

Bible Study on Lessons for October 30-31, 2010

Let's begin by reading the Old Testament Lesson which by the way is also the Key Text for the Sermon. The lesson is taken from Habakkuk 1:1-4,2:1-4

Habakkuk's message came near the end of the seventh century B.C. This was during the time of the cruel and oppressive rule of the Babylonians. Habakkuk was deeply troubled by the violence and suppression these cruel people inflicted on the Israelites. However he is even more disturbed by the apparent silence and indifference of God to the sufferings of his people. Right from the beginning of this brief letter he challenges God with this question: "O Lord, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? And He continues his questioning of God: "How can you stand by to look on such wrongdoing?" Then he goes on to describe the sad state of affairs in which he and his people are living in. Now some say the bible is nothing but ancient history: a mere collection of old stories and myths. But when I read God's Word it often speaks to my heart and to what I and others are experiencing every day in our daily lives. How often has Habakkuk's question been your question? In your times of suffering and pain haven't you ever wondered if God is even listening? Sure you have! Everyone has! It comes with living in a broken world; a world that has more than it's share of violence, injustice, sickness, tragedy, oppression and death. We want answers. We want someone to fix it! We want someone to make it right!.....and we want it right now! Now read the Lord's answer in chapter 2:1-4 God responds to Habakkuk's complaint by assuring him that He will give him an answer and it will be coming quickly, but then God seems to reverse Himself by cautioning Habakkuk when he says: "It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed." In some ways this is a frustrating response. It's one of those *yes, but* answers.

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Yes God is going to respond to Habakkuk, *but* God's answer might seem slow in coming.... so just wait for it. Now when we are sinking in the swamp and are up to our armpits in alligators these are not the most comforting words to hear. But they are honest and truthful words. This is not a politician make promises just to get elected. This is God. The God of the universe, who created all things and that, includes time. So God will respond, *but in God's time not our time.* Ah there is the rub. We want answers in our time frame and that is not the way God works. So as we face overwhelming evil and tragedy and we can't see the reasons for it we are to wait in faith and look to a future time when God will make all things right.

Now read Psalm 119:137-144 in this portion of Psalm 119 the writer is in a situation similar to Habakkuk. He tells how his enemies disregard God's law and how he is despised by his enemies. The Psalmist does not complain to God but instead he tells us how he delights in God's law; a law that is always true, and even when he is troubled and anxious he still finds joy in the commandments. He ends this section by declaring that if God will just give him understanding he will be able to live. What an amazing and different response! So what about you? Do you find delight in God's law? Does it bring you comfort in times of strife? If not then where do you find comfort and hope?

The next lesson to read is 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 and verses 11-12. as they say timing is everything. Remember that Paul was the first great Christian missionary. He started churches. He would preach the Good News of Jesus and some would believe and be baptized. Then Paul would go on to the next town and do the same thing. But after he left these churches often problems would arise. In the case of the church at Thessalonica the recent converts to Christianity became confused about the second coming of Christ.

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At this time they are suffering great persecution because of their new found faith in Christ and they were looking for relief. They believed this relief would take place when Christ came back to earth a second time. There were some in the church who were teaching that the return of the Lord had already taken place, and there was no need to work anymore. This was causing great confusion among the believers in Thessalonica. Paul writes to correct this idea. He assures them the Second Coming has not taken place and that many signs will occur before He comes again. He further assures them that they will be among the saved.

Now read Luke 19:1-10 This is the story of Zacchaeus. This is the story of a tax collector who wanted to see Jesus. He is despised by his own people for being the pawn of Rome by collecting taxes for Rome, and taking more from them for himself. Zacchaeus is a traitor and a cheat. Yet Jesus sees him up in that tree and goes to his house. The crowd is astonished by this. They do not understand how Jesus could reach out to such an evil man.

Questions: so how about you? Do you find it troubling that Jesus spent so much time with the outcasts of his society? Now read Luke 4:16-19. In this passage our Lord makes it very clear that his ministry is about bringing hope and comfort to the outcasts of his world. Now go ahead and read on through verse 28. Notice what happens to Jesus. The people from his home town are so angry at him because of what he has just said that they try to kill him! You see it's dangerous to be on the side of the downtrodden and the outcast, but look at what can happen when even an evil man comes to know our Lord. Now what does all this have to do with the sermon Theme – B00! Head for the hills the goblins are here! Find out on Sunday!

