



## **How Our Savior Is Building His Kingdom Here & Around the World**

**Habakkuk 2:14**

**Rev. Dr. Luis Bush**

**January 3, 2016**

---

This is the day the Lord has made, and we shall rejoice and be glad in it, because He's able to do exceeding abundant above all that we can imagine. And He is with us as we begin this New Year. This is a time of looking forward and asking, "What is it the Lord has for us?"

As we look around the nations we see that He is at work in our world today in spite of so many things that might tell us contrary. Pastor David Sunday asked me to cast a vision of what our Savior is doing to build His Kingdom around the world and how we can be involved from here in St. Charles. That is an awesome assignment.

My wife and I, as Latin Americans, are indebted to Christian missionaries who came from this country to share the gospel with us—people like Dick Schurtz who came to São Paulo, Brazil, when we were still dating and shared the gospel at a time when our hearts were open. We responded, came to faith and we've never been the same.

We're very grateful for the missions that have gone forth from this church, a church that has been engaged in so many different places for so long and so faithfully. These missions are making a difference. As we look at what can be done to see our Lord at work in the nations, continue what you're already doing to engage in this mission effort.

At the same time, as we look at what is happening around the world and in our nation, we're asking the question, "How can this be? It seems like the Lord doesn't answer all my prayers." What is taking place is not what we expected in the United States and beyond. It's a time of soul-searching for our nation that is much like the context of the book we're going to be reflecting on, the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk was a prophet who saw things in his day that were overwhelming to him, as they can be overwhelming to us in our day. The main thing he said was, "I look and I don't see justice anywhere—neither within the nation of Israel nor with the instrumentation God wants to

use to bring justice to the nation of Israel.” As we are looking out, we’re asking that question with him, and this question is the source of our inspiration this morning.

Turning to the book of Habakkuk, we’ll be reading the opening verses, Habakkuk 1:1-4. We’ll see that he was wondering what was going on, and that wondering became worrying. But God did a major work in his life that took him from worrying to watching and waiting as he didn’t get answers, then finally to worship.

So this is the spiritual journey that he’s been on, that he invites us to consider as we start a new year. We’re wondering. Some of us are worrying. We’re asking, “Where do we go from here?” But perhaps we can go with Habakkuk to waiting and watching, then we might end up in a spirit of worshipping the Lord.

In the first verses of Habakkuk 1 we find the oracle that the prophet saw:

<sup>2</sup> *O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not hear?  
Or cry to you "Violence!"  
and you will not save?*  
<sup>3</sup> *Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.*  
<sup>4</sup> *So the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.*

Then the Lord answers that question. As He’s looking at His own people, the Lord says, “*Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded*” (Habakkuk 1:5). Then He’s going to say He’s at work building His Kingdom around the world. Habakkuk 2:14 says the earth is going to be filled with the fullness of the measure of the presence of God, of the glory of God, “*as the waters cover the sea.*”

In that intimate dialogue we have the revelation that in the midst of times of great questioning when God appears not to be active, He in fact is moving and calling us to open our eyes to see what He is doing, then stand back and rejoice, asking, “What would He have us do in the light of what He is doing?”

The conclusion of this book is that He is building His Kingdom in the nations. The phrase—“The earth shall be filled with the measure of all the fullness of God, of the glory of the presence and the power and the peace that God gives as the waters cover the sea”—that’s a

picture of the Savior advancing His Kingdom and bringing transformation in the nations, the change that only He can accomplish.

We see this happening today in different parts of the world. We appreciate so much your prayers for us during our journey to China. It was very unexpected that in China they're talking about missions from **China**. Not only are there missions to China, but now they're asking, "What can we do from China?"

In the very days before this event was to take place, the Daily Telegraph of Great Britain had announced a crackdown on the Christians in China with crosses being torn down from the churches—yet in that context they called together this gathering of God's servants throughout China, accompanied by a few overseas missionaries. Over 800 Christians came together, organized by these Chinese servants of God, with a mission called "China Mission 20/30," in which they were committed to sending out 20,000 cross-cultural missionaries from China by 2030.

It was remarkable. I remember that first evening, with Doris, feeling the presence of God in that worship time that went on and on, from one song to another. Then they had a time of testimony. They were supposed to stop at a certain time but they went on to 10:30, telling their stories of beginning mission efforts, with missionaries going out to the west part of China and beyond. There was a spirit of the presence of God. The first speaker said, "There is unspeakable joy. A new wave is rising, a new wind is blowing. God is starting to work in our people of China, calling us to missions."

