

Woe!

(Trumpets Tears And Ashes, Message 4)
(Lent, 2018)
Habakkuk 2:6-20

A. The Hebrew “*hoi*” translated “*Woe to You!*” sounds like a threat

1. It is traditionally understood as a prophetic condemnation
2. It can also be understood as a “cry of dismay or grief”

B. The prophet is once again calling his people to repentance

WHO

A. Habakkuk doesn’t specify the people against whom these words are spoken

1. It’s often understood to be the Assyrians or Babylonians
2. Some think the tyrant is the prophet’s own king
3. The Qumran community identifies the tyrant as their enemy
4. Others suggest we should simply reflect on our own complicity in these sins

B. So to whom do these woes apply? Answer: If the shoe fits...

WOES

A. The first woe deals with exploitation (2:6-8) (Violations of the 8th command)

1. Woe to those who enrich themselves on the backs of those who have not
2. We must be concerned about all the matters of injustice we encounter

B. The second woe deals with greed (2:9-11) (More violations the 8th command)

1. Greed is an unhealthy focus on self-preservation where people hoard goods that might otherwise benefit and help others
2. God will bring down the greedy and arrogant

“Those who exalt themselves will be humbled...” (Matthew 23:12)

C. The third woe deals with violence (2:12-14) (Violations of the 6th command)

1. The Babylonians had a reputation for violence for killing and maiming; literally and figuratively
2. It is natural to seek revenge against those who’ve harmed and done violence
3. Paul reminds us our revenge is unnecessary: God will do it (Romans 12:19)

D. The fourth woe deals with intimidation (2:15-17) (Violation of the 7th command)

1. 2:15 paints a picture of indignity, embarrassment, and sexual hazing

a. “*The cup in the Lord’s right hand is coming around to you*” (2:16c)

“Jesus said ‘You do not know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to him, ‘We are able.’” (Matthew 20:22)

b. Again Habakkuk reminds us, “*What comes around, goes around*”

2. Intimidation and bullying in our world come in many forms. None are acceptable to God!

E. The fifth and final woe deals with idolatry (2:18-19) (Violates 2nd command)

1. Exodus 20:3 says we may place no gods before the one true God
 - a. Most of our current idols haven’t been fashioned to be idols
 - b. The idol’s silence underscores its powerlessness and uselessness
2. As people worship little things, they lose sight of the greatness of God

WONDER

A. Evil looks to be winning...

B. God says, for the moment, I’m going to allow an evil nation to gain power and dominate my people because they must be purged of their sin

C. What comfort is it for people who are suffering and oppressed to know that someday - their oppressor will come to justice?

1. If it doesn’t make any difference, what’s the point?
2. When the oppressed hear God’s promise, when the weak who can’t stand up to the power of the tyrant are assured there is a greater power, when those who suffer are given a ray of hope and when they believe it “*The righteous can live by faith*”

D. Then Habakkuk puts this all of this in proper perspective...

1. Don’t forget, the Lord Almighty, is greater than any army
2. Don’t forget, evil has been unsuccessful in overcoming good
3. Don’t forget the Lord is in holy temple (2:20)

“The Lord is on his heavenly throne” (Psalm 11:4)

“The whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord!” (2:14)

4. Don’t forget we live by faith (not by sight)
5. Habakkuk is cries out: **Make God big! Make the glory of the Lord known!**

E. Quiet everyone. Stand before him in holy silence. Listen! The day is coming...