

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In the Nuremburg War Crime Trials a witness appeared who had lived for a time in a grave in a Jewish grave-yard, in Wilna, Poland. It was the only place he, and many others, could live, when in hiding after they had escaped the gas chamber. During this time he wrote poetry, & one of the poems was a description of a birth. In a grave nearby a young woman gave birth to a boy. The eighty-year-old gravedigger, wrapped in a linen shroud, assisted. When the newborn child uttered his first cry, the old man prayed: "Great God, hast Thou finally sent the Messiah to us? For who else than the Messiah Himself can be born in a grave?" But after three days the poet saw the child sucking [only] his mother's tears because she had no milk for him.

So strange, so sad, so wrong, God must come now.

So it is for Habakkuk. Having seen violence and evil against the poor, violence against his people by the Babylonians, having witnesses the kings court abuse the innocent – Habakkuk says, “*Lord, How long? You must come now, how bad must it get before you intervene in human affairs?*”

So it is for the Psalmist in Psalm 37. Such a completely understandable lament, as the psalmist complains that the wicked continue to prosper, even as the righteous suffer, the poor starve, and injustice thrives. *Why, Lord? How long, Lord?*

So it is for us. We see the violence of anger and hatred as the fabric of our society unravels more and more each day; again last night

in Kansas – 4 dead in an apparent racially motivated mass shooting. In Iraq and Afghanistan young Americans continue to fight and die as we fail to disentangle ourselves from the war on terror, which we set in motion. For 20 years we have seen what fear can and is doing around us. The world has experienced outrage, and vows to combat terrorism, and still we cannot understand what has happened, why it has happened, what we can do. Where is God in the midst of all this atrocity?

What is happening says very little about God, and a great deal about human sinfulness. You may say, “Wait a minute. I’m in no way responsible for what happened on September 11th,” and that is most certainly true. On that day, nearly 3000 innocent people died senselessly – and yet everyday 24,000 people die senselessly of starvation, *and we can do something about that, but mostly we don’t, because it doesn’t affect us.* What we know better today than we did 20 years ago is that life has gone way wrong, is spinning out of control and spiraling down into chaos, hatred, violence. And we can’t fix it.

What all this has to say to us is that we need help. We need *God’s help.* We can’t, nor should we try to do it alone. So we cry out with Habakkuk, “How long, Lord?” One thing is clear, *we need God’s guidance.*

And when Habakkuk, the psalmist, and St. Paul speak of what to day they say – wait and trust the Lord – there is still a vision for the appointed time.

When Jesus tells the disciples that they must forgive continuously –

every time someone repents – they ask Him for more faith. But Jesus tells them and us by extension, “*You don’t need more faith! You need to do something with the faith God has already given you.*”

There is still a vision for the appointed time;

it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

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

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them,

but the righteous live by their faith.

The end is in sight. It was not a vault in a Jewish cemetery, but the Christ was born in a stable, among the poor. He lived among us, and though he was truly innocent suffered a cruel death, and was buried.

But God raised Jesus and brought Him to the right hand of the Father.

So now Jesus is wherever humanity suffers, as should be His people .

Habakkuk says it clearly, “*the righteous shall live by faith.*”

For ***our eyes see not only the destruction that wastes at noonday, but the merciful Lord who upholds the bereaved, feeds the hungry, contends for justice for the oppressed.*** The eyes of faith see more than the

desperation, and hopelessness of the aftermath of human sin, horror,

brutality and indifference. ***The eyes of faith see how many have***

willingly wade into the suffering because we trust God and know

God’s vision for a future of shalom, of wholeness, of forgiveness and justice.

What do we see?

Do we see a pathetic infant, born in poverty, squalor, and

hopelessness? Or do we see the Christ? In the end it doesn't really matter, because Christ sees us. Only, *our vision – and the view that goes along with it – is so much better, when we are looking for and expecting to see Jesus Christ working in the midst of the brokenness of our lives and world.*

So it is that when the apostles ask Jesus to give them more faith, *Jesus instructs the apostles to use the faith that they already possess to live obediently God's way of forgiveness, peace, charity, & justice.*

We can feel immobilized in the midst of the world's problems and sinfulness, but *Jesus gently reminds his disciples that we already have something to give.* God has already blessed us with many gifts to share.

We don't need for God to make us into people of exceptional faith to be obedient and try to do his will. Indeed, if we are not that does not excuse us from doing what we can in Jesus' name here and now.

Today, *not when we're stronger or more faithful.* Here and now – *not later on some obvious mission servant project.* With the people you see everyday, *not only amongst those who are obviously in need of ministry.*

For now simply live the faith that God has given you to share that same vision of hope to our hurting world. As St. Francis said, “*Preach the gospel at all times, use words if necessary.*”

“For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.”

Amen!!!