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Finding Joy When It Isn't Easy

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Finding Joy When It Isn't Easy

Abstract

"Perhaps, you too have had moments in your life when you wonder, 'What is God doing?' In those moments, I encourage you to read Habakkuk."

Posting about perseverance through trials from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/finding-joy-when-it-isnt-easy/>

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Comments

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Finding Joy When It Isn't Easy

 [all in allthings.org/finding-joy-when-it-isnt-easy/](http://allthings.org/finding-joy-when-it-isnt-easy/)

November 10,
2016

Dave Mulder

On the corner of my desk, I have an Easy Button. You might remember those ads on TV? Push the button, your problem is solved, and the voice-over says, "That was easy!"

I wish I had an Easy Button that would solve the problems I see in American society today, the problems this election season has dragged to the surface.

I think I am entering a season of lament. I am lamenting the brokenness that I see in American culture. I am lamenting the hurt and fear I see so prevalent among the vulnerable. I am lamenting the deep division that is so obvious in my social media feed between those celebrating and those mourning. I am lamenting the fracture I see in the church. How effective will the church's collective witness be moving forward? Will we be able to come together in love and concern for those who now feel alienated?

I feel far from joy right now.

In times like these, I turn to a book in the Bible that might not top your reading list: Habakkuk. Perhaps, you too have had moments in your life when you wonder, "What is God doing?" In those moments, I encourage you to read Habakkuk.

Habakkuk is among the prophets called to speak to the nation of Judah in the Old Testament. [Habakkuk](#) was likely a contemporary of Jeremiah, speaking to the people just prior to the exile to Babylon.

The book of Habakkuk records a series of conversations the prophet has with God, and I take great comfort in the fact that Habakkuk is able to complain to God, and basically tell God, "This isn't fair!" Habakkuk begins by basically saying, "Hey, God, would you have a look around at the people of Judah? These people are wicked! There is injustice all around...aren't you going to do anything about it?"

And the Lord replies: "Oh, Habakkuk...you're right. I've seen the injustice and wickedness, and don't worry; their punishment is coming. You won't believe it when you see it: I'm sending the Babylonians, the most ruthless people on earth to punish Judah for their sins."

Habakkuk is shocked. "Hey now, God...wait just a minute here! The Babylonians? They are even worse than we are? How can you possibly use them to discipline us?! Hello, God? I'm waiting for an answer here!"

And the Lord, the Mighty One, sets Habakkuk straight: "Trust me, Habakkuk; I've got this situation in my hands. Those Babylonians are going to get what's coming to them." And the Lord explains to Habakkuk the desolation that will be coming on the Babylonians. They will be used to discipline His people, but they themselves will be disciplined.

And at that word, Habakkuk is stunned into silent worship.¹ And after that, he is driven to pray, pouring out his heart before the Lord.

"Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."

After recounting God's mighty deeds, and praising Him for his strength and power, Habakkuk ends his prayer with an amazing statement of faith, finding joy in the midst of distress and trouble:

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields

produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.”

For the people of God living in America today, this is my hope and prayer for us as well, that Habakkuk’s cry of faith—finding joy even in the face of great trials—will be our cry of faith as well.

However you are feeling personally as a result of the election of 2016, we all have to recognize that there are deep divisions in this nation. This election season has brought the fractured nature of contemporary American society to the forefront. Human beings—real persons, created in the image of God—are wounded, anxious, angry, disgusted, frightened, and sorrowing. There is no Easy Button for this. People are not going to just “be happy” in the face of this divisiveness. There are no quick fixes for the hurt that many have experienced, and are likely to continue experiencing in coming days and weeks and years.

But I believe that there can still be joy.

What will be our witness? Will we rupture in despair and division? Or will we be able to find power to overcome differences in love? Will we be able to rejoice, even in a time of adversity and trouble?

I believe this is our call to love, to love the “other,” to love the one who votes different than you, the one who thinks different than you, the one who worships different than you, the one who looks different than you. This is our call, both as individual members, and as a corporate body: be salt and light in a dark place!

Footnotes

1. At least, this is my interpretation of Habakkuk 2:20 in the light of the whole book: “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.” ↩