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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke  
Bible passage or verse: Habakkuk 3  
Title of sermon: Will I Make It?  
Series: Questions for God - #4

Habakkuk 3 NIV:

**3** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On *shigionoth*.

<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. <sup>4</sup> His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. <sup>5</sup> Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. <sup>6</sup> He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed— but he marches on forever. <sup>7</sup> I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish. <sup>8</sup> Were you angry with the rivers, LORD? Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea when you rode your horses and your chariots to victory? <sup>9</sup> You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers; <sup>10</sup> the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high.

<sup>11</sup> Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. <sup>12</sup> In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations. <sup>13</sup> You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. <sup>14</sup> With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding. <sup>15</sup> You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters. <sup>16</sup> I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. <sup>19</sup> The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

“God, am I gonna make it? Are we gonna make it?” That’s his last question. “God, are you indifferent? Do you care? Do you care about us -- little old us? Do you listen to me? God, are you fair? I’m not sure why, Lord, you use people who are more sinful than me to correct me -- but you do. That doesn’t seem fair. And it doesn’t seem fair to me that you would seemingly look past people who need to be corrected and need to have the discipline of God, and you seem like you just don’t care. Are you fair? God, are you just? Are you ever gonna hold people accountable?”

I was talking with a gentleman whose marriage is ending. In his mind, the world has treated him unfairly. It hurts. He’s served in ministry -- one of the national ministries -- and it just seems unfair that in his mind his wife is getting away with murder. “Are you just?” But maybe the question that is most raw is -- “God, am I gonna make it? Am I gonna make it to the end?” I’ve asked that question. The reason I ask it is because, the vast majority of people in the Bible don’t do well towards the finish. It’s very, very lopsided -- like ten to one -- people who finish poorly versus people who finish well. Call Caleb -- at 84, he’s asking for “Yes” -- Enoch, he walked with God and then was no more -- there’s some good ones, really good ones. There’s just a whole lot of bad ones. Am I gonna make it?

Questions are important. They were for a little boy -- he came to his dad and he said, “Dad, can I ask you some questions?” “Aw, son, sure. Fire away.” “Um -- Dad, how many people are in the world?” “I don’t know, son. A lot.” “Dad, how many stars are there? I mean, God created them all, right? How many stars are there?” “I don’t know, son.” “Dad, how many fish are in the sea?” “I don’t know, son.” “Dad, does it bother you that I ask you all these questions?” “Not at all, son. How are you gonna learn anything if you don’t ask questions?” Sometimes that’s the way we are. We come to God, and it’s like,

"Hey, God, I've got some questions!" Well, tonight, we finish with his fourth. "God, am I gonna make it?" He asks that because he teaches us, as we all know, this is something we know, absolutely, we have seen ourselves included -- circumstances often shape the way we see God. Well, they did for Habakkuk. What drove the questions? "My country that I love, my people who are called by God -- the people of God are being led into human prison. We are going to be slaughtered, we're gonna lose everything. Every promise that you have given to us, God, seems to be stripped away. Circumstances are not to be made fun of." And, to be quite candid with you, I don't think it's real helpful to just say, "Well, you just need to trust God." Man, I'm telling you what -- if my circumstances are bad, sometimes that glib answer is not real helpful. It's not. It's not that it's untrue -- it just seems like it doesn't resonate with the reality that this circumstance hurts. And the circumstance is painful. Like the grandmother who came to me, and she had to turn in her own kids. She had to turn them in because her son-in-law was abusing the kids, and she discovered her daughter knew about it and was doing nothing. And she realized that the decision that she was about to make most likely would sever her relationship with her daughter and her son-in-law for the rest of her life. How did it get there? That's what she wondered. "Pastor, I did everything I thought I was supposed to do. I took my kids to church, we were in Awana -- how can my daughter, whom I love, knowingly put up with her husband abusing the kids?"

"God, why didn't you stop that? Why didn't you hear our prayers?" Sometimes circumstances are not just, "Oh, well -- you know, gas prices went up. I guess we're not gonna take the vacation that we thought we were," or, "Wow, you know, this happened and it's kind of glib, but" -- the reality is, no, we're talking about the circumstances when a friend went to pick up a young lady. She was in the mental hospital. She was discharged. Her friend came to pick her up. What put her there? Her pregnancy surfaced the early years of her abuse. Why that connection? She doesn't know. Why did all of a sudden her pregnancy, which she looked forward to, surface all kinds of just grotesque things that occurred to her from the ages of zero to eight? That she actually thought that she had dealt with. And on the days that she's supposed to be at home celebrating the birth of her child, she's in a hospital, and they're trying to keep her from taking her life. When she got picked up, her friend asked her this question -- "How do you think God sees you right now? What's your view of God?" And she said, "God is in Heaven with His hands in His pocket, dumbfounded."

