

Calvary United Methodist Church  
October 13, 2019

**LET'S BE HONEST**  
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

**Children's Message:**

Habakkuk 3:2

I invite our children to come forward at this time. If there are some children that would like to come forward. Please? Well, if not, good morning! Come on over. How are you doing this morning? Good.

I want to talk a little bit, how about if we sit down? Since it is just you and me and the rest of the crowd here this morning. I want to talk a little bit about power and God's power in our lives. Are you strong? Pretty strong, I think. Do you have any superheroes you like? No? There are a lot of superheroes. When I was young it was Superman and Wonderwoman and nowadays there are more superheroes than I can keep track of. But God is a superhero to me because God is the one who can do anything and I have always been taught that God is a hero because God is so wonderful and marvelous.

So, I'll share this little scripture. It says: Lord, I have heard the news about you. I am amazed the powerful things you have done. Do great things once again in our time. Make those things happen again in our own day. Even when you are angry, remember to be gentle with us.

The man who wrote this is named Habakkuk and he wrote it a long time ago because he was sad, he was worried. Times were tough. Do you ever have any tough times at school or at home? Yeah. Any of you ever have any tough times? And there are some times we wonder: God, are you really there? Are you my Superhero? And God says: I want you to know I am always with you, even when you are sad. And sometimes when we are mad or when we are angry, when we are frustrated in whatever we do, God says: I want you to know I am with you.

And sometimes we don't always see the power the way we want. Sometimes we think of power as I could really do anything I want to anyone I want and I think of the power of God as like God's creative force and I think of God being with me wherever I am. God knows all about me and God can just be there for me anytime I call out God's name.

And that's been my experience, but there are many other ways...do you find places you see God? Sometimes I look around and I see God in so many places and then sometimes I'm like this guy: It's raining problems on me and it's like, oh my gosh, I didn't get my homework done or I forgot my books at school or I told Mom and Dad I would do this and I didn't. Did you ever have those kind of days? Any of you ever have those kind of days? Oh, yes. It's like life is raining down on us.

And we don't know what to do with it all and I just wish I had some of God's power. Some days you feel like...did you ever hear someone say: I'm going to pull my hair out? Don't do it. You look around and you'll see some people who were successful at that and it's not a good thing. We get all frustrated and it's like: ah, whatever I try nothing seems to work out. And God says: I am with you even in those tough days.

And there are other days I'm thinking why do I even try anymore? Did you ever have that issue too? Now, why didn't you come up here? You have all these answers? There are a lot of times we try stuff and it just doesn't come out the way we want, but I am reminded a lot that this man Habakkuk was upset because his people were very sad. They were going through very difficult times and he said: God, do something great. And I think God says to me and He says to you and He says to all of us: I'm doing great stuff every day.

For instance: Wait a minute! Look around you. Now we just don't look to nature to see God, but that is one place we see God. God says: Have you ever travelled much? Have you ever been out of Pennsylvania? Does it look like Pennsylvania everywhere else? No! And it's just amazing God say: You are just seeing one little part of life when you look at your problems and struggles at school and home and family and finances. Whatever it is, God says: There is so much more.

Why create the water of the world? You know the oceans cover more of the world than the land. You know we have to have water to live? You could go a long time without eating, but you can't without water. We use water to grow things, for plants, we use it for...it keeps the moisture in our lungs and the air around that we breathe. It does a lot of things. If you create power and electricity through power plants, God says: Do you think I don't know these things? Sometime if you have ever looked around you can imagine that we don't have mountains this big here in Pennsylvania, or actually we don't have them that big anywhere in United States. God says the world isn't just this little place that you think you know. God says: Have you ever seen a tree that you can drive a car through? God says: I've done it. Out in California there is something called Sequoia National Park and if you go there these big redwood trees are thousands of years old and they are that big and God says: See, you look at your problems and they are only in this little small space and God says: I'm a lot bigger than the little things that you see. You don't see all the beauty of all the places around the world.

Can you imagine crawling on steep mountains like a goat or a sheep? It would be fun to do that, wouldn't it? Because they can be on steep slopes and not even fall down. And I look at some of the places...we think we go to the ocean and it is pretty here, but our oceans are awfully dirty. Could you imagine going where the water is so clear because it is just way because God created it that way.