They described three different motivations for their missions effort. First was the words of Jesus in the Great Commission: to make disciples of all the nations. Secondly, they had a motivation of gospel debt, they called it, or mission debt, owed because of over 10,000 missionaries who had come to China. They said, "Now it's our turn. We want to repay. This is our time to repay the gospel debt of those who have come and carry that gospel ourselves all the way back to Jerusalem."

That's their ultimate vision—completing the circle of the mission task after Paul was prohibited from going north to Asia (Acts 16:6). Now that the gospel has reached the uttermost parts of the world, it is time to continue westwards, to bring it all the way back to Jerusalem, not that they would take it alone, but that China would go to all nations to invite God's people to join them on the way back to Jerusalem. That's their ultimate motivation, starting with this 20/30 vision.

The last part of their motivation is not only the gospel debt, but it is the expectation in Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14 that "*this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout*

*the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*” They actually believe that their part of this force of mission will take them to Jerusalem, and then the Lord will come back. Isn’t that an amazingly naïve kind of expectation—yet indeed an expectation full of faith?

This is where we begin to see that God is doing some unusual things today in our world. Just yesterday I read in that same Daily Telegraph an article that said in 15 years China will have more Christians than any other nation in the world. In the context of both crackdown and growth, this mission thrust gives an inkling that God is up to something special in our time—and what a privilege that we can be part of that.

Habakkuk was searching because he had so many questions about what was going on in his day. As he looked at his own nation of Judah, he was ashamed because they were turning away from God. He wasn’t finding justice inside. He was asking God in verse three, “Why do You idly look at wrong? These are Your people. They’re supposed to be following Your commandments. Look how they’re living out their lives.”

So the Lord answers, “Well, look at the nations. I am at work in the nations.” Ultimately, that work will build His Kingdom in the nations. As it says in Habakkuk 2:14, *“The earth WILL be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* That is God’s message to Habakkuk, but he’s wondering and worrying—as some of us are—so the Lord begins to open his heart and mind to see that He is at work in His world despite what Habakkuk has seen.

The way we can be involved—and this is the big idea in the book of Habakkuk—is that we can engage from where we are. Pastor David Sunday is concerned to ask not only what God is doing, but how can we be involved? Through this short, three-chapter book there are four things God is encouraging us to do with Him as He’s at work building His Kingdom around the world.

- The first thing is to allow that vision to be birthed in our hearts.
- Second, we must realistically discern the barriers to the fulfillment of that vision.
- Third, we should ask how God is at work in the nations so we can see a breakthrough of that vision.
- Finally we should ask how can we engage in the vision and be part of what the Spirit of God is doing in our time so that this vision of the advance of Christ’s Kingdom will blossom in the nations.

As we look at the beginning of the book of Habakkuk we see the birthing of the vision. So join me as we ask God to open our hearts to this vision.

Lord, give us ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church at this time—here at New Covenant Bible Church, in our nation and in the nations of the world. Open our eyes and hearts. How are You working in our world today? Show us how the Savior is building His church, building His Kingdom in the nations of the world and how we can be involved. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **Birth of the Vision**

The book of Habakkuk uniquely unveils the inspired account of a faithful and prayerful servant of God who sought to understand God's ways and respond by faith. It was perplexing for Habakkuk, whose idea was that people need to participate in order for the vision to be birthed.

Verse one of chapter one describes this birth: *“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.”* That word ‘oracle’ means a prophetic utterance and in some translations it states, *“This is the burden that Habakkuk the prophet received.”* The oracle was like a burden, something that made his mind and conscience and soul uneasy. It became a burden as he was looking out and seeing the realities in his time, in his nation and in his world.

The burden was a foreboding of what was to be announced to Him by God in this book. There was calamity coming. There was disaster coming. So he had to respond in his time—but how? The rabbis understood that the name Habakkuk meant “embrace.” Even without full understanding at the time, he had to embrace what God was doing and how he was to respond. In the process of his embracing what God was doing, God would embrace him.

His prophetic career followed that of Isaiah the prophet, who gave us the clue that it wasn't only God advancing His Kingdom, but also the Savior advancing His Kingdom. Remember in Isaiah 11:1-2 where it says that out of the root of Jesse there will be a branch that emerges, and that branch will be empowered by the Holy Spirit with counsel and wisdom and might and power, and ultimately it's going to fulfill a vision.

Isaiah 11:9 describes this vision: to fill the earth with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. It's exactly the same expression as found in Habakkuk 2:14. So Habakkuk certainly drew from Isaiah this expression of God advancing His Kingdom. But Isaiah 11 references the Lord Jesus Himself Who is going to be coming. So biblically, we can understand that this is really the Savior beginning to work—the root of Jesse that is branching out—and He is going to be the One advancing God's Kingdom purposes in the nations.

