

## Order of Worship for July 23, 2023

### Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

**Opening Hymn: “Salvation Unto Us Has Come” - Hymn #555, vs 1, 7-9**

### Confession and Forgiveness:

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**C: If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

P: Most merciful God,

**C: we confess that we have sinned. We have falsely claimed to be righteous, when our deeds do not match our words. We have falsely claimed to be righteous, when we claim our deeds make us righteous. We have falsely claimed to be righteous, when we know we are only righteous through faith in You. For such as these we ask forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ.**

P: According to the will of God our Father, Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins to set us free. In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

**C: We have been crucified with Christ. Now we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.**

P: In the name of Jesus and by His authority, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

### Service of the Word

P: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

**C: the conviction of things not seen.**

P: By faith we understand the universe was created by the word of God.

**C: So that was seen is not from things that are visible. (Hebrews 1:1,3)**

P: The word of faith is near you.

**C: In your mouth and in your heart.**

P: Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord

**C: And believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

P: For with the heart one believes and is justified,

**C: And with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**

P: For the Scripture says,

**C: “Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.**

P: For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;

**C: For anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:8-13)**

## Prayer of the Day:

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us pray.... Almighty, eternal God, in the Word of Your apostles and prophets You have proclaimed to us Your saving will. Grant us faith to believe Your promises that we may receive eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

## Hymn of Praise: “*In Christ Alone*”

### Old Testament Lesson – Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,  
and You will not hear?

Or cry to You “Violence!”  
and You will not save?

Why do You make me see iniquity,  
and why do You idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.

So the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.

I will take my stand at my watchpost  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look out to see what he will say to me,  
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

...

And the LORD answered me:

“Write the vision;  
make it plain on tablets,  
so he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.

If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.”

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Epistle Lesson: Galatians 2:15–21; 3:10–14**

P; We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. . . .

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel:-- John 5:21-24**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the Fifth chapter

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

### **Children’s Message:**

**Sermon Hymn: “By Grace I’m Saved” - Hymn #566**

**Sermon:** *“Habakkuk the Prophet”*

If you turn on the news or listen to talk radio, as you scroll through your social media feeds, they can be full of cries for justice. Stories of shootings and stabbings, wars and violence, storms and floods all point us to what is going wrong in the world. As we look at that, we wonder where God is, and wonder when God is going to fix everything.

The opening lines of Habakkuk seem as contemporary as the evening news. It’s an unusual opening, beginning with a complaint that sparks a conversation between the prophet and his God.

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you “Violence!”

and you will not save? (Habakkuk 1:2)

“Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?” Habakkuk asks God. “Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise” (1:3). In common with most of us, Habakkuk stands aghast at the “destruction and violence” all around (1:3) and wonders how it is that justice seems never to conquer.

God gives an answer to the prophet. He tells Habakkuk that he has heard his complaint and the people’s cry for justice, and he plans to do something about it. He will raise up the brutal Babylonians, also known as “the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation” (1:6), to punish Judah’s injustice and put her violence to an end. The Lord will fight fire with fire. He will destroy a violent nation with an even more violent and wicked nation that devours nations and levels cities like sand castles. “At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it” (1:10). In other words, “Don’t worry, Habakkuk! I got it covered. I’m going to wipe your country off the face of the map, and that will take care of those evildoers you’re complaining about!”

But that is too much for Habakkuk to take! The prophet cannot believe that God’s eyes, “too pure to behold evil,” could look on silently “when the wicked swallow those more righteous than they” (v 13) — indeed, that God could rouse Judah’s neighbors to violence against his chosen people (v 6). It’s overkill! He brings another complaint against the Lord (1:12-17) and wonders how a holy and righteous God can “remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he” (1:13). How can a holy God use the godless, violent Babylonians to punish the chosen people of God? Habakkuk cannot make it make sense! It doesn’t add up. It doesn’t seem right or fair. What kind of God are we dealing with?

But despite the divine silence, Habakkuk remains confident that God will answer: Habakkuk resolves to “stand at my watchpost and station myself on the rampart,” to “keep watch to see what he will say to me” (2:1).

In our time, too, that’s sometimes as much as we can do: “keep watch.” Not impatiently, but expectantly. For what God promised to Habakkuk, he promises to us, that he will make plain his “vision for the appointed time. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not

delay” (2:3). And the Lord does answer, because God always answers prayer. It may not be the answer we want to hear, and sometimes it’s difficult to discern the difference between the answers of “no.” and “wait.” We may need to wait a long time for the answer—he will not answer before we are ready to hear and receive it.

