

October 11, 2026 - Habakkuk 2:18-20 - "Lesson 5: Trust the God who speaks"

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[0:00] Habakkuk 2, 18-20. Let all the earth keep silence before him.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's be silent for just a minute. That got pretty uncomfortable, didn't it?

I know that people on the live stream were probably checking the audio, refreshing the browser. And even if people are listening to the audio right now, they were like, uh-oh, driving their car. We're not very good at silence. And I just wanted to prove that to you this morning. And not saying that kids have to be good at that.

We know that at least there's an age of accountability that they're going to reach where, you know, we can count them in. Kids can be as loud as they want right now. But give adults, you know, five seconds just of silence.

[1:55] That was about 15 or 20 seconds. I was going to go a full minute. But that was just 20 seconds. But think of, like, five seconds of silence.

We seem to, like, feel like an obligation. Like, we need to, like, cough or something. We need to adjust something on our, you know, just, what's going on?

This is awkward. We need to check our phone or wonder whether the pastor forgot what he was doing or possibly that I had a stroke. Not yet, church.

Can't get rid of me yet. But silence is going to matter today. It's going to matter today because by the time that Habakkuk 2 ends, God will say to the entire earth, hush.

And that is essentially striking, especially striking, because this final woe is filled with sort of another kind of silence that Gil read for us this morning.

[3:03] What else is silent in this passage? Silent, lower G, gods. Silence. These are pieces of wood that can't answer.

Stone that can't wake up. Idols that supposedly teach yet cannot even speak. And standing over all of this silence in this passage, it is the living God, Yahweh, who has been speaking the entire time. But before we get there, we have to remember where we're at in a bunch of these woes. Maybe this is your first time attending the service, or maybe you've been out for a couple weeks.

These past four weeks, God has been unfolding woes that are in direct relationship with this nation called Babylon.

Babylon, and it's a newer developing nation. The Chaldeans is what they were referred to as in this time period. And we've broken down these five woes against them, these five judgments, all verse by verse.

[4:23] And this is the fifth and final one. And in the first woe, we see there's been sort of, well, let's treat Babylon like a sick patient and trying to diagnose Babylon.

What's going on with Babylon? What's wrong with them? Well, the first woe, we could say, well, why can enough never be enough for Babylon?

The second woe we might consider, why will Babylon sin its way towards security? The third woe we might, you know, diagnose Babylon by saying, why is Babylon obsessed with its own glory?

And the fourth woe that we saw last week, why does Babylon's power become permission to humiliate, permission to destroy other people?

And now in this fifth and final woe, God finally gives us the diagnosis of it all. We had a little bit of a hint upon that diagnosis, thinking back to Habakkuk chapter one, verse 11.

[5:40] God had already told us that Babylon's own might is their God, kind of just to say, Babylon trusted Babylon. Babylon. So Babylon's deepest problem was not merely greed.

It was just a symptom of a deeper problem. It wasn't just about insecurity like the second woe. It wasn't about pride or it wasn't about an abuse of power.

But underneath it all, we find idolatry throughout each of them. Unfortunately, idolatry is not thought of as a modern-day problem, as if it is limited to bowing down in front of a wooden object or statue. We think that idolatry is sort of like one of those old words that relate to those people and doesn't really exist in the same way. But if that's your impression of idolatry, I do want to challenge you to think beyond what lives on your shelf and focus upon what lives within your hearts, in all of our hearts and mine included.

We're all guilty of this. An idol can live in our bank accounts. An idol can live in our political ideology, especially with midterms coming up.

[7:11] Our idols can rest within our reputation and what other people think about us. Our idols can actually be rested in our sexuality, whether you're an alpha male and nobody's going to tell you what to do or maybe even feminism or some toxic form of those manhood and womanhood versions.

Or idols can live in your career or in your intelligence or maybe even your family can become an idol or your relationships can be idolatrous.

And even our own preferred version of Christianity, well, Steel Valley Church, there's no other true church, right? The people down the road don't have it all together. All of this can lead to idolatry. It's not a problem of old. It's a problem that rests within all of our hearts. And today, Habakkuk is going to expose the absolute insanity of idolatry.

I'm going to break this up into three separate sections. There's three verses, so I'll make it easy. Three sections. And the first section, we're going to see that we make gods that agree with us.

[8:26] That's the basis of idolatry. Not yet, Dom. Getting a little frisky back there. The second section, we're going to see that we trust gods that fail us.

