

When God Seems Gone

Connect Break the ice and get people talking

- What's one high and one low from the past week?
 - Describe a time in life when you were treated unfairly.
 - If you had a million dollars to give to a non-profit, who would you give it to and why?
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Truth Understand and discuss the scripture's meaning

READ: Habakkuk 2:6-20

DISCUSS: What stands out to you from this passage and why?

This chapter is God's answer to Habakkuk's question, "Is [Babylon] then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?" Last week we looked at verses two through five, which explain that the plan will seem slow. Verses six through twenty reveal the nature of the plan. In five "woes" – declarations of judgment – God shows Habakkuk a vision of how he will confront the evil of Babylon. This vision of God's justice helps us know how to respond in times of life when God seems unfair.

WHEN THE STRONG EAT THE WEAK

READ: Verses 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, and 19

DISCUSS: Choose one of the woes, and describe a modern-day example where this kind of injustice is taking place.

Exploitation, tribalism, brutality, sexual abuse – these were all ways in which Babylon used their power to oppress weaker nations. These aren't just ancient realities. There are more than 40 million modern-day slaves, tyrants still live in luxury built on the backs of impoverished citizens, and more than a quarter of Americans have experienced some form of sexual abuse. These actions grieve and anger God, and his woes against Babylon help us understand how he responds to this kind of injustice.

LOOK AT GOD'S JUSTICE

READ: Micah 6:8

DISCUSS: What do you think it means to "do justice"?

The word "justice" can often be shaped by our political bent, and although political ideas of justice can contain a good measure of truth, we must understand what the Bible means by "justice." The biblical idea of justice is rooted in Genesis 1, where God created humans in his image. Doing justice is rooted in acknowledging that God is the source of all good, and treating others with the dignity they are due as image-bearers of God.

LIVING FOR GOD'S GLORY

READ: Habakkuk 2:14

DISCUSS: What do you think it means for the earth to be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord?”

Babylon stepped on others to build up their own power. They committed injustice for their own glory. But as image-bearers of God, people are designed to live for his glory. The design hasn't changed and neither has the purpose. If you live for your own glory, everything you've worked for will get swallowed up in the rising tide of God's glory, like a sandcastle built below the high-tide line. It might seem like the unjust are winning now, but whatever's built on another's glory will crumble and fade.

Grace See how the passage connects to Jesus

READ: Habakkuk 2:18-20

When the tide turned and Babylon was threatened, their lifeless idols couldn't save them. On the other hand, God's justice will be done because he rules from his holy temple. All of us have been on both the sending and receiving end of injustice in some measure, but God visited the justice we deserved upon Jesus. He rose from the dead, and that means injustice loses in the end. It also means that we will either trust Jesus for our justification or we will be judged for sharing in Babylon's injustice.

Change Apply the passage to our thoughts, feelings, and actions

- In what ways might you need to change the way you think about justice?
 - How does the promise of God's justice help you process the evil you've experienced or witnessed?
 - What does it look like in your life right now to live for God's glory rather than your own?
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Prayer Respond to the passage in prayer

- Verse 20 says to “let all the earth keep silence before him.” Take some time to silently contemplate this vivid vision of God's justice.
- Pray for God's kingdom to come and his just will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?