So it begins with God giving a vision. In the case of the United States, if you think back to the very beginning of this nation, where did it begin? There are various points of view, but I

think a valid viewpoint is one by a gentleman named Richard Hakluyt, who was commissioned in 1584 by Sir Walter Raleigh to describe an approach to the newly discovered colonies in the West.

In response, Hakluyt wrote “A Discourse on Western Planting,”<sup>1</sup> in which he had 21 suggestions, the first of which was this statement: “We shall, by planting in America, enlarge the glory of the gospel and provide a safe and sure place to receive people from all parts of the world who are forced to flee for the truth of God’s Word.” That was written in 1584.

And indeed America has become an exceptional nation—perhaps the freest, most prosperous, and some say most virtuous nation in history. God was fulfilling the birth of the insight of one servant of God, Richard Hakluyt, and the birthing of the vision in our hearts is where it begins.

A number of you have been engaged one way or another in missions in your communities and in the nations. Also, I so appreciate your work in the prisons around here. God placed that vision in your heart, and that was the beginning of what now is a blessing to the prisons.

It all begins with asking God, “What do You want to do in my heart this morning, at the beginning of this New Year?” As you look ahead at the realities of your family, church and community, what fresh thing does God want to do when we launch out into a New Year? As we join Him on His mission of advancing His Kingdom in the nations, we are engaging in something that will take place. The question before us is how can we do this? Seeing what God is doing, how do we engage with Him? The first thing is to let that vision birth in our hearts.

I remember that in the Latin American mission field, after several years, all of a sudden the vision came: it’s time we join as part of the mission force. So in 1916, American pastors, church leaders and people from the church—praying intercessors—came together and declared Latin America a mission field. It was 1987 when over 3,000 came together by bus, air and on foot from Latin America, joining in a declaration that from a mission field Latin America was becoming a mission force. Since that time the number of mission agencies and missionaries from Latin America has multiplied. Interestingly, Spanish has over 5,000 words borrowed from Arabic, so they’re perhaps more comfortable in the Arab world. We’ve found them in the Turkic world and they’ve gone to other parts of the world as well. In October 2016, one hundred years later, thousands of Latin America church and mission leaders are expected to gather in Panama and declare Latin America a mission force. This all began with the birthing of the vision.

So as we look out at the New Year and ask, “What is it specifically that God would have us engage in?”

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/before-1600/richard-hakluyt-discourse-of-western-planting-1584.php>

## Barriers to the Vision

Then, from the birth of the vision, we follow Habakkuk's path as he saw the vision blossom and flourish, but also recognized that there were barriers to that vision. He describes those (Habakkuk 1:2-4, Contemporary English Version) in this way:

*<sup>2</sup> Our LORD, how long must I beg  
for your help  
before you listen?  
How long before you save us  
from all this violence?*

*<sup>3</sup> Why do you make me watch  
such terrible injustice?  
Why do you allow violence,  
lawlessness, crime, and cruelty  
to spread everywhere?*

*<sup>4</sup> Laws cannot be enforced;  
justice is always the loser;  
criminals crowd out honest people  
and twist the laws around.*

He wasn't talking about what was happening outside of his people. He was describing what was taking place within Judah, the people of God. That was his reality. Now, I know you don't think that about the United States, right? We're very much in agreement—but some of us have some questions right now. This is a time that we would say, "What is going on in this country?" The United States compares in some ways to what Habakkuk was describing.

For example, the Ten Commandments are literally being thrown out of some courtrooms. Less than six months ago the Oklahoma supreme court announced the rule that the Ten Commandments were unconstitutional. So we're seeing it happen at the very center of legislative and judicial groups in this nation, and we ask, "What do we do?" These are barriers to the advancing of the Savior's purposes in His Kingdom in a nation like this. So what can we do in St. Charles?

One of the things we can do is join some movements of the Spirit of God through the people of God. One of those is called "**The Love 20/20 Movement.**" This is a movement of thousands of Christians in our country from every walk of life, representing a growing number of outward-focused congregations, national ministries, networks and city-wide collaborations.

It is a call to followers of Jesus everywhere in this nation to be loving others and to live a simple and powerful lifestyle of praying, caring and sharing the love of Christ in word and deed with those around them. As God has brought us in touch with people in our own communities

and we're expressing love in this manner, we are part of a movement whether we know it or not. But this is something happening right now in this nation.

There are other major initiatives of prayer. For example, this very week—on January 6 and 7—there's a 24-hour assembly of the major ministries, like Mission America, which gathers all the denominationally facilitated leaders of this nation. There is the Awakening American Alliance that is encouraging prayer at the places of justice across the nation. Last year they had prayer sessions at 850 courthouses in the United States.

