

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

November 6, 2022 "The time was right. How long oh Lord?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing, and you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Fall is here and we have several things planned to the end of the year. Our children's program is growing and we're still tweaking ways to love on them well. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all that through our brand new website, upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Sunday.

We're going to start with some 'despair' questions. Fun...right?

How do you handle God feeling far away in your own personal life?

When things are just not working out, you've prayed and pleaded for God to show up...and it isn't happening.

How do you handle God feeling far away in our society and world?

Bad people seem to be winning, we seem to be moving further and further away from the world you want, and God seems to be indifferent to the problems we see and feel around us.

These are common feelings for those of us who know of, and want a better world. And those of us who have a fairly healthy understanding that God wants these things also. But what do we do with our struggles and unrealized expectations? When God feels silent? You don't feel close to him, or you're not receiving any direction or any word from him. What do you do?

This is how the nation of Israel felt when they were carried into exile. The temple was destroyed, the prophets only had harsh words for the nation, and then everything went quiet. The Israelites were promised salvation, a messiah, redemption, and in that moment all those promises are unfulfilled. The people, children, of God don't hear from him anymore, and they don't know what to do. This was the place the people were at between the last words of God, and the birth of Jesus. And this is where we will be for the next three weeks. Talking about what it's like to live in this silence. When we don't feel or hear God, and how to navigate that silence. This first Sunday we'll talk about silence, stillness, the timing of God, and how to live in the "*Where are you God...how long do we have to wait?*" place.

There is a lot in the message that's not covered in here. In the message Kal talks about the difference between silence and stillness. And he also talks about the timing of God versus our understanding and expectation of time. Watch the service to get some background on how those play into the understanding of waiting for God.

We're going to break up the scripture differently, and hope to guide you through a growing understanding on how God responds to our struggles to understand when he feels silent.

Read Habakkuk 1:3-4.

Habakkuk pours out his heart about his frustrations.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

How do you relate to Habakkuk's struggle?

It seems to be important to have a relationship with God that allows us to feel the freedom to express our feelings around times when God feels distant or silent.

Read Habakkuk 1:5.

God's reply is short and doesn't really acknowledge Habakkuk's struggle. And it's okay to say that.

What jumped out to you from this verse?

How did you respond to God's reply?

It's important to learn and trust that God does care about our struggles, and even though we may not get the answer we want, we can trust it's the answer we need.

Read Habakkuk 2:1.

Habakkuk says because God has shown him that he is doing some amazing things, he will position himself to be able to see them.

What jumped out to you from this verse?

If a watchtower is a place to see God at work, what would your watchtower be?

It seems a watchtower is the place we can find refuge, see God, AND make sure to share with others what we gained from our relationship with God.

Read Habakkuk 2:2-3.

Then God tells Habakkuk that the things he does see God doing, he's supposed to write them down and tell others. We are to share the hope we have positioned ourselves to see with others.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What does it mean to you that even though Habakkuk's situation hadn't changed, things were not getting better, that God wants Habakkuk to encourage the people?

What would it take to speak encouragement and hope even when you don't see or feel it?

This is where we grow into working into our daily life opportunities to share what we learn.

Read Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Habakkuk seems to land at this really new and centering perspective.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

Have you ever come to a perspective like this with anything in your life?

Where Habakkuk ends up is amazing. What a beautiful change of perspective. And what a model and example for us in how we handle the difficulty of God feeling very far away.

III Challenge.

I can't even begin to describe how difficult it is to see good, believing God is still working out things for good. Especially when it feels like we're just surrounded by bad, and we see no end in sight. The nation of Israel would have to wait over 400 YEARS for Jesus to be born. And he still wasn't the messiah they were expecting. We have to feel the weight and despair that comes from that kind of life. But...knowing that God does care and is in the midst of all the struggles we find ourselves in.

Knowing this, what would it look like for you to live fully into the faithfulness of God?