

“A VISION’S TIMING” (8/29/10)

SCRIPTURES: Habakkuk 2: 1-11 & John 2: 1-11, 17: 1-5

KEY CONCEPTS: Following God involves not only the vision – involving people, process & resources – but also the need for proper timing & unwavering faith & patience.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION:

Today is the 5th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina – August 29, 2005 – this category 5 hurricane slammed into the MS Gulf Coast, destroying everything in its path. Many of us were directly affected by this storm because we have family that still lives there. As you may remember, Our Hope MCC sent several loads of items to the affected areas & 5 of us even spent a week in Biloxi, MS helping clean up, rebuild & serve the people of that area.

I would ask that we remember the people of the Gulf Coast on this anniversary & as they continue to deal with the consequences of the oil spill from April 20, 2010.

WILL YOU PRAY WITH ME?

PRAYER:

CONTINUED ILLUSTRATION:

I want to talk to you for a moment about timing & how bad timing might have made things worse back in August 2005. Although I can’t say there’s ever a good day for a hurricane to hit, I can say that August 29 was not a good day for the people of AL, MS & LA.

For you see, Katrina could not have come at a worse time. Think with me about the timing... It was near the end of the month & a number of the most vulnerable people – those receiving social security, those receiving supplemental checks, etc. – had not yet received their monies that would have enabled them to reach higher ground or a safer place. People who usually got paid on the 1st of the month had not received a pay check either. Some people stayed because they literally did not have the money to leave their homes – to put gas in the car, pay for a hotel room or purchase enough food to last until the Sept. 1st – which was 3 days away.

For some people, the timing of Katrina was the difference between making it & not making it. Timing, of course, is essential to many things. And today we’ll look at how important timing was in the life of Jesus Christ – as well as ancient advice from the minor prophet, Habakkuk on faithfulness during hard times while trusting God’s timing & vision.

GOSPEL READING – JOHN 2: 1-11 & 17:1-5:

Broadly speaking, the book of John points to Jesus as both a human & social being. The first reading from John, chapter 2, is found in the section of John (1:19-4:54) where Jesus & his public ministry primarily as objects of people’s faith. People are very interested in Jesus & what he was able to do during this early time of his 3 year ministry. John, chapters 2 & 17, both point to the importance of Jesus’ total commitment to fulfilling God’s vision/purpose for Him in the proper time & in the proper way.

The wedding at Cana: is a social gathering. The mother of Jesus came to him with an issue – the wine was gone – which would be a huge embarrassment to the groom & his family if the guests realized the wine had run out. Jesus’ reference in verse 4, “woman” was a term of respect & affection. His overall response “***that his hour had not yet come...***” referred to his future time on the cross which was not to be determined by his mother’s desires. Changing water into wine was a sign that Jesus was connected to God – & was a means to a greater end – which was to point people to a God that was larger than any single act/sign.

In *John 17*, Jesus prayed for himself & openly acknowledged that his time, his hour, had come to glorify (& honor) God in the greatest of all possible ways – to give his life for the people whom God loved. The book of John recounted Jesus as he meticulously & deliberately created a ministry of compassion, love & spiritual depth that many missed while he was among them.

In *John 17: 5*, Jesus acknowledged that the hour has come for him to “finish the work that God had given him to do...” And even though the work was brutal & harsh, Jesus faced it because he was clear about the vision that he had been called to complete.

APPLICATION:

So, how clear are we with God’s calling & vision? Sometimes, God calls for us to endure & walk through some truly hard circumstances & situations. And some of us have been blessed to realize that we need God during the really hard times of life.

- Like the death of a child, a parent, a grandparent or a lover
- Like the loss of a relationship, a job or our 401k
- Like the stress of lower property values, aging parents, sick family members

I would imagine that everyone in this room today is dealing with some hard circumstance or tough situation. This season or this time of difficulty will pass, yet in the meantime, how are you responding & how is your faith? Are you still looking to God or are you blaming God?

In our Hebrew reading, from Habakkuk 2, we may find some words of comfort & resonance.

HEBREW READING – HABAKKUK 2: 1-11:

The book of Habakkuk reflects the struggles of Judah between the time of King Josiah’s death (609 BCE) & the first deportation of exiles to Babylon in 597 BCE. The key question that is asked in this book of a minor prophet: **“Is this fair?”** How many of us would like an answer to that question today?!

- Is it fair that those who are seeking God don’t ever seem to catch a break?
- Is it fair that those who are so oppressive, evil & hateful seem to prosper?
- Is it fair that so many of us seek God’s vision, God’s plan & yet life is one roller coaster challenge after another?
- Is it fair that some righteous people often struggle from day to day just to have their daily needs met?

These are all valid questions that are looked at in the book of Habakkuk which is only 3 chapters long. I recommend this book, along with the other books toward the end of the Hebrew Bible.

Habakkuk, *Chapters 1 & 2*, encompass a dialogue between God & the prophet, with Habakkuk lamenting the injustices of his current society & raising questions about God’s ability to justly govern the world. (1:2-11, 1:12-2:24)

The prophet questions the injustice of *“why the wicked swallow up the more righteous people.”* (1:13)

God’s answer: “To wait, faithfully, for an appointed time; for the injustice will indeed be addressed (2:2-4). Ultimately, the eternal answer to the question, **“is life fair?”** is valid.

Ultimately, God is still sovereign; God is still working & in God’s own way & in God’s proper time, God will deal with the wicked, oppressive & hateful of the world.

Our job – our responsibility: To be faithful, to be righteous & to live by our faith (2:4). We are also called to grow up, to mature spiritually & to be persistent, patient & even tenacious in adhering to & obeying the instructions of God, while believing in the promises of God.

CLOSING QUOTE: “*A Network of Mutuality*” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

There are some things in our social system to which all of us ought to be maladjusted.

Hatred & bitterness can never cure the disease of fear, only love can do that.

We must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression & retaliation.

The foundation of such a method is love.

Before it is too late, we must narrow the gaping chasm between our proclamations of peace & our lowly deeds which precipitate & perpetuate war.

One day we must come to see that peace is not merely the distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at the goal.

We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.

We shall hew out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.