

This past week, like many of you I followed the murder trial for Botham Jean who was killed by Amber Guyger, a Dallas police officer. Perhaps somewhat expectedly, after five hours of deliberation the jury found her guilty of murder. What no one expected, however, is what followed. After sentencing, the younger brother of this slain man forgave his brother's killer, embracing her and encouraging her to seek Christ in the midst of her darkness.

In our first reading from the prophet Habakkuk, we find a world in ruins, filled with destruction and violence, strife and greed. The prophet cries out, "How long, O Lord? I cry out for help, but you do not listen! I cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin? Why must I look at misery?" The people living in those days felt like God had abandoned them and that there was no way out of the darkness that surrounded them.

In the midst of this despair, God answers Habakkuk saying that they have not been abandoned. Even though they may not realize it, God's plan for them is still pressing forward to fulfillment. "The vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late." God goes on to reveal to Habakkuk that the just need not fear any evil for they shall live because of their faith.

Even though we are separated from the time of Habakkuk by several centuries, the message which he proclaimed should still speak to us today for it is easy to see in the world around us that our times are not that different from his. Our world is also in ruins, filled with destruction and violence, strife and greed. And unfortunately, our Church is not immune to this for it too seems to be in ruins, attacked and ravaged by enemies from both without and within.

Like the prophet, we too find ourselves calling out, "How long, O Lord? I cry out for help, but you do not listen! I cry out to you, but you do not intervene! Why

do you let me see ruin? Why must I look at misery?” The response which God once gave to Habakkuk is just as timely now as it was then. We are not alone. Our God has not abandoned us. His plan still presses on to fulfillment, so we must wait for it in faith, and through this faith then we too shall be saved.

This of course, is not easy. It is much easier to doubt God’s word and so we often find ourselves crying out like the apostles in today’s Gospel, “Lord, increase our faith!” The apostles had been overwhelmed by Jesus’ teachings, and the seeming impossibility of living out the lives of holiness to which they were called. Jesus calmed their fears by revealing the great deeds that faith can accomplish in their lives. As He said, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus says that with faith the size of a mustard seed you can move mountains and cast them into the sea.

In other words, we cannot do these seemingly impossible things through our own strength, but with God’s strength all things are possible. If we cry out to Him and call upon His strength, then He can move the mountains in our lives through faith. This, however, is hard for us to believe. We look at the seemingly insurmountable problems in our own lives and the world around us and think that it is impossible to overcome them. We might think that it is impossible to live lives of holiness or to forgive those who have hurt us. We might think it is impossible to overcome societal sins like racism or end the scourge of abortion. We might think it is impossible to fix the problems in the Church. Again and again, we look at the problems in our lives and the world and the Church, and we want to give in to despair saying, “it is not possible.”

And yet, this is not of God. As Paul proclaimed in today’s second reading, “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-

control.” God does not tell us that something is impossible but rather that all things are possible through His strength. God tells us that if we even have faith the size of a mustard seed, we will have the power to move mountains and topple every single evil that oppresses us. For this reason, as Paul says, we must “stir into flame” the gift of faith that God has given us.

We need to deepen our faith so that we can finally believe that God can move the mountains in our lives, especially when it sometimes seems like He isn’t listening or answering. As we have already heard many times today, “if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” Sometimes, the transformation that we are asking for takes time, whether that is in our own lives or in our society. Think to the evil of slavery in America. There was a time when many thought it would never end, and yet it did. God heard the pleas of His people and brought them to freedom. Through faith, God can move every single mountain in our lives, even if we must sometimes wait for those miracles to occur.

Anyone who has ever tried to forgive someone who hurt them or a family member knows the strength that it took for Brandt Jean to forgive and embrace the woman who murdered his brother. It was clear that he was only able to do this through the strength that came from his faith in Jesus Christ. His faith moved mountains, mountains in his own life and the lives of those who experienced this mercy. We must learn to live our lives out heroically as well, so that God can also use our faith to move mountains, mountains in our lives and the lives of those around us, and save us all from the darkness.