Silence for meditation, confession, contemplation, reorientation, asking God to expose your pride and your idolatry and how that show itself up in all these different ways.

Then we'll sing and celebrate. We'll get into it next week. That's where Habakkuk goes. Chapter 3 is a song. We'll take communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. It's Jesus. He's our God. He's our only hope. The only hope for Seattle is not more environmental laws, more taxes, more programs and more isms. The only hope is that Jesus changes peoples' hearts and that change begins from the inside out. And so we want the knowledge of God to go forth. But if we're muddying up the works, then we're slowing down God's work. We'll take our offering as well. If you're a visitor, not a Christian, you're not expected to give. If you're not a Christian, don't partake of communion until you've turned from sin and turned to Jesus.

And the offering boxes are at the back – in the back, in the front. You can send it in. Whatever. It's between you and God. But I just want to encourage you guys. It's a day for consecration. Next week we'll worship and celebrate. And then we move to see what God has for us as a people.

Father, God, we love you. We pray that – as you intend, that the knowledge of you would go forth in our city as waters cover the earth. God, it's our prayer as well that first you would consecrate our hearts as a people, that we would see our own pride and that we would see our own idolatry. That we would realize that most of our life is honestly about us. And I pray, God, we wouldn't get into the foolish issues of morality and rich versus poor and that, God, we would be about righteousness and unrighteousness. That we would be a people who love you and stick close to you and that we would love other people and encourage them to do likewise.

God, it's my prayer for us all that we would end up like Habakkuk. In prayer, in silence, and in faith, waiting and trusting in you. And, God, it's our prayer that we would draw close to you today and that you would prepare us for what you intend. We certainly love you for your goodness. We thank you for how you've provided for us. God, may we learn to be satisfied with what we have and satisfied in you. And, Lord, God, realizing that the stuff and the experiences of life are a means, but they are no ends, and we are not, not, not satisfied apart from you. We love you, and we thank you. In Jesus' good name. Amen.