So these two groups, along with many others—including the Southern Baptists—have planned an event to cry out for America in this moment of time. They have set aside a 24-hour “moment” that we can join in prayer wherever we are. Beginning at 2:00 p.m. this coming Wednesday and going to 2:00 the next day, we're asking God to deal with the realities and challenges our country faces.

As part of the body of Christ in the United States, we're crying out in one voice, “Lord, move in our nation. Fulfill Your purposes. From that original call You gave—that the gospel would go forth, that we would be a city on a hill, a bright light to the nations—Lord, fulfill that call for America.”

It's also introducing the 240th anniversary of this nation, and in preparation of this next anniversary we're joining hands and hearts in prayer. They are gathering, but we too can pray wherever we are. In the process we can see these barriers that are emerging in the United States being overcome—and we also see examples of how this is happening in the most remote places—and we can be encouraged.

For example, the number one registered non-religious, atheistic country in the world today is the **Czech Republic**, and we see God doing some remarkable things today. Stories indicate that there has begun to be a movement with young people in the churches who gather together for a week-long camp. They develop relationships and sing songs, even though half of them don't know Christ. Many of them come to faith. Then the next Sunday they come back to that same local church they came out of and tell—through song and story, along with their testimonies—what happened during the week. Over the last 20 years, 60,000 young people have gone through that process, and as a result the church is being renewed in the Czech Republic, which is also revitalizing the culture.

So in that culture, things are beginning to happen. For example, the Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Education has taken notice and said, “We need to incorporate a curriculum in the public schools called ‘Ethical Education.’” They're struggling with drugs and many of the things our young people are struggling with here. So the Minister of Education begins an ‘Ethical

Education' program and invites those who have been involved in this camp movement to speak into that in the different schools. So they come for a lecture. They come for a concert. And then, after the lecture, where they're dealing with practical issues these students are facing, they have been given permission to share the gospel one-on-one with those who are interested. They are able to say that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

As a result, the Czech Republic is being transformed! It's a barrier that's being overcome. Christ's Kingdom is advancing in ways beyond our imagination. And if it can happen in the Czech Republic, it can happen here. Hallelujah! He's able to do beyond all we can imagine, but when He's done some things we can begin to imagine how He can do other things in other places.

In **Africa** they're going through so much struggle right now. In the last month alone one million children have been prevented from going to school in Africa. Violence is erupting throughout Africa. And one would say, "Can anything good come out of Africa?"

Well, next month there is a gathering of a group called **MANI**, which stands for **Mobilizing African National Initiatives**. They have been meeting for the last 15 years, and they were launched with the idea of affirming, motivating, mobilizing and networking Christian leaders to reach the unreached peoples of the nations in Africa.

In this process, God is moving powerfully through Africa. With all these barriers of culture—and we have missionaries serving out of this church in Africa who describe some of the realities Africa faces today—in the midst of it, God is calling up this movement of national leaders, along with missionaries from the outside, who are saying, "We want to take responsibility for the evangelization of this continent."

What kind of result can we expect? We thank the Pew Foundation, which has done the work for us—a six-year study of what Christianity will look like by 2050.<sup>2</sup> The results are going to surprise us. What they're saying is that the gospel is going south, and one of those places is Africa. In the next generation from 2010 to 2050, the number of Christ-followers in Africa will double. Doubled in the next 40 years! But by 2050, when you look at the picture of where those Christians will be worldwide, that's the shock. Whereas in 2010 they found that 25% of Christians are in Africa, by 2050 it's going to go to 40%.

What a shock! The Kingdom of God through the Savior is moving in mysterious ways. As we see these barriers being overcome, we follow William Cowper who wrote, "God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." As we look at Him overcoming these barriers, we say, "How amazing how God is working today!" But impenetrable barriers are still there, and we say these are "insurmountable impenetrables"—until we see what God is capable of.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>

The third thing Habakkuk wonders after he receives the vision and then looks at the realities of his people is, “How are we going to fulfill this vision if there’s so much injustice amongst ourselves?” God responds with the third entry point to the fulfillment of His vision, which is to look past the barriers to the breakthrough.

## **Breakthrough of a Vision**

What is it going to take to break through in America, in our own souls, in our own families and churches? What is it going to take to break through? It might amaze you. As Habakkuk sees the judgment on his own people and realizes that justice is not being fulfilled, God speaks to him in verse five: *“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.”*

God is going to do something in our day. Do you believe He could do that today? Does anybody here believe that? Yeah, He could do that because He is God. He’s capable and powerful and almighty and sovereign. These are the lessons from the book of Habakkuk. Our God is a strong God, able to do more than we could ask or imagine.

It’s so amazing how He can break through what seems to be impenetrable. But then we get a surprise because in that breakthrough, the instrumentation He uses to break through among His own people is something we cannot even imagine. In the next verse He says, *“I am raising up the Chaldeans.”* The Chaldeans are those people from what is today **Iraq and Syria**.