But then we come to God’s answer to Habakkuk’s complaint: “And the Lord answered me: ‘Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not right within him...’” (Habakkuk. 2:2-4a).

In other words, “Be patient, Habakkuk! Wait a while longer.” You see: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The reason the Lord doesn’t just snap his fingers and spontaneously combust the wicked is because God is patient towards you! He wants “all people to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4). God wants to save his people, not destroy them, He wants to save everyone!

And then comes the most famous declaration of all in the Book of Habakkuk: “But the righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4b). The righteous shall live by faith. Now that’s good news! This powerful statement is quoted three times in the New Testament; in Romans, in Galatians, and in Hebrews.

“The righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4b). But there is none righteous, no, not even one. Certainly not any of us. Actually, there is One. His name is Jesus. Jesus is the Righteous One, the only righteous man who ever lived. Fully God and fully human, Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for our sins so we could be forgiven. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your Savior and Lord, then the Lord will declare you righteous and forgive your sins so that you too can live by faith—not just today, but forever in eternity!

So how do we do that? The answer to that question is found in Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous shall live by his faith." God invites us to put our faith in Him - not just when life is smooth and everything is working out just the way we want it, but also when things are falling apart at the seams and words "unsettled times" only begin to describe what is going on. Maybe right now is one of those times for you.

This is the Good News: The righteous shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). We live because Jesus died and lives again. That is our faith. That is the only reason we can live and stand before God. Because of God’s grace in Jesus, we can boldly and confidently stand before the Lord our God. We can stand at the watchpost and station ourselves on the tower and to wait and see what God will say, and how he will give answer to our complaint.

And the Lord does answer! The Lord promises Habakkuk that Babylon will not escape God’s punishment. Even though God can wield a wicked nation as a blunt instrument of his wrath to discipline his people, the wicked never go unpunished. They will be judged. And so will

Babylon (2:6-19). “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (2:20).

The Book of Habakkuk ends with a confession of faith and a prayer. “God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.” (Habakkuk 3:19) Have you ever seen a deer bounding about in hilly, uneven terrain? They can do it because they have been equipped for it. If other animals less equipped, or you and I, tried to bound about with the same agility in those conditions it wouldn't be pretty. Likewise, if we try to navigate our way through the most challenging times in our lives with just our own resources, we will be ill-equipped to do it. But, if we take on those same challenges with faith in the Lord, our feet will be secure and we will nimbly maneuver our way through like a deer on a mountain.

There are times in our lives that if we focused exclusively on our circumstances, we would surely be brought to a place of despair. But as Habakkuk sets his eyes on the Lord, he is able to say that he is going to rejoice in the Lord and find joy in the God who has saved him. Because God is giving him strength he will stand strong and secure in spite of his unsettling surroundings.

And so we can pray with Habakkuk, complaining to God and waiting for His answer. And he will. And he does—through his holy Word and his body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. He gives us faith and strengthens our faith and helps us to believe even in the face of death and destruction. He promises that justice will come. We have hope that Christ will return to set things right, to judge the earth, to raise our bodies from the dead, and to renew the whole creation. Until that Day we need only to hope and wait and pray for his forgiveness.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Article of Creed and Explanation:**

### **Song of Habakkuk:**

**ALL: I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

P: O LORD, I have heard the report of You,

**C: and Your work, O Lord, do I fear.**

P: In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known;

**C: in wrath remember mercy.**

**ALL: I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

P: God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.

**C: His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.**

P: His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from His hand;

**C: and there He veiled His power.**

P: Before Him went pestilence,  
**C: and plague followed at His heels.**

P: He stood and measured the earth;  
**C: He looked and shook the nations;**

P: then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low.  
**C: His were the everlasting ways.**

**ALL : I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

P: You went out for the salvation of Your people,  
**C: for the salvation of Your anointed.**

P: You crushed the head of the house of the wicked,  
**C: laying him bare from thigh to neck.**

P: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
**C: I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

P: God, the LORD, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer's;  
**C: He makes me tread on my high places.**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**ALL: I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.**

**Prayer of the Church:**

P: Lord, in Your mercy,  
**C: hear our prayer.**

**Blessing: (Pastor)**  
**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation" - Hymn #644**

**Postlude**