

Title: **Learning to Lament**
Text: **Habakkuk 1:1-5**
Date: **June 5, 2022**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at mercyhillchurch.org.



Big Idea

When all around you seems hopeless and lost, drought-stricken and barren, when you go looking for fig on the branch or grape on the vine, and there's nothing, can you still have joy? Have you learned the secret of this sort of faith? How do we get this? Where does it come from? In the opening verses, Habakkuk might not show us the full picture, but he does show us where to begin: with lamenting.

Habakkuk invites us to come along with him on a journey. We move from his struggling and lamenting at the beginning of the book to his singing and praising by the end of it. It begins with a *cry* and ends with a *song*.

1. The Occasion

Habakkuk has been commissioned by God to minister in and around Judah during a time of great turmoil—both politically and religiously. If you noticed, in the opening verses of our text, in an effort to express the severity of the situation so far as he perceives it, he just starts stacking up the synonyms: “I look out and I see ‘violence’ (v. 2), ‘iniquity’ (v. 3), ‘wrong’ (v. 3), ‘destruction’ (v. 3), ‘strife’ (v. 3), ‘contention’ (v. 3), injustice (v. 4). That’s what I see. I tell you the one thing I don’t see: God doing anything about it!”

2. The Lament

“Habakkuk is not content to say, ‘What’er my God ordains is right,’ and leave it there in a spirit of resignation. Like Job, he argues with God and expostulates with him, and thus reaches a clearer understanding of God’s character and a firmer faith in him. The old, easy assurances that peace, health, long life, and prosperity were tokens of divine approval have collapsed in the face of experience, but Habakkuk, in hardship and privation, comes to know God more fully and to rejoice

in him for his own sake and not for the benefits he bestows.” (F.F. Bruce)

Biblical lament as we see her modeled by Habakkuk is not mere complaining. It is, if I could flesh it out further, complaining *in God’s direction, on the basis of God’s Word, with an expectation of God’s response* and help.

3. The Response

“I could never myself believe in God, if it wasn’t for the cross. . . . In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world of brokenness. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in Godforsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross that symbolizes divine suffering. . . . ‘The other gods were strong; but thou wast weak; they rode, but thou didst stumble to a throne; But to our wounds only God’s wounds can speak, And not a god has wounds, but thou alone.’” (John Stott)



Reflection Questions

- Sit down at some point during the week and read through the whole book of Habakkuk (it’s only three chapters, you can do it!). What do you notice? What confuses, troubles, convicts, or encourages you?
- In what ways can you relate to Habakkuk in these opening verses? Have you ever talked to God like this? What in your life makes you want to lament right now? Follow Habakkuk’s example and do it!
- Are you more prone to “simplistic faith” or “simplistic skepticism.” What would it look like to “fight for faith” instead?

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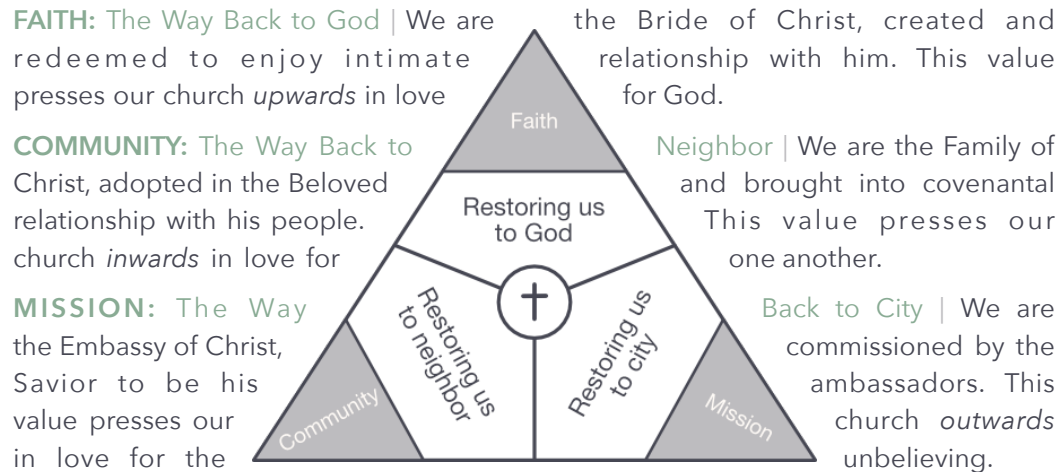


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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

CityTeam's Love Your Neighborhood Day - June 25th!

Mercy Hill is participating in CityTeam's Love Your Neighborhood Day on June 25th from 1:00 to 4:00pm. There are three stations - craft table for children, prayer station, and helping people as they shop. Volunteers must register for one of the stations listed on the calendar on June 25th.

Find a link to sign up by scanning the QR code below and heading to our online Communications Hub.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Becky Durstenfeld at beckydurstenfeld@gmail.com.

Mercy Hill Men's Hike - This Saturday!

The men of Mercy Hill are going to be taking a hike in the redwoods of Castle Rock State Park. The date will be June 11th and we'll start hiking at 9:00am. We're asking men to pack a lunch (and water, of course) as we plan to linger a little bit together. After sharing a meal in the woods, you'll be free to head home.

Find a link to RSVP by scanning the QR code below and heading to our online Communications Hub.

If you have any questions, you can reach out to Paul at pwwalton@comcast.net.

All Church Hangout - Today!

Meaningful community is hard to find in Silicon Valley, even in the church. Our congregation is spread out all over the city. But there is one day of every week when we all commit to gather together and worship our God: Sunday. It seems strategic to take this pre-existing momentum and work with it in an attempt to develop deeper community within our body. Therefore, on occasional Sundays throughout the year we will invite the church to enjoy picnic-style afternoons together immediately following the service. Grab lunch across the street and come join us!

For clickable content and more announcements,



scan this code to head to our Communications Hub!