As He describes them for us, it is rather a shock when we begin to see the nature of these Chaldeans as they were then. As you read it, you might say, “Oh. There is a similarity to what we are seeing now.” In the Contemporary English Version they’re described as fierce, fearsome, frightening and more ferocious than wolves. These are the Chaldeans that God was raising up as instruments to rectify and to bring justice and judgment to His own people.

You say, “Lord, why would You use that kind of instrumentation?” Yet the historical record corroborates this biblical record in Habakkuk, as He announces the raising up of His people to execute judgment on a future thing. When Habakkuk receives this revelation from God, it has not yet happened. This is a moment before the Babylonians invaded. There was going to be a siege on Jerusalem. They would come in like galloping horses and would “gather captives like sand,” just as it’s described here. It would happen just a few years from that time.

Outside evidence verifies what he described. One evidence is the [Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle](#) from the British Museum in London which details Nebuchadnezzar’s military campaigns to the west and is interpreted to refer to that siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. Also look at the violence that is coming with that instrument of justice. Maybe this is where the expression

“take no prisoners” comes from. In that same record there is a statement by Nebuchadnezzar, who’s the author, that as they battled seven years previously in 605 B.C. against the Egyptians and the Assyrians, who were allies in the famous battle in Carchemish, there “were no prisoners who were taken of the Egyptians. Not one Egyptian returned to Egypt.” Ferocious.

So here we see God’s judgment and ask, “How can a holy God use a sinful people for a holy cause?” As we look at what’s happening in the United States, we ask the same thing: how can a holy God allow a sinful people to bring about justice in a holy cause? That’s addressed in verses 12-17.

Maybe we don’t have all the answers. Max Lucado observes in one of his books with the title What Was Meant For Evil, God Used For Good that ultimately it was part of God’s sovereign, omnipotent movement to bring about justice through a corrective step with His own people.

So what happened to the prophet? Habakkuk incarnates what the people were experiencing in his own intercessory moment, where he is pondering and burdened by these two insolvable problems: the corruption and injustice in his own people, and the instrument that was to bring them judgment and correction from the outside. And of all people, it was the Babylonians who would do that. Yet in that, God brings about clarification. Habakkuk complained not once, but twice, and we find in him a model for our own complaining. [Well, I know you don’t, but sometimes in my life and in my marriage I complain a little bit.] But out of Habakkuk’s complaining, all of a sudden there is a new posture of moving—without understanding everything—to celebration. In the last verses in his book he talks about celebrating God and rising to the heights.

In between we will see how God will work through these two complaints. But we are invited to take the same posture today, to go from wondering and worrying to watching and waiting. In chapter two, Habakkuk says, *“I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.”*

This is a new posture. Instead of complaining, now he’s watching—and the rest of the story moves toward celebration at the end. I believe that’s where he’s inviting us to go: to the place of waiting on God for His revelation. But in the process, Habakkuk gives us an inspired interpretive key to this whole book. Habakkuk 2:14 is one key verse: *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.”* But Habakkuk 1:5 is also key: *“Look among the nations and [watch].”*

The reason is this: God is not only building His Kingdom—which is the great movement—but our Savior is building the Kingdom. Pastor Sunday asked, “What is our Savior doing right

now in building His Kingdom around the nations?” It’s in this verse that we find that interpretive key because the Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Acts 13:41 to describe how the gospel that was first going to the Jews was now suddenly to also go to the Gentiles.

And Who is at work taking that gospel? It’s the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we see our Savior moving in Acts, and this is anticipated in the book of Habakkuk. In that process we see the breakthrough coming as God is at work.

In a place like **the Middle East**, we have seen amazing breakthroughs. Doris and I were together recently with servants from the Middle East and we heard about the migrations coming out of Iraq and Syria. Most of the poorer ones are coming from Syria and are landing in camps in **Jordan**, while most of the wealthier ones from Iraq are ending up in Christian homes in Jordan. From there most are going on to Europe and some are traveling beyond.

We heard testimonies at a recent global summit focusing primarily on the ideological challenge of our time that takes place in **Asia**. One servant of God described the development of a holistic compassionate outreach, showing love in action. He told of one Iraqi Christian who said he had been a cultural Christian, but now says, “The Christ I never knew is now in my heart.” He had come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And others are being saved as they go.

In fact, one servant of God told us about his brother—whom some of our family members know quite well—who has been ministering in a country of **North Africa** and has seen 50,000 people come to faith in Jesus Christ in recent years. Two Christian leaders, who facilitate some of what God is doing in that region, said they believe that the MBBs (M\_\_ Background Believers), not only in **Egypt** but all over the Middle East, have doubled since the uprising. So God is stirring.

