

**Habakkuk 3:17-19**  
Joy will break through!

**11 December 2016**  
**West Baptist Church**

**2**

## **Introduction**

Look at the world!

It seems out of control.

On the international scene there's Syria.

Rebels are fighting the Syrian government.

The American are helping the rebels,

the Russians are bombing them.

The Syrian government is fighting the rebels and ISIS

the Russians and Americans are both bombing ISIS.

Caught in the midst of all the chaos and destruction

a multitude has fled the country,

over a million of them making their way to Europe.

The whole thing is out of control,

a total mess.

But closer to home

things aren't all that great here in New Zealand.

There's unemployment,

and homelessness,

protest about the TPP,

domestic abuse and murder.

Things often seem out of control.

Even in families things can seem out of control.

Here's a single mum with two children.

A while back she found another man to live with.

Her new partner

shouts at her,

## **Introduction: Video Clip!**

<sup>17</sup> *Even though the fig trees have no fruit*

*and no grapes grow on the vines,*

*even though the olive crop fails*

*and the fields produce no grain,*

*even though the sheep all die*

*and the cattle stalls are empty,*

<sup>18</sup> *I will still be joyful and glad,*

*because the Lord God is my savior.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Sovereign Lord gives me strength.*

*He makes me sure-footed as a deer*

*and keeps me safe on the mountains.*

## **Let's pray and commit out time to Lord Jesus Christ!**

Father, thank you for this morning

that we can come together in your name again

and learn more about you through the story of Habakkuk.

Father, please may your Holy Spirit be with us and teach us.

Open our minds and give us your wisdom

to understand your word by your Holy Spirit.

We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.

### 3

and says cruel things that really hurt her.  
 Just recently she's found out  
 that he's been hiding drugs in the house.

She had these kind of problems with her former-husband.  
 and now the same thing is happening all over again.

Her family life is a mess.

Whichever way you look,  
                                   international,  
                                   domestic,  
                                   personal,  
 so often it seems that everything has turned to custard,  
 and God...?  
                                   Where's God in all this?  
                                   Where is God when it hurts?

#### 1) Habakkuk complaints!

In our Scripture this morning  
 here's someone asking exactly the same question—  
 Habakkuk  
 a spokesman for God 600 years before Jesus.

In verses 2-4 he describes his world.  
                                   It's out of control too.

Everywhere Habakkuk looks he can see only one thing—  
 violence,  
 trouble,  
 wrongdoing,  
 destruction  
 and injustice.

### 4

Good people suffer,  
 bad people go laughing all the way to the bank.  
 No wonder Habakkuk is unhappy and complains to God.

Why do bad things happen to good people?  
 Why is there so much injustice and wrongdoing?

If God is the living God,  
 a God who cares for his people  
                                   why does he just sit on his hands  
                                   and do nothing?

                                  Where is God when it hurts?  
 As Christians, I think it's ok to ask these kinds of questions.  
 We might think of lacks faith or show weaknesses  
 But it's ok.

#### 2) God answers!

Well, here's God with an answer.  
                                   "Listen," he says to Habakkuk,  
                                   "I'm not doing nothing.  
                                   I'm raising up a foreign power,  
   the Babylonians."

"They're a fierce and restless people,  
 and they are marching across the world to conquer it.

Their horses are faster than leopards,  
                                   fiercer than hungry wolves.  
 They are like eagles swooping down to attack their prey.

"Kings they treat with contempt,  
 rulers they laugh at,  
 no fortress can stop them....

5

and, Habakkuk,  
they're going to conquer your land,  
overrun it,  
and put an end to all the troubles you complain about.

Maybe you feel God is doing nothing.  
Just he is quiet doesn't mean He's asleep!

"I am not doing nothing, God said"

In fact,  
what I **am** doing is so amazing you won't believe it,  
even when you hear about it."

**3) God's answer leaves Habakkuk completely dissatisfied and puzzled.**

But God's answer  
leaves Habakkuk completely dissatisfied and puzzled.

Puzzled, because the Babylonians are a wicked people.

*Lord, he says in verses 12 and 13 of chapter ,  
from the very beginning you are God.  
You are my God, holy and eternal.  
yet you have chosen the Babylonians  
and made them strong so that they can punish us.  
Even though we are more righteous than they are?"*

See why Habakkuk is perplexed?  
The God Habakkuk knows  
is holy and just and righteous.  
So how can a holy and just and righteous God  
use such an evil nation  
to sort out problems among the Jews,  
his own people.

6

Sure, the Jews might not be all that great,  
but they're certainly better than the Babylonians  
who think they're successful  
because of their own strength,  
their own war machine.

How can a holy God  
go along with all that?

We can feel for Habakkuk.

Many of us here are praying for our nation,  
and asking for things to be turned around  
so that people will respect God  
and do what is right with each other.