And you could imagine how could anyone live in the desert. And God says: I'll show you how powerful I am. There are creatures that live out in the deserts and survive because God

made them that way. Yesterday we flew back in from New Mexico and it's amazing when we think of how overcrowded we are. Do you have any idea how many trees there are in Pennsylvania alone? I've never counted but there are a lot and when you fly over America you see so many different kinds of places and sometimes you can be above the clouds to see God's handiwork. God is so many places.

If we would go the North Pole in the summer solstice we would see the beautiful sky, or perhaps over Norway. You see, God says: You are only looking at a part of the problems.

When we look at the sun right now, it might have been hot but in the winter we are glad it heats us up and it makes in the summer the plants grow. It is used for energy. God says: What do you mean I need more power? I want to see you more? Because even the moon at night gives us light. And when you look over all the world at night, it is all lit up because of God's wonderful power.

So when you think is God going to do something great for us today, God says: I do something great for you every day. Can I hear an "Amen"? (Amen!) God says: I do something great every day. And he says: You will come to know me, you will seek me and find me when you search me with all your heart.

God wants you to know that God loves you, you know that? And God loves you and God says you are a gift to the world. So thanks be for God.

Thank you for coming up. Please feel free to have some fruit.

Old Testament Lesson: Habakkuk 1-4

Today's lesson is from Habakkuk. It's not a book we often hear from but Habakkuk and Lamentations and so many of these prophets were dealing with very difficult times. You've all had difficult times, times when you wondered: Where's God? Someone we love passes. Disappointments come our way. Losses, rejection, wondering if there is any hope for tomorrow. Nations have felt this when war upon war has befallen them. Israel had been unfaithful to God, they forgot, they got comfortable. Remind you of any people? We get comfortable, so comfortable that the more we have, statistics prove, the less we think of God, because we think we can handle it ourselves. Babylon come on in and they took over Israel. They marched them into slavery, out of their land and they wondered how they could ever worship their God again.

**Message:**

Habakkuk 1:1-4

In our darkest moments, for Israel, for America, for any nations, for any individual, for any family, any group, we need to be honest before Almighty God and that's what these prophets did. There has been a lot of teaching through the years that we should never tell God how we

are feeling. Really? That we should never be angry, we should never scream out at God, that we can't be all honest. If we can't be honest with God, who can we be honest with? And there are a lot of times, particularly in the church, we are less than honest.

And I'm not talking the honesty. I remembered as I put this together the commercial a couple of years ago of Mary Todd Lincoln asking Abraham: Does this make me look big? We are not talking about honesty just telling someone else what you think. I'm talking honesty with ourselves, honesty with God. And what is really amazing to me when we talk about God and His people is we all talk about God as the Powerful God and All Knowing God, so God knows it anyway, but we don't want to come clean. We don't want to tell God because we fear that somehow if I expose who I am before Almighty God, perhaps God won't love me.

May I clarify right now, for all of us, there is nothing you could ever do to take God's love from you. We can walk away from God, but these prophets, one after another, would remark to us: God loves you. When you are broken God loves you; when you are complete, God loves you period. You are a gift from God. You are a blessing from God and God says: Just be honest with me. Pour out your hearts before me that I might clean you up, make you who you are as individuals and groups and as a nation that we could pull together.

This powerful God says: You are great. You can do great things, but you need to believe in yourselves to overcome whatever it is that is the obstacle around you. This God who says: I can handle anything. But we are so worried that if I tell God: Lord, I've got an addiction... and some of the worries about God and some of it's worry about other people. I can't let other people know I have an alcohol problem, a drug problem, a pornography problem. I can't let anyone else know that I have a problem in my marriage or in my relationship. I can't let anyone know that I've made bad decisions and I'm going bankrupt. Instead we just disappear from God, we disappear from the life of the church, we disappear from friends, we disappear from family, because we refuse to be honest. And God says: Of all the things that I am, I'm a healer. I'm the one who can take your broken finances, your addictive problems, whatever it and I'm the one who can pull you and your life and your family and everything back together if you will but come to me and humble yourselves. I am the God of Power. I am the God who can do it.

And we can come to God as we are. I've been taught that since a little boy: Just as I am without a plea. I can come before God and God will never...hear this...God will never drive us away for God is the One. But when we break trust in a relationship, you know what it's like, don't you? We pretty much trust people until they do something that breaks that relationship and then it is so hard. And God says: Please don't break our relationship.