Then in **Indonesia**, a faith couple who have been mightily used by God, were saying, “What’s happening in the Middle East is not us”—so they started another movement called **Chinta**, which means “love.” This movement toward love that has emerged in Indonesia has opened the hearts of the people to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is a time of great spiritual harvest in that nation.

So we see God breaking through irresistibly, using mysterious ways. With all of the conflicts and concerns that have come out of this migration to Europe and now to the Americas, in the midst of that God is working in amazing ways His wonders to perform.

## **Blossoming of a Vision**

From the birth of the vision to the barriers to the breakthrough of the vision, finally there's one more step: to see this vision become a reality. That's the blossoming of the vision. How can this vision blossom? In Habakkuk 2:1-3, we see this blossoming:

*I will take my stand at my watchpost  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look out to see what he will say to me,  
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*

This is the answer of the Lord, and this will be the answer to our question, "What can we do about it?" He says we have to do three things. We have to read and receive the vision. We've got to write it down, as he says in verse two. But that's not enough—we've got to run with the vision. Somehow we've got to find a way to say, "How can this touch my life? What can I do within my life and my journey, in my church and community, to make a difference and be part of Christ's advancing His Kingdom purposes on earth at this time?" Habakkuk has now exhausted his complaints and is ready to do something, and these are the practical steps he is given.

In the midst of some of these great crises, like that in the **Ukraine**—where our church has been involved for many years, serving and training the pastors—two great movements have occurred. First, because of the war taking place with Russia, there have been 1.3 million refugees resulting in about one million homeless people. The church has anchored a movement of holistic compassionate outreach to those who are in that condition within the Ukraine. The testimony of people like Ruslan Maliuta and others who have been a part of this is that there is transformation happening in the Ukraine. We only see the pictures of the war, but the church has been instrumental in compassionate outreach.

Also, as you look at the place of greatest need there, in the streets of Kiev—Ukraine's capital city—you find thousands of children who are orphaned or have left their parents in conflict. The chance of an orphan succeeding in life is minimal, so they typically gravitate to situations that will not bring them to success. But as the Christians in the Kiev community began to feed these orphans, one family said, "Let's adopt one of these orphans." So they did, and there was blessing. Shortly after that another orphan was adopted, and another, and another. As I interacted with those who have been involved, I was told, "Where there once were 30-40,000 orphans on the streets in Kiev, you don't see them anymore."

In the meantime, a movement of "Ukraine Without Orphans" was started. So all of the denominations in the church got together and envisioned a Ukraine without orphans. They've been on TV and radio, and the message was spread until the government said, "We want to be

involved.” So the president and his wife joined the Christians’ prayer rally for a Ukraine without orphans. Then they said, “If it can happen in the Ukraine, maybe it can happen somewhere else.”

Another of the greatest countries of need is **Russia**. So a few months later, pastors from 20 districts in the nation held a conference and launched “Russia Without Orphans.” Then it became international. Next month they’re meeting with 60 different countries, and now Christian leaders in 40 nations have committed to their nation without orphans. It’s become a “**World Without Orphans**” movement. Over 400 people will gather at this conference in the country of Thailand.

So God’s vision is blossoming in ways we cannot imagine, and He’s moving in areas that are close to our hearts. I know this congregation has modeled the church’s concern for orphans through many adoptions and ministry in other needy areas.

I know you’ve had investment in the **Turkic world**, with the couple being there a number of years. In the late ‘90s Doris and I spent a month there because we were told something really special was happening in the Turkic world. We went from country to country, meeting with the pastors and national leaders. We would ask them how many Christians there were then in 1990 and how many were there at the present time.

In those .stan countries—like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, the ‘stan, ‘stan, ‘stans—we found that in that particular Turkic belt, God was doing some amazing breakthrough things, blossoming things. Because they all had a similar Turkic culture, Christians from one part found it easy to share the gospel and plant churches in other parts.

We were in the crowded millet M\_\_\_ ghetto in the heart of Plovdiv, **Bulgaria** among a people who retain Turkic culture, and there were people who had gone to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and planted a church there. We found this blossoming taking place in the Turkic world, where more than 90% of the more than 142 million people who live in a window between the 35<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> parallels above the 10/40 Window, called the 35/45 Window—from Urumchi, China, to Skopje, Macedonia who share the same common homeland and culture.

Then, tracking from 1990 to the year 2000, the number of Christ followers reported in 1990 was less than 2,000, one half of whom were in Turkey; now they have multiplied more than twenty times, to over 42,000. All of our eyes were opened. “Oops—these are M\_\_\_ people, and this is the gateway to the M\_\_\_ world.” So as we look at the M\_\_\_ world today, we see that God has created a gateway. He’s working in amazing ways with people who have come to faith and are giving their testimony in places like Indonesia.