Now imagine God answering our prayers by saying,  
"OK, I'm going to do what you ask.  
I'm going to send ISIS to invade New Zealand  
to punish your nation  
and get you all back on track.

Wouldn't you have problem with that?  
ISIS?  
To reform New Zealand?  
New Zealand is God zone.  
How can God use an evil force like ISIS  
to do his holy work?

That's exactly Habakkuk's question.

*"Lord," he says "our nation is wicked. Reform it."  
"Fine, says God. " To do the job I'll send someone worse!"  
God does answer prayer,*

but not always in the way we want or expect.

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts,  
his ways higher than our ways.

We don't always understand what he is doing,  
and that leaves us feeling unhappy  
and puzzled.

#### 4) How do we handle this?

So how do we handle this?  
The answer's here in verse 4 of chapter 2.

In a world that seems out of control,  
we may not understand what God is doing  
but the answer, as Habakkuk is told,  
is to remain faithful to the very end.

“In all that's coming,” says God  
*“the righteous will live by his faith” (2:4).*

That's the lesson Habakkuk has to learn. It's the lesson we have to learn.

Here is one good example  
how I handle when my world is out of control.

In 2010, I nearly turned away from God because at that time,  
I didn't know what to do,  
and I felt at a great distance from God,  
and that made me feel so sad and depressed.

I was asking lots and lots questions to God  
but I couldn't receive any obvious answers from Him.  
That was not easy! But one of the things  
I always remember in my life is that no other way  
I could come to New Zealand, if it wasn't by the Grace of God,

that I could live here. Even though I have faced many challenges,  
I still remember what he has done in my life.  
And that I could look on the brighter side of my life  
and that made better and gave me strength and confidence.

We survive by faithfulness,  
even when God appears to be doing nothing,  
appears to be doing nothing for the truth is that  
God is not doing nothing. He is doing something.

And we know that God is doing something because of Jesus.  
God started his new creation 2000 years ago.

In the meantime we survive by faithfulness.  
Even though our world turns to custard,  
and we struggle with our health,  
our study, our job,  
our marriage or our singleness,  
our friendships or our future,  
we carry on being faithful to God and what He wants.

Remember a Virgin Mary's story?  
She responds to God with humility and courage,  
even when she is facing in a fearful situation,  
she still looks on the bright side of the problem,  
so she can praise God with joyfully songs.  
Like Mary, we can always look on the bright side. God is on our side.  
You can't choose a problem in life but you can choose how you're going  
to react or respond.

When bad things happen to Mary in **Luke 1:46-48,**

*“Mary said, My soul glorifies the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.”*

9

In Mary’s story, she is taking a risk with her life  
 But Mary remains faithful even though confused and protesting,  
     she hangs in there  
     and finally understands the wisdom of God  
     and she can praise and glorify God with her joyful heart.  
 Mary learnt the lesson of faithfulness  
     and she looked on the bright side of the problem.

Habakkuk learnt it too. Listen to where he comes to at the end of his book (3:17-19).

*17 Even though the fig trees have no fruit  
 and no grapes grow on the vines,  
 even though the olive crop fails  
 and the fields produce no grain,  
 even though the sheep all die  
 and the cattle stalls are empty,  
 18 I will still be joyful and glad,  
 because the Lord God is my saviour.  
 19 The Sovereign Lord gives me strength.  
 He makes me sure-footed as a deer  
 and keeps me safe on the mountains.*

**Conclusion:** That’s the kind of faith we need too.

In a world that is falling apart,  
     when even the fruit trees fail  
     and the sheep  
     and cattle are all gone,  
 we will still be joyful and glad  
     through prayer and be positive in any situation  
     because the Lord God is our Saviour.

There are two ways to look at the problem.

10

No matter what is the problem, two ways to look at it.  
 You can look on the bright side of the problem or you can choose the dark side of the problem. Like the person who looks on the dark side, can find something bad in anything.

On the other hand, the person like “**Habakkuk**” or “**Mary**,” who looks on the bright side, can find something good in anything.

Think about how you react!  
 The most important thing we need to do is  
     to look on the bright side like **Habakkuk** and **Mary**.

No matter what happens in your life,  
     God is on our side, so next time you get sad or mad,  
     or when your world is out of control,  
     you need to look on the bright side and that make you feel “**Joy!**”

To conclude, let’s watch a video clip of  
     how some Iraqi Christian refugees celebrate Christmas in Jordan.  
 Even though they were facing a fearful situation,  
     they were still celebrating the birth of Jesus.

In the tangled mess of the world, here is our faith—  
     trust in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Let us pray:**

Father, thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ  
who has brought to us a good of great "Joy."  
that will be all the people.

Father, please grant us strength in hard times,  
faith in moments of doubt,  
and courage in all circumstances

Father, thank you for the example of Habakkuk and Mary  
Who show us how we can trust You  
and rejoice in You Always!  
when our world is out of control.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.