The third section, and then God reminds us at the end that he is still on the throne. The title of this sermon that I want us to look at, man, Dom is on it today, is lesson five in this fifth woe.

Trust the God who speaks. Trust the God who speaks. And the main point that I want us to really see arguing from this passage and from the structure is simply, do not trust what you make, but submit to the God who made you.

Do not trust what you make, but submit to the God who made you. Let's pray as we enter into section one, Dom.

And we will approach this in a manner of arguing that main point and seeing that come to life. And it not being my words, but solely the word of God to speak today.

[9:47] Let's pray. Father, we come to you this morning. We ask for you to help us to understand, and for us to see the problem that is centuries old, that is actually as old as the Bible, and as old as the Garden of Eden.

Help us, Lord, to be able to examine our hearts, the things that we replace in our lives instead of you, and help us to see that we do have many symptoms in our lives.

Those symptoms are unique, but the problem is very consistent related to idolatry. Help us to see our hearts as they are.

Help me, even at this time of preaching, to see my heart clearly as we do this, and let your words speak. We praise in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The first section that we'll be opening up here is, hang on just a moment. I got my clicker here.

[10:58] We make gods that agree with us, and we see this in verse 18. And just as it was read, verse 18 starts out with a question.

What prophet is an idol when its maker has shaped it? A metal image? A teacher of lies? I found it pretty interesting this week, and I think you probably find it interesting this week as well.

All of the other woes started with a woe. I know what you're thinking. Whoa! What's going on, right? Whoa! Whoa! This might be actually an intentional reservation from God. God is speaking here in this woe, and maybe that might be for a specific reason why he decided to give this sort of preference to save us, that woe, until the next verse.

And I think that might be the case. Look at the question that he asks. He says, what prophet is an idol, or what has this thing actually done for you?

[12:17] That question is especially devastating for Babylon, because Babylon has spent this whole chapter chasing more. Babylon is chasing more wealth, more security, more glory.

Last week they were chasing more power. It's all self-interest, church. And so God essentially gives this theological preface to the woe, saying, fine, let's evaluate your God by your standard.

What have you gained from it, essentially? It's a playful question that he hands to humanity, Babylon specifically. What's the obvious answer to that?

What does all these created things do for you? Nothing. Nothing at all. And so God exposes that absurdity.

He says it's maker here. It's maker trust in his own creation. To put it another way, it's someone who creates something with their own hands and then asks that thing that they created to tell them how to live.

[13:30] What insanity is that? You see, Babylon's idolatry is ultimately self-trust disguised as worship.

And God calls that a teacher of lies. This is a Hebrew word that's associated with instruction, specifically related to the Torah, which creates a contrast between false instruction of idols and the true instruction from the Lord, all capital L-O-R-D, meaning Yahweh in Hebrew.

And now, how can something speechless teach? Because speechless things can teach, and that's the sort of irony of this passage.

It's quite a deep matter, because anything that we trust in, ultimately trust in, begins to shape how we interpret reality. Like, what we trust teaches us.

Think about this. In a couple different areas, I want to prove to you that these things do teach us. Like, if money is my God, money teaches me that my worth is what I possess.

[14:50] It's the amount of digits that follow that apostrophe, or that comma, rather, apostrophe, comma in the bank accounts.

How many zeros are after that decimal point, right? If approval is my God, how does that teach? Well, that our worth is what people think about us.

If politics, Lord forbid politics being our God, like if our side wins, everything's going to finally be okay. It's the biggest lie.

Or if self is my God, well, truth is whatever allows me to become whoever I want to be. Do you see how these things that are essentially nothing, that we create, speak?

The idol never has to open its mouth, but your trust gives it a voice. Isn't that fascinating?

[15:58] In church, this is why idols are so attractive. The gods we make usually agree with the people who make them because we have the idea. We want this idol to serve our needs, and they rarely confront us, and they rarely contradict us, and they rarely tell us, if ever, to repent.

And so maybe the heart check is not merely, what do you love too much? Instead, maybe it might be, what have we all allowed to tell me what is true besides God?

In other words, what voice gets the final word in your life when Scripture disagrees with it? I know, that steps on a couple toes.

It stepped on mine. You see, the moment that we require a lowercase g, God, who always agrees with us, we are no longer worshipping capital G, God.

