

- (Communion)

Chat with the Children: Asking God Questions

- If you could ask God any question, and get a straight answer, what would you ask?
 - put them up on flip-chart
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Q&A with God!

- Questions... Q&A sessions with lecturers?
 - what would you like to ask God?

Question: Why is Wickedness unpunished? (1-4)

- What's his problem?
 - God isn't answering (v.2)
- What is he asking for?
 - help - but not help as in physical rescue, but help to see his world change...
 - *"Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds."* (v.3)
 - its more than "what is the world coming to?"
 - for it **assumes** that God is also concerned, and his proper desire is to see and make things differently!
- The problem is the mismatch between who God says he is (just, holy) and how he is acting (unjust, careless of victims)
 - **Habakkuk is close to calling God a hypocrite!**
- What mis-matches do people perceive today?
 - some do worry about God allowing injustice, especially unjust suffering - the good person struck down, either by violence or by disease
 - this is a valid complaint! It should not be! We were made, in the image of God, for better than this!
 - others complain that God is **sold** as a **God of love** but his actions (or perhaps the actions of his followers, his representatives) fall somewhat short...

Answer: It will be! (5-11)

- Holidays are coming... holidays are coming...
 - Babylon is coming... Babylon is coming...
 - the judgement is coming, and God reveals that he will use the Babylonians as his agents, at least on this occasion
 - (historically we are somewhere near the end of the kingdom of Judah, shortly before the sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians in 587BC, and probably in the 20+ year period of growing Babylonian ascendancy)
 - but there is no covering over the brutality of the Babylonian reputation (v.9,11)
- God **will** justify himself
 - he **will** keep his promises
 - things **will** work out right in the end

Question: isn't the punishment unjust? (12-17)

- Here comes the second question...
 - accepts, notes God's answer (v.12)
 - but there's still stuff he can't get straight!
 - if God is pure, then even his judgement will be pure, proportionate, just and seen to be so...
 - so how can God use the treacherous, evil Babylonians to bring judgement on

Israel?

- how can their wanton destruction and pillage - the dragnet that sweeps up everything on the seabed and not just the stuff being fished for - be just? (v.15)
- is this your judgement, Lord? (v.17)
- Again, the question is fundamentally, Lord, do your actions match your revelation?
 - are you in action who you say you are?
- (Note personal nature of the relationship Habakkuk has with God - v.12)
 - these questions come from the place of covenant relationship...
- *Answer: wait for Habakkuk two!!*

So What?

- Habakkuk's questioning is reassuring:
 - he does so from within the context of a covenant relationship with God
 - a relationship, a covenant, an agreement, that goes both ways - we can "hold" God to his promises!
 - he will prove faithful... even if not necessarily in our time or our way!
- And such expression of what is felt is healthier for relationship than festering resentment!
 - so if that's what you feel, have the courage to express it, particularly to God (and not merely moaning about God behind his back!)
 - and if you hear someone upset with God, that's OK! Don't tell them off. They haven't necessarily lost their faith. Listen to their concern. God is big enough to cope with such complaints - are you? You are his appointed representative, his ambassador, after all...

So What Now?

- Some closing reflections/questions:
 - *what would you ask God?*
 - *where do you see a gap between what God says about himself and what he does?*
 - *is your relationship with him strong enough to ask the hard questions?*
 - *how would you respond to a Habakkuk in church?*