

ACN
November 9, 2025
Habakkuk 1:1-11
When God seems Unfair - Does God care?
Rev'd Lynda Johnson

What do these places have in common -

Russia	Haiti
Ukraine	Nigeria
Israel	Mali
Palestine	Burkina Faso
Sudan	Afghanistan
Myanmar	Ethiopia
Congo	Syria
Yemen	Kashmir
Mexico	

I could go on.

As of November 2025, there are numerous ongoing armed conflicts globally, ranging from full-scale wars to insurgencies and gang violence.

It's pretty hard to pin down an exact number, because there are varying definitions of "war", but some sources suggest that there are over 130 armed conflicts around the world today.

Major conflicts with high casualty rates;
some of which get significant international attention.
But most, do not!

Overall, the world in 2025 has a high number of ongoing conflicts, with more people dead or displaced by fighting than at any time in recent decades.

Apologies for being gloomy, but things around the world are pretty bad, aren't they?

And it's understandable to ask What is God doing?

Well, how long has it been since you've read Habakkuk? Although, perhaps for some of you, you've just read it this week! Great!
But before that how long has it been?

Is it just three insignificant chapters from a little-known insignificant Old Testament prophet?

That's an interesting question.

And we don't know whether its Habbakuk OR Hab-baar-cook.

I'm leaning towards Hab-baar-cook, because that's how Tom Wright pronounces it, and Tim Keller as well.
So for me, that's pretty good cred to run with Hab-baar-cook.

We know very little about him apart from this book. It is likely his name means 'to embrace', it may be based on a Hebrew word that means that.

But ... what we **do** know.... is that the world that he lived in was a world of great military conflict.

Countries were rising and falling, they were fighting one another, alliances were formed and changed, responses to those alliances were devastating and the landscape was deeply divided and volatile.

Isn't that interesting? **Habakkuk's** world and our world are not dissimilar.

And Habakkuk asked the question - what on earth are you doing God?

Do you find yourself asking similar questions of God today?

Maybe, not just about the state of the world. Maybe you're asking God about the state of your own circumstances.

Are there things in your life you simply don't understand.

But you want God to act and bring change.

I pray this little series might speak into your life, if that is the case.

Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah, but he was a very different type of prophet.

Not only different to Jeremiah, but I must say, different to just about every other prophet we might read in the Old Testament.

Other prophets were called upon to speak to the people, or to leadership, to the kings. To make declarations on behalf of God.

Not Habakkuk.

He directs his passion and pain to God himself.

This makes him unusual, even unique as a prophet.

This book reveals his prayer life, and even his whole relationship with God.

And by us reading this, his relationship with God becomes public. And it's really challenging.

He doesn't pronounce judgement on the guilty.

He pours out his heart to God.

And what he pours out is his own offence at sin, and how deeply that moves him.

And he's saying to God, why aren't you doing anything about it?

This is a dialogue between a perplexed prophet and his God.

And God **is** actively, at work.

Just not in the way you'd expect!

These verses we're looking at today explore a man wrestling with God in the face of injustice. And it explores his incredulity at the mystery of God's ways and God's timing.

It shows ultimately, the need for faith and trust in God's sovereignty.

So what is the central idea today?

When God seems Unfair - Does God care?

Even when we don't understand God's difficult plans, we can bring our complaints to him honestly, and we can trust him.

Today as we only look at these first 11 verses, you may go home dissatisfied.
In fact, I kind of hope in a way that you do.

I think we're going to left hanging this week.

And that's ok, because it's pretty rare isn't it, that we fully understand what God is doing, and how he's doing it?

But let me give you an overview first of this three week series:

Yes Habakkuk has 3 chapters, but it's actually split up into three sections which aren't aligned to the chapters per se.

So there's two complaint sections - with Habakkuk railing against God, and God responding each time.

So his first complaint and the Lord's first response are in these 11 verses today.

Habakkuk complains in vv 1-4
and the Lord responds in vv.5-11.

Habakkuk's second complaint is from verse 12 through to chapter 2:1 and then God responds in 2:2-20. That will be our passage next week.

Then the book closes with Habakkuk praying to God in chapter 3.

So I said that Habakkuk was a contemporary to Jeremiah. This is at a time in Israel's history before the exile.