When nations fall, they do what Israel did. God has forgotten us. When problems come into our life and there is death and there is loss and sometimes we think God has forgotten us or that we are broken and we walk away from God and I can picture God as a parent crying and

sobbing saying: Why are my children leaving me at this time of despair when they need me more than ever? I want to be their God. I want to be their healer. I want to be there for the nation of Israel.

God wants to be here for the nation of America, to bring healing in our midst. But when we are broken and when we can't be honest and say: Lord, I have problems...God seems mighty distant. I've been there and you have too, because we are so ashamed, not necessarily of things just we've done, although I've done those as well, but we are ashamed of where we are in our life at this particular moment and God says to us: Come home.

There is probably no greater feeling. I remember my grandchildren more than my children coming to me because my children were old when I met my wife. Child coming to you with their joys. Is there anything...Pappy!...greater than them jumping into your arms: I had a great day! Smell my dandelion, and it's a leftover dandelion that they are blowing in the wind. It's like gold, isn't it? You want to hear their day, their joy, their puppy, their sorrows, their grief. You want to hear everything about your child. And you want them to be accessible and yet you would want them to be just as accessible when they have had a bad day, right? If something is happening at school, if someone is bullying them, or someone has been inappropriate with them you want them to trust.

And see, that's where the trust is. If we can't build that two-way relationship with God and say: I can come to God and praise You for the good life, but I can't come to you, God, because I am afraid of what...this judgement? And God says: Please get that out of your mind. No one wants that parent to come to them in their trouble: I told you so. Right? That's not really helpful. It's much more helpful when you come home and you didn't buy the right car and your finances...you spent wrong at college or your home or your relationship and them saying: What can we do together now? That's our God.

God doesn't come to punish. God doesn't come to humiliate. God doesn't come to put you in your place. God comes to say: I am your loving parent. Where can we go from today? How can we find healing? It's not a matter of zipping up our mouth, it's a matter of this from scriptures: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

This book of Habakkuk was a man who knew God inside and out. He knew the brokenness of Israel. He knew the brokenness of his own life. He knew what it was like to be in that desert experience, to wonder: How can I get out of this dead, dry area of my life? Because he knew the whys of life. Do you know the whys? It's when you are young and your relationship breaks. It is when you have strived hard for a new business and the market falls and you lost everything. I have met folks in my churches who have really put up their home, put up their investments, put up their retirement and everything falls and we ask why?

The list of endless whys...they started with Moses, right? Do you remember Job when he

lost everything saying: Why, God? Do you remember the Psalmist...I invited you this week in the program to read through the Psalms. Some are praising and some are saying constantly: God, where are you? Why has this occurred in my life? What is going to become of me? It's not easy.

There are times in our faith we are told by other people in our trials that we ought to just put on a happy face. No one wants a fake Christian. We don't need to hear trials all the time, but in the midst of our trials, we've got to be honest to God and sometimes, I don't always find it easy to put on a happy face. And I would say: No, no no. We don't tell people to put on a happy face. We tell them to be honest.

These people came before God honest and we need to come before God honest. What do I want when I am honest? When I am hurting I remember my comfort was Mom and Grandmom and Paps. You want someone to hold you close, don't you? You want someone to be there. And God says...I love the example of Christ, arms out on the cross: Come. The story is about to end. I will gather you in, Israel, like a hen gathers her chicks. Why? Because I want to protect you, I want to comfort you, I want to console you.

This is our God, so when the child is feeling out of place in school, or you are having a bad day at work or you come home to brokenness and we wonder how in the world am I going to make sense out of this mess, we cry unto God as say: Hold me, Jesus! We heard it sung just a few minutes ago: Give me Jesus.

We hear these words about coming home, the One who wants to bring...and I think of many scriptures as we read and reread the scriptures we will find those that become our comfort. Remember from Romans? It is always, often anyway, read at funerals? Nothing can separate me from His love. Not peril or nakedness or sword for persecution. What can separate me? Nothing can separate me from the love of God because God will never give up on us. Isn't that good news? God will never give up on us. Trusting God is what we do when it doesn't make sense, instead of walking away. Instead of walking away, if you are there today, God says: Please point to me. Be honest with God and share because I will be with you.

And it becomes easier when we take time to build a relationship through prayer and scripture reading and fellowship and service, the more we become a part of God, the more we understand God's way.

