

**“Liberty and Justice for All”**  
Message by DD Adams  
Kemptown Providence UM Church  
Holy Communion Sunday  
July 1, 2018

The O.T. lesson is from Habakkuk 1:1-17. The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen. Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.

They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; they all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand.

They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”

Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy? This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. God we pray your blessing on the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word. Open our hearts and minds to allow your mercy and compassion to come into us as you broaden our thinking to make our circle wider. Amen. Peace be with you!

Americans celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> as our Independence Day from Great Britain, but that day in 1776 didn’t bring freedom for everyone. The American Indian

wasn't free to live their life as they chose. And in the O.T.—the Canaanite people—they were commanded by God to annihilate the people who stood in their way of entering the Promised Land. This Native American easily identifies with this group.

Those of European origin celebrate Independence Day and see through a very specific lens, but that's not everyone's point of view. Not everyone in the U.S. considers this country to be a land where "liberty and justice for *all*" exists. These viewpoints from other perspectives are called theologies of liberation. It brings into question God's command to overpower indigenous people—Habakkuk in the O.T. promotes just that kind of thinking.

The prophet Habakkuk from Judah's kingdom goes back to 600 BC—just before the Babylonians capture Jerusalem and the Assyrian empire is losing ground. Habakkuk protests God and questions God as how He is handling the world—all very similar to the annihilation of the Canaanites and the Native American Indian.

Habakkuk cries and complains to God about the great violence and injustices of the Babylonians. Why is God allowing it? Additionally, Judah's monarchs were partnering with the wealthy and taking advantage of the poor and controlling the people with violence. Habakkuk is angry! We struggle when God tarries and allows injustice and evil to continue. Here's some food for thought.

What can we do to make a difference with the injustices in our communities? Are there things we do that give some groups privilege but deny others to remain powerless and without voice? In Habakkuk 2 God provides some guidelines. Listen. 3 “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” So God’s advice is to be patient and to trust Him.

What about you? Are you waiting for God to act and bring justice? God’s counsel is to wait and as you wait, continue to serve God and walk by faith. When we wait for God to act it can be frustrating. We feel things are unfair. Trusting God requires faith, and it means we have to let go of any control *we think we have*—it’s a form of suffering.

Richard Rohr, an American author, spiritual writer and Franciscan friar defines suffering as “whenever you are not in control.” We may think we control our lives, but the older we get the more we realize we really don’t control much of anything. We can’t control how long we live, the illnesses that come our way, or even the losses we encounter. All of life’s struggles, its pain and suffering, bring us closer to God as we release control to our Maker.

Richard Rohr says that “Suffering is the most effective way whereby humans learn to trust, allow, and give up control to Another Source.” Of course,

we'd rather opt out of suffering, but it's not our option to choose. It wasn't Jesus' option either, the cross was his fate, and he knew he must relinquish control.

So as we wait and serve, pray and trust God, let's put our daily worship and obedience to Christ at the forefront of our daily spiritual journey. For people to endure suffering, injustice, and inequities, faith is needed. Yes, we put legs on our faith, but we leave the outcome to God. Please pray with me.

God our loving and grace filled Creator,

Help us to release control in our lives to you.

To let go of our power seeking ways to be right.

To acknowledge that You alone can brace us up so we can let go.

We can let go and have a divine union that's closer.

Faith is a gift, so empower us Lord to embrace that measure of faith and allow it to become more excellent with each passing day.

Allow truth and mercy to prevail in our lives as we look to God and release control. Amen.

\*Prayer adapted from Richard Rohr's daily meditation,  
*The Irony of Faith*, Meditation 35 of 52  
 *Holding the Tension: The Power of Paradox*