**Sunday, March 14th, 2021**

**Habakkuk 2:1-4, 3:14-19**

What if this year is worse than last year?

What if there is more suffering?

What if there are more trials?

More problems?

More difficulties?

More confusion?

It all started so well didn't it?

2020 was our year, a new decade, and didn't it just sound so amazing – 2020.

A year we could accomplish anything!

It was to be a year of great new adventures, new discoveries,

           and new opportunities.

But it wasn't so amazing by the time we got to March, April, May, and June.

Co-vid 19. Infection rates sky rocketing. Lockdowns. Stay at home orders.

          Masks. Social distancing. Isolation. Ventilators. Riots. Job losses.

          Toilet paper shortages. Stock market plummets. Church doors closed.

          Schools closed. Restaurants closed. Hospitals overwhelmed.

          Sports venues canceled. More Delays. More doubts. More fears.

There was a general mood that once the clock struck 12 am on January 1st

          we could all put 2020 in the rear-view mirror

          and things would magically return to normal.

We lived through it and now things have to get better and better. Don't they?

We want them to not only get back to normal, but to be better than normal.

But what happens if they don't?

What happens if the crops don't grow?

What happens if people's personal economies don't come back?

What happens if the New Year is just a repeat of last year?

          Or turns out to be an even worse year?

We worship God, we pray to God, we trust God, we know God is with us,

          and yet – we wonder how we will get through it all.

The prophet, Habakkuk,

           saw God's people suffer while the wicked prospered.

Habakkuk had questions. Tough questions.

“O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear?”

It caused him to wonder, and doubt, "Where is God in all of this?"

He asked God some hard questions.

Questions we may often want to ask as well,

          but either we don't dare, or we don't have the words.

Why do the wicked prosper?

Why do the righteous suffer?

What should we do when life doesn't go as we expected?

When nothing in our lives make sense?

Why didn't God intervene?

God replied he was doing something about it.

But it would take time before things changed.

He reminded Habakkuk that:

          he was called to live by faith, not by sight.

It changed Habakkuk's attitude from complaining, to joy.

No matter how hard life might become,

          he would rejoice and find strength in the Lord.

In the end, Habakkuk trusted God

          even when everything seemed to be going wrong.

God's response still has meaning for us today:

Living by faith we can find hope and joy, regardless of circumstances.

We know God is at work, even when we cannot see what He is doing.

We can rejoice and trust in God, as Habakkuk did.

We can go to God with our questions, and doubts, and concerns.

And when we do, we discover God really is with us,

          even when we are not sure just what He is doing,

          or how things will turn out.

We humans are not very good at waiting.

Waiting is very difficult for us.

We live in a society where everything is instant.

We want to know what is happening, and how it will all turn out.

We want to know right now.

But that is not how God works.

Habakkuk finally decided to stand at his watch high up on the ramparts

          and wait and see what God would say to him, and what God would do.

God told him to write down the message on tablets,

          in large letters so even, a runner could read it and understand.

We too are called by God to pass the message

          on to those who are anxious to hear it.

Everything we do in our lives, should help others to understand and trust God

Our words and actions reveal God's presence and love,

          to those who are lost, confused, and fearful.

God is with us, in the silence, and in the darkness.

It was so in the time of Habakkuk,

          and it is still true in our time.

In the end Habakkuk was able to proclaim:

          Though the fig tree does not bud,

          and there are no grapes on the vines,

          though the olive crop fails,

          and the fields produce no food,

          though there are no sheep in the pen,

          and no cattle in the stalls,

 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

 I will be joyful in God my Savior.

We can learn much from Habakkuk.

Finally, we too, can proclaim:

          Even when we are confused, and do not understand,

          and we are doubtful and afraid,

          when everything is turned up-side-down,

          and evil seems to have the upper hand,

          and sickness is spreading throughout the country,

          yet we will rejoice in the Lord,

          we can be joyful in God my Savior.

AMEN