God is doing remarkable things in our time and He’s inviting us to be part of it. As He did to Habakkuk, the way He’s asking us to have a part is to have the eyes of our hearts open to see.

There were four expressions of seeing in Habakkuk's breakthrough verse, Habakkuk 1:5. Look at the nations. Watch. Study. Be amazed. It requires a concentrated effort to look and see: what IS our Savior doing in building His Kingdom around the world? And what can we do to make a difference?

The other major verse we don't want to miss, because this is the anchor verse for the whole transformational movement of God in our time, is Habakkuk 2:4. He says pride, tyranny and evil cannot last, "*but the righteous shall live...*" how? "*...By his faith.*" This seed thought was what his son in the faith, Paul, took to write the book of Romans. It's the basis for the thinking in that book.

It's also the seed thought, the watchword, for the whole Protestant Reformation, which reformed not only northern Europe, but then spread to this country, bringing those transforming truths that made the United States a great nation. The righteous shall live by faith (Hebrews 10:38). Even though it seems like it's not happening, God is calling us in our present circumstances to live by faith.

So we have Paul, as Habakkuk's son in the faith, then Martin Luther as his grandson, and he has a great-grandson in the faith as well by the name of John Wesley. Wesley was attending Aldersgate in London when he heard someone read from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans and later wrote these words:

While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

(From John Wesley's Journal, Volume VI)

Then after being soundly converted, John Wesley launched serious renewal disciplines of mission that not only engaged the culture of that day, but were catalytic for the next days and ultimately transformed the church with various movements emerging out of his teachings. But it started in Habakkuk chapter two, where Habakkuk moved from not understanding to the understanding that "the righteous shall live by faith."

What about our response here in St. Charles? Here are some thoughts. First of all, we recognize with Charles Dickens that it was the best of times, but sometimes it seems like it's the worst of times. Our takeaway in this dialogue is that God wants to move us from where we are, like He moved Habakkuk from where he was: from wondering and worrying, to a place of watching and waiting, and ultimately to worshipping God for what He is doing.

So what we can do is believe the fact that our Savior is building His Kingdom around the world and wants us to be involved.

Secondly, we can be comforted and trust in the times of trouble—whether it’s personal, family, relational, in ministry, occupational or church. In times of trouble we can trust, having a harvest time in the midst of a time that seems to bring problems and failure, because God took Habakkuk to a harvest place. Everything was not right. He didn’t understand everything, but he ended up climbing to the heights because he knew God was sovereignly moving to fulfill His purposes. He’s not going to answer all of our questions immediately, but as we embrace Him on His journey of what the Savior is doing, He’s going to show us the way—wherever we are in our journey. It might be personal, relational or health related.

Thirdly, we must be faithful during the storms of life, knowing that God does keep His promises, filling the earth with His glory. He wants to bring His glory into those circumstances.

And fourth is that we must be full of faith—a matured faith—trusting humbly but persistently in God’s design for establishing righteousness on earth. He’s calling us to that kind of faith.

We must be wise in dealing with the practical problems we have, even as Habakkuk did. We don’t run away from the problems and difficulties of life because God wants us to use those difficulties to strengthen us in our journey and in our life and in our faith. So what do we do? Like Habakkuk, we learn that the just shall live by faith. First of all, we honestly admit when we have the problems. Second, we talk to God about them. He’s our Father in heaven. Thirdly, we wait quietly upon Him in prayer and meditation and the Word until He speaks—and then we listen and obey.

Our fifth step of action is to become a student. “Watch and see what I am doing, and then react. Be amazed because I’m working.” When we become a student, we ask, “What is God doing in my life? In my family and community and nation? In my church?” We’re watching and waiting, expectant that we will see what He is going to do, then join Him in what He is seeking to do.

Next, be prayerful. Habakkuk teaches us about prayer. He was ultimately an intercessor. So it’s a posturing. It’s not only a moment, but he took a moment and went to a place. It’s good to have a place and a moment, and then to posture ourselves is even more important than a place and a moment. *“I will see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint”* (Habakkuk 2:1). This is the personalization of prayer, where we have issues and complaints. It’s that prayerful posturing with a practical positioning.

Number eight, we become a Kingdom seeker for Jesus, Who said, “*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...*” and what’s the promise? “*...And all these things will be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33). I believe that as we see this vision birthed, we must recognize barriers and then look for those breakthroughs, expecting the blossoming. God is going to do above all that we could ask or imagine, as we started off at the beginning.

