

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 2021

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Anytime Now Lord!"

Based on Habakkuk 3:17-19

It seems that whenever there was trouble in the ancient world, a prophet would appear, "A voice in the wilderness, calling." (Isaiah 40:3).

Whenever the people of YHWH strayed too far from their faith for too long, a prophet's voice would cry out for them to repent and return to the temple.

When armies invaded and long exiles into foreign lands through hot desert sands claimed the lives of many, a prophet's voice would emerge from the wailing, pleading with the people to hold on, for their God was unfailing and theirs would be the victory in the end.

When the people of YHWH became despondent that they had been forgotten and set aside by the all-powerful GOD, the songs of the prophet would scold their despair, and remind the people of God's

steadfastness through all things.

But Habakkuk? Who the heck is Habakkuk? Well, he was a tiny little prophet with a tiny little book very near the end of the Old Testament. His short writing has sometimes been subtitled,

"Conversations with God in confusion and crisis." Sounds like it should be a late night documentary on Public Television.

"Ah," you might be saying to yourself right now. "We certainly have confusion, and some parts of the country have crisis. You're getting warmer!"

You see, the proclamations of a prophet were not generally well liked. Nor were the prophets themselves often well liked. That's because, what they had to say was difficult news: difficult to get your head wrapped around, and difficult to actually do something about. Prophets were often saying things like, "Get back to church! Read your Bible. Stop doing things only for profit. Take care of each other. Stop throwing your faith away." The prophets demanded more than just lip service. They

demanded changes in character, priorities, trust, and respect for YHWH. And these things were a lot harder to do, than just showing up at church once in a while to shut down the gossip line. Prophets said it like it was, and were often quite unpopular because of it.

I will be getting to the joy bit, so just stick with me for a bit longer!

What makes the prophet Habakkuk different, is that instead of scolding the people, we find Habakkuk scolding God. Habakkuk looked around his world and saw confusion, he experienced crisis moments, and he was waiting for the 'other shoe' to drop. He knew his God well enough to remember the stories of God's sweeping justice, and His wrath, and His lifting of oppression. Habakkuk was looking at the situation around him, and waiting, and waiting and waiting...

"Anytime now, God. You just say the word and I'm your voice right here in Vernon. Anytime, now. Waiting. Ooo, see that over there? Doesn't that deserve a little of your wrath?"

Doesn't that need a little 'feel good moment'?
Come on, now.
Just sweep that might hand of Yours and let it fly.
I'm ready for it.
I can take it.
Come on, God, You got to give me something.
Booming voice from the heavens maybe?
Intense storm from the mountains?
How about a miracle or two?
Hey.
God.
You awake up there?
When are you going to take action?
Anytime, Lord.
Anytime."

Habakkuk was courageous enough to give voice to an inner longing pushing against the 'confusion and crisis' I think we are all feeling as COVID drags on and on. For myself, as Ontario moved into a 'Shelter in Place' phase this week, I felt a tightening on my heart: thankful that I am here, where there is of course, real concerns around COVID', but more mindful than ever that my parents, my oldest daughter and grandchildren are in a part of the country where the word "crisis' has emerged.

We are weary of it all, and I suspect there is a part of each of us that longs to say to God, "Anytime now, Lord. I have been faithful, and I know You are steadfast. But a word from

You right now would go a long way. A sign. A whisper."

So now the joy.
Habukkuk says,
*"I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.
The Sovereign Lord is my strength, he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights. (v18-19)*

Nothing was going the way Habukkuk thought it should be.

YHWH wasn't responding the way Habukkuk thought He should.

The leaders of Habukkuk' days were not leading the way He thought they should.

The people were not behaving the way they knew how to.

Yet Habukkuk said, "I will rejoice."

He did not say "Somehow through all this I will be happy."

He said, "I will rejoice."

The ancient Hebrew of his phrase is even more archaic, "I will joy."

It's a verb.

It's an action.

And there's our answer for the moment.

"I will joy."

Let that roll around in your mouth for a minute.
I will joy.
In the midst of confusion and crisis,
I will praise.
I will laugh.
I will share.
I will love.
I will joy.

And now I don't need God to act.

Because He just did.

I will joy.

Amen.