You might say, "Well, that's just faithless." Well, then you can accuse Habakkuk of it. Accuse this prophet -- because he had questions. "God, am I gonna make it?" The question is just like this young lady asked. "Am I gonna be there for my child's first birthday? God, am I gonna make high school with her?" See, circumstances often shape how we see God. And Habakkuk teaches us something. You know, names in the Bible are not throwaway: Peter -- Rock, Habakkuk -- what does it mean? To embrace. Circumstances embraced become an opportunity for us. Not denied, not forgotten, not shoved aside, not suppressed -- not that it becomes our identification -- but circumstances embraced. What does it mean to embrace something? It's to take it in. It's to let it touch your heart. It's to not deal with a glib response. "Well, you just need to trust God." That's not embracing your circumstances. That's not dealing with the crushing difficulty of turning your children in to DHS and wondering if you'll ever see them again. That's not being willing to sacrifice ever seeing your grandkids again because you know if you don't act, it's -- no, what does it mean to embrace it? It means to bring it in -- the wound, the hurt, the difficulty, the consequences. That's what Habakkuk is looking at. "God, what's gonna happen to us? We're going into exile, we're going into human prison. We're gonna lose everything, and I'm afraid, Lord, we may lose the promises of God. And we may lose the memory of God."

To embrace is to bring it in. And when you do, you discover some things. Number one, you discover some things that you cannot change. Sometimes God doesn't make your way easy. More than a few times in my life, I have discovered that my prayers are fundamentally this to God -- "God, can you make it easier?" And not very often, until He rebukes me and loves me, do I say, "God, can you make me tougher? Can you make me endure?" Why? Because when I embrace a journey with God, I discover that there are things I cannot change. There are things that are gonna happen. There are people that are elected -- some that I like and some that I don't. There are people who do things, and I have no

control over them. There are people who believe things, and I have no control over them. Habakkuk came to grips with the reality that there are some things I can't change -- I can talk to God, I can pray to God, but the reality is, we're going into exile. It's been settled, God has determined it, He's even declared the number of years, and it's fixed.

What does it mean to embrace that? It means that we don't fight it. It means that we don't get angry at God and resist it. It means that, "Lord, this is where we're headed. The business that I have loved for 25 years, because of COVID is going to close. There's not a thing I can do to stop it." There's been a lot of people that have had to embrace that difficulty. Our family is forever going to be affected by this challenge of race. Lord, I am gonna love, I am gonna stay the course, but the reality is, I didn't ask for it, it's painful, it's hard to deal with -- but there are some things I can't change. People have certain views. I can pray. I can choose to love. But the fact is, there are some things I can't change. They're inevitable things. And what God says is, "I want you to live with faith in-between my answer." He teaches us also that we will experience a change in the midst of those times. I've said it before -- it's one of my favorite quotes of Malcom Muggeridge -- "The only things I've learned in life worth remembering I learned in suffering." It's true. I seldom remember things that came in joyful times. I absolutely remember the things that came when my back was against the wall -- I felt hopeless, I felt threatened, I felt even fearful. And it's in those moments that God does something beautiful. What is it for Habakkuk? Turn to verse 16. "Habakkuk" -- God tells him in chapter one -- "You're gonna see something that's gonna be great. If I would've told you about it, if I would tell you now about it, you would never believe it." You hear that? You say, "Go ahead and tell me. Try me. Lord, go ahead! I wanna hear it now!" "No no no no." And something happens in this incredible man where he is waiting, and he says, "Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation that is invading us. God, you don't have to demonstrate your justice today. You do not have to close your accounts on my time line. I don't get to determine the fiscal or the spiritual year end of God. Yet, I will wait patiently. I will embrace the pain, I will embrace the challenge, and I will surrender my time line to God." Sometimes there's an experience in really challenging circumstances that there's a change that comes. Why? "Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity. Though the fig tree does not bud, no grapes on the vine, the olive crop fails, the fields produce no food, and there are no sheep in the pen -- that's not a good day. Yet, I will praise you."

He has moved out of his place of questions, and in some ways, possibly even accusations against God. And he's come to that place, where, "God, I will wait. I will watch. But until it happens, I will praise you." What are the steps to get there? He tells you. It's in silence. How do we know it's in silence? There's a word that just threads its way through this prayer. That's what it is -- it's a prayer. Starts in chapter three, verse one, "A prayer of Habakkuk." It's the only time that this word is used outside of the book of Psalms. It's used 84 times total in the Bible. This is the only place that it used. It's the word "selah." It happens three times in this text. After verse three, right at nine, and towards the end, in-between 15 and 16. You've probably heard somebody say, "What does 'selah' mean?" It's a pause. What we do know is -- when the choir director is leading, it's a moment where the musicians play, and no one speaks. They're silent. But it