The power of prayer is very powerful. The people of Israel were invited to come and sing by the people of Babylon and they said: What? How will we sing, here along this river? Hear this scripture in Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept. If you have ever pictured war and you are driven out of your home. If you have ever been driven away from somewhere, brokenness in relationship, and I say if because we have all been there, and someone says let's sing a song of

joy, you just can't do it. There we wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps for there our captors asked for a song, our tormentors demanded songs of joy they said: Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the song of the Lord while in a foreign land?

Simply, it's not possible.

It was way back in 2003 my father was diagnosed with cancer and I knew from the diagnosis, I'm not a doctor, but I've been around a while, that it wasn't really good. Six months later he passed. There wasn't a lot of good news for me. I wanted someone to be the healer and it doesn't always happen, but you have to become something you aren't always. You don't have to put on a happy face. We did a skit some years ago in our youth group that was called "Super Christian." No matter what happened, your father dies, put on a happy face, I'll be fine. Something else happens, you lose your house, you lose your finances, put on a happy face. Well, I want to say, folks, we're not the kind of people that need to judge other people whether they are putting on a happy place or whether they are real sad.

And sometimes we, the church, tell people that are going through a tough time: Well, you just need to trust in God a little more. Not easy when you are in the hole. Not easy. Sometimes people grieve longer than we think they grieve or some people don't grieve as long as we think they ought and we make all kinds of judgements and God says: That's not our business for we all have to find our way of dealing with wholeness and healing in the way we need to find it.

I know when my father died it was like a wall collapsed. It was like the dam that broke, because he was more than my father...he was my friend. I don't know about you, there have been a lot of people in my life like that, not just my blood. Because of my calling to Christ I have met wonderful people just like you. Some of you are my family, if not all of you and when things happen, I grieve. And I don't know about you, when I had the privilege to share in my father's service, I sang that song: I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm sad, because I knew his eye was on the sparrow, He had my father and he had me. It wasn't easy. I finished, I went away and cried. People say: did you just put on a happy face. No, I didn't. I was sad inside, but I did it because I needed to find that healing in my for something I knew my father loved.

You see, what we do with our faith isn't someone else's judgement. It is just to be honorable to God. What we need to do is be honest before Almighty God. We need to be honest while holding tight to Jesus' hand, his name called...hear this when you are going through struggles: Faithful and True. All thou has left, God says, faithful and true. He promised He would see us through and that is the way I have found my God.

There are so many times my heart is broken and so many times I don't know what I'll do and I come to God and I cry out for help and I, like Thomas and like you and like other, say:

Lord, I'm having a real tough time believing today. Help my belief. Have you been there? I'm having a real tough time today, believe me, help my unbelief. And I'll tell you what. It's not always easy when someone else says: Don't worry, you'll be fine. Do you find that real helpful when you are standing by the casket? Just cling to God, everything is going to be fine. We have all these little quaint sayings we say. May I ask you today on behalf of God never to say them again? Never! They are in a better place. Indeed, once we are in a more rational state, I knew my father was at peace, I knew it was better than his suffering, his better place for me would have been right here beside me yet today.

What we do in those times is find that healing comes in the name of Jesus Christ because I'm not always okay when I'm in the midst of that hole. I read one time someone had talked about the dark holes of life. We have all seen them and I'm reminded from a science friend that said: You know a lot of critters live in the dark. I've met some people who live there too, right? It's a dark lonely cold ravenous place that will eat us up, but God says: I'm bigger than that.

One of the things I love about God is He says this: In Him there is no darkness at all. So, how can I overcome, how can you overcome, how can we move beyond all the problems because the Word of God is the light of the world. I remember my baptism, I remember that there is new life and that I am washed clean, no matter what my addictions, no matter what my problems, no matter what my failures, no matter where or whatever I am. God says: I love you. Here this: God says I love you. God says you are a gift, you are cleaned, you are washed, you are new. Today is a new beginning.

Get honest with God and your focus will shift from seeing your own problems—no matter how overwhelming they seem to be—to the grace of God. And it's never too late to come home to God. Our God who spoke through this man Habakkuk says to us: I am a healer of individuals, I am a healer of nations. I am your healer today.

Let us pray: Almighty God, all of us have been broken. All of us have been injured. All of us have been hurt. All of us long, Lord, for healing. Bring that healing power upon us this morning. Touch us again anew. Fill us with your light, fill us with your love. Encircle us and let us know clearly, Lord, that we are a gift, we are a blessing to others. In your most Holy Name. Amen.