So there's the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, and they are both struggling with a litany of changing good kings and bad kings, of the people responding to God, and the people being disobedient to God. Up and down, up and down.
Habakkuk is before this has happened. Things are getting worse and worse with evil kings taking the people into greater and greater idolatry and disobedience.

So in vv. 1-4 we see the problem of injustice.

Habakkuk is surrounded by violence, by sin, by strife in his own nation of Judah.

He had lived during the reign of King Josiah, who was a great king, who loved the Lord and led the people into obedience. But then Jehoiakim follows Josiah. And he's a terrible king who takes the people away from God.

Habakkuk sees this travesty and despairs.

The nations around them are warring, Assyria is on the decline and Babylon is rising up.

He says to the Lord that the law is paralysed, and justice never wins!!

He's shouting at God saying that the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering, and how long are you going to let this go on for, God??

It's your law, and you're letting it down!!

It's been so long, and he feels like God isn't even listening to him. God seems silent.

Habakkuk is frustrated that God doesn't seem to be acting in accordance with his character, and he's calling God out on that.

Quite dramatic stuff, really.

But then God gives a surprising answer!

In fact, his answer is more shocking than the perceived silence.

God tells Habakkuk that he **is** acting, but just in a way that he wouldn't believe.

And he tells Habakkuk that he is raising up the Babylonians (also known as the Chaldeans) and they will do terrible things.

And he's telling Habakkuk something he already knows, that the Babylonians are a ruthless and brutal nation.

But the strange thing is that God is going to use this wicked and pagan empire to bring judgement on Judah for their sin.

In fact, look at v.11 - God describes Babylon's arrogance, their military might and their pride, noting that their own might is their god. That's how arrogant and proud they are.

And that's where our passage today ends.

We're left hanging.

We have to wait till next week for Habakkuk's response, and God's answer to that.

So what are we to learn from this, today?

Well I think that these 11 verses teach us that God is ready, and is even ok with our honesty, our anger, our complaints, and our doubts.

He's not distant, or absent, but, quite the contrary, he's always working, even in the difficult circumstances, and despite the difficult circumstances.

Our call is to stay connected with him. Even in our despair and anger. Habakkuk was angry, but he still knew that God was the only place he could go to vent, and to find out what's going on.

Our call is to maintain faith, to trust in God's timing, and to remember that he, and he alone, is ultimately in charge of history and judgement. Nothing is beyond him.

But you know what, I'm actually not going to leave it there today either.

Because there are things in these first 11 verses that draw me to Jesus, and, very clearly, show me Jesus.

I want to ask you some questions.

- Who is the one who knows history and chose to enter history?
- Who is the one who willingly went into difficult circumstances and was abused and mocked?
- Who is the one who told the disciples what was going to happen to him, and they wouldn't believe?
- Who is the one who was mocked and scoffed as the King of the Jews?

- Who is the one who was put to death by arrogant leaders who believed in themselves and, who was betrayed by religious leaders who should have known better?

Listen again to the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's railing ...

v. 5 Be utterly amazed ... For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

v.6 I am raising up the Babylonians that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.

v.7 They are a law unto themselves and promote their own honour.

v.10 They mock kings and scoff at rulers.

Does that not remind us of what Jesus endured?

You see, our God is a God of surprises. He doesn't do things the way we might think they should be done.

No, our God turns things upside down, in order to turn things right way up.

The reason we also read from Romans 8 today, was to help us understand that God knows that suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that is to come.

That sin and evil are real, and that judgement will come, in God's purposes and in God's timing. There is groaning now, but just you wait.

Because we know that all things work together for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Can I just leave with this whenever we find things in the Scriptures that are difficult, where there is innocent suffering, where there is evil that requires judgement, we can also find Jesus.

Our questions might not always be answered neatly and the way we want, but there is an ultimate reckoning, and that happened at the cross. That is where judgement is fulfilled, that is where mercy meets that judgement head on. The cross is where we see God making an end of everything that is wrong with this world.

And the resurrection is where everything is made right.

As we work our way through this insightful engagement between Habakkuk and his great God, I pray that you will be encouraged to go deeper in prayer.

I pray you'll be encouraged to not sanitise your prayers when things are tough. Go to the hard places, because God has been there before you, and is there with you. The hard places is where Jesus chooses to go, and brings redemption. Amen.