We are worshipping a reflection of ourselves, a voice that we've created. Romans 1.23 actually gives us some insight into this reflection as it writes, as Paul wrote, those who exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling man.

[17:29] Do you see the mirror in Romans 1? We see it here in Habakkuk centuries earlier. And in verse 19, Habakkuk, there's another question that's kind of naturally posed here.

What happens when the God you made finally needs to save you? And this is where we see in verse 19, the woe come.

The absurdity is established, and now the Lord says, woe. Woe. We trust gods who fail us. Now the hammer drops, and I couldn't help but notice that this woe is not pronounced upon the wood.

You terrible piece of wood. It's not pronounced upon the stone. It falls upon the person trusting in these things.

Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, awake to a silent stone, arise. Can this teach? What a wake-up call.

[18:44] Thinking back to those metaphorical, hopefully metaphorical things that we trust in, like money, politics, reputation, sexuality, careers, and family.

These are obviously not the issue. It goes a little bit deeper than that. The issue is that we cause these things, like good things in life, to play such a significant role in our lives that they become our lowercase g, God.

So we are the ones responsible to be judged. The tragedy of idolatry always falls back upon the worshiper.

It always falls back upon the worshiper. The worshiper desperately cries, awake, arise, do something. And this is deep misplaced dependence that stems from what our hearts have ultimately put trust into.

Simply to say, when we're trying to tell a piece of wood to wake up, I mean, don't you see that there's quite a problem?

[20:01] Whatever that piece of wood might be in your life, might that signal that there's quite a problem? When you look at your bank account, when you look at your relationships, when you look at your politics, when you look at your sexuality, when you look at all of these things in your life, and we're essentially behaving as we're telling those things to wake up, don't we have quite a problem?

Jeremiah makes the same mockery. People say to a tree, quote, you are my father. And then when trouble comes, they cry to the gods that they made, and they say, arise and save us.

This is the timeless great tragedy of every idol. It works wonderfully until you actually need an uppercase G-god. We could feel the safety of these lower G-gods we make for only a time until you really need supernatural power.

For some of us, certainly, money can help a lot of our problems. I could probably use an extra 20 bucks or something like that, right?

Like we can always, money can help us until your problem actually can't be purchased away.

Because it's just, you get more money, you spend more money.

[21:26] That's the human motto. You can get all the raises at work as you want, but reality and history says, well, you're probably just going to spend more money. Probably going to get a nicer car, and then all your money is going to those things.

So money can solve many problems until your problems can't be purchased away. Health can carry you for decades until your body fails. Reputations can open doors and whatever your resume may say about you and your qualifications until everything falls apart and the job opportunity goes away. Politics are sweet, beloved politics in this country. I say that sarcastically. They can affect governments, but no election is a solve-all solution.

It isn't. God takes this case further after raising the question, can this teach? And he continues to reinforce even the most impressive, expensive, beautiful, powerful idol.

He says, overlaid with gold and silver. He's reinforcing that even the most impressive, expensive, and beautiful, powerful idol is an absurd, lifeless object to trust in.

[22:49] There is no breath at all in it. And church, we can cover these dead gods, lower G gods, with gold, but we can never give them life.

They can never give us life. What an important reminder, I think, for us. That idols begin as genuinely good things. Like wood is useful, stone is useful, money is useful, work is useful, family is beautiful, government is very necessary, but a created thing collapses when we ask it to carry the weight only designated to its creator.

Do you understand? Romans 1, if we go even deeper into Romans 1, Paul brings this theological issue to the forefront of the church in Rome. Ones who, knew God but did not honor Him as God and became futile in their thinking.

So, therefore, God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

Why? Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

[24:21] This is where Christianity makes the most outrageous claims, I think. God is not something that we created. It's not.

The gospel is not humanity reaching upward and constructing some path towards God. No, Christianity is about a God who came down to us.

John says that in Him, Jesus Christ, was life. And not just life as being expressed in like, He had a couple good things to say, so He wrote it down and these are ways to live your life by, but no, Jesus said that I am the resurrection and the life relating to eternal matters.

Dead gods cannot save living people. And whether you are here today as a believer needing to strip your heart of this idolatry that you've learned from the culture or maybe an unbeliever as Paul also says in Romans 1 of an unbeliever suppressing the truth and trusting in whatever seems right in your own eyes, well, verse 20 really puts the cap on it all.

It puts every idol, every empire, every worshiper, and even Habakkuk himself in their proper place. I want you to see this in verse 20.