## **A Personal Note**

I believe I’m here because of the faithful prayers of servants of God in this country, one in particular by the name of Wesley Duewel. At the time my mother was only 18 years old and was in school in England. It was a time of concern because the clouds of the Second World War were appearing on the horizon. At that age, she wondered what she should do. As she observed the ominous clouds forming on the horizon her thoughts went to a young man she had fallen in love with in Argentina and said to herself, “This is what I need to do. I need to somehow get there before this war erupts.” Then the question came to her mind, “What can I do to gain the heart of this man I like so much?” She remembered that he really liked Cadbury's chocolate. So she had gone to a British grocery store and bought every variety of Cadbury's chocolates you can imagine—the pure milk, the fruit and nut, the milk and honey—filling her bag with them. Now that young man happened to be my father.

I’m telling you this story because it comes down to faith in prayer. She was able to get on the last convoy of ships going out to Argentina before the start of World War II. There were 30 and as far as she knew she was the only woman among the lot. As they approached the port of Montevideo, Uruguay, with lights blacked out at night for fear of a prowling German pocket battleship called the ‘Graf Spee’ that was sinking merchant ships in the Atlantic, the Captain came to her and said ‘I think you are old enough to know that we have been informed that the Graf Spee is in the vicinity. Sheila wondered what to do. She went to her cabin, saw the chocolates in her suitcase and consumed every last one of them. She said she felt rather sickly after that, as you can well imagine. The captain managed to park the ship off the southern coast of Brazil until he heard that the ship had been sunk. When she got to the shores of Buenos Aires fortunately the young man was not only interested in Cadbury's chocolates but also in her.

There was another side to this story—the spiritual side—that poses a profound question. One night in the late eighties I was reading a book called Touch the World Through Prayer, by Wesley L. Duewel. I read an illustration that jolted me and immediately shared it with Doris. Duewel was making the point in his book that you should pray when you feel a special presentiment or apprehension of danger or need and then he told this story:

On December 12, 1939, while praying about the outcome of World War II, I became especially burdened for a particular situation. The Graf Spee, a German merchantman that had been converted into a 'pocket battleship,' was sinking many merchant ships with much loss of life. That night I felt God's special authority as I asked Him to intervene. The next day radio news reported that the Graf Spee had been chased into the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay. After several days, the ship was brought outside the harbor and scuttled.

It poses a question: Could it be that it was the prayer of Wesley L. Duewell that touched the heart of God, that led to the humanly speaking unexplainable decision of the Captain of the Graf Spee to sink the ship, that allowed my mother's ship to get through to marry my father? According to the annals of World War II, as recorded in the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Graf Spee wasn't threatened. Rather it was one of the British cruisers which was damaged, yet the captain, "believing that a superior force awaited him," had his crew scuttle their ship.

All the sailors got off in the port of Montevideo, Uruguay, and somehow my mother's ship got through. She met this young man who was waiting for her and thankfully he wasn't only interested in the Cambridge chocolates. They got married and a few years later I was born. Indeed, God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform and we never know just how He's going to work.

It's like Duewell was saying: "I saw what was happening with this battleship going across the ocean and I had a burden." Just like Habakkuk said, Duewell wrote: "I had a compelling burden in my heart to pray, so I prayed. And a few days later I learned that the ship had sunk without any loss of life except the captain's, who chose to go down with it."

As I read that in the book, I thought, "Whoa! Could it be that the prayers of Wesley Duewell touched the heart of God and then allowed this ship to get through so my mother could meet my father?" Is that possible? There's nothing impossible for God. Doris and I went to see this place where you can still see the front helm of that ship in the Montevideo, Uruguay port, and we asked, "How did this happen?" Well, it happened because someone prayed. I believe it's because of this young man's prayer—who at that time was young, but now he's over ninety years old. Wesley Duewell has been serving in missions for more than seventy years and has seen that, yes indeed, you can touch the world through prayer.

And in the midst of the crying, trying moments of life when we don't see any solutions, we do know Someone Who does have the solutions. As we take the posture of Habakkuk the prophet, I believe we can be surprised. God wants to do in your life beyond all that you can ask

or imagine—in the family, in the church family, in the community—that He might receive all the glory. Because this earth is going to be filled with all the measure of the fullness of God, His glory, as the waters cover the sea.

God bless you.

For more information on Dr. Bush and his ministry, visit

[http://johnharmstrong.typepad.com/john\\_h\\_armstrong\\_/2009/04/luis-bush-you-need-to-know-about-my-friend.html](http://johnharmstrong.typepad.com/john_h_armstrong_/2009/04/luis-bush-you-need-to-know-about-my-friend.html)

---

## New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ [emily@sermontranscribers.net](mailto:emily@sermontranscribers.net)