[25 : 57] God reminds us that He is still on the throne. Notice the word but here.

This word changes everything. It's a contrasting word that says, yes, all of that but, and it turns our attention from the idols that we have made to Yahweh, capital L-O-R-D, Yahweh, who is and always will be.

In other words, this whole passage has been actually driving towards this contrast. Yahweh possesses everything that these man-made idols, these things that we've given the power to speak to us because of our trust.

Yahweh possesses all the things that they lack. Life, speech, truth, presence, authority, comfort, instruction, power.

And when Habakkuk says here, well, the Lord says in the book here, the Lord is in his holy temple. We know that this is not binding God to some religious structure, like some temple or anything.

[27 : 20] It's like a religious building or a religious sanctuary. But the contrast, look at the words, all the earth strongly suggests that this is God's heavenly sanctuary where he is the living king sovereignly ruling over all creation.

The Lord is in his holy temple. It echoes the author of Hebrews that raises Jesus Christ as a greater than, greater than to each living thing and non-living thing.

Paul also goes into to say everything living, visible and invisible in Colossians. So we see idolatry has a way of making us believe that God's throne is essentially vacant.

It doesn't it? But God reminds Habakkuk, who's asking a lot of questions here in this entire book, and he's reminding us today that it has already been occupied.

It always will be forevermore occupied. Maybe you're not in Christ today. You're kind of checking out church and having some good coffee.

[28 : 41] Coffee is very good, by the way. You should get some coffee. I want to ask you specifically if you're not in Christ and you only know in your heart, is the presence of God enough for you to realize that your trust in anything else besides him is an empty pursuit?

pursuit. Is the presence of God enough for you to realize that your trust in anything else besides him is an empty pursuit?

I would invite you according to this word to turn from your idolatry today and to turn towards Jesus Christ believing in every word that Jesus Christ said and every action he did to substitute himself upon the cross to forgive you of what?

Your idolatry paid for completely upon the cross so that you may live. In fact repentance might be something as simple as the commands of verse 20 let all the earth keep silence before him.

Sometimes repentance looks like just shutting up and trusting. The Hebrew word here is very forceful can be translated as hush.

[30 : 29] the picture is beautiful irony. The idols are silent because they can't speak and the earth becomes silent because God has spoken.

Isn't it interesting that even maybe speechless idols who can't speak even know their place naturally as being created things to be silent before the living God.

A God who reigns over them who created them. Here church we need to see that this verse is actually bigger than Babylon. It reaches backward all the way to the opening verses of Habakkuk where Habakkuk said God why are you silent as the chapter opened up and God answered Habakkuk silent right Habakkuk did not like his answer after God responded no I'm not silent and so God graciously answers again and now after all of these five woes do you see what's happening here God says hush before him all the earth and that includes Habakkuk and it includes all of us myself included and as we will see next week in this third and final chapter this silence was the prelude for

Habakkuk's worship and song of chapter three chapter three is beautiful and why is it that way well because eventually for all of us as well as Habakkuk there comes a point where all of our questions have been asked everything has been exhausted we've we've questioned everything from every

angle and God has told us everything that he has chosen to tell us and that is the point where faith begins isn't it?

When we hush at God's revelation and what he's doing and simply trust that's what faith is all about faith says you are God and I am not I will trust you and in that trust you're giving you're affirming God's voice aren't you?

[33:09] Faith is a hushful surrender faith surrenders to the God who has spoken and sits on the throne lifeless idols are silent and we ought to reach the point of silence as well and because we know that if we reach the point of silence and trust we know that true life does begin which breaks chapter three into a song church we began this morning with silence silence that was difficult at first it felt awkward right but Habakkuk has shown us that there are two different kinds of silence the idols are silent because they're dead empty and the earth is called to silence because God is alive God has spoken God is on the throne and maybe that is where faith finally has to bring us to just silence we spend so much of our lives trying to construct something that we can control something that agrees with us brings reassurance to us protects us to tell us what we want to hear we try to fill the silence but eventually those gods we know will fail don't we church and when they do the answer is not to build a better idol a shinier!

right? that's the vanity of this passage but the answer is to look up to the Lord who is in his holy temple and always has been and always will be the throne is not empty it was never empty and when God speaks and our hearts disagree one of us needs to become silent and church is not God you see the point do not trust what you make but submit to the God who made you let all the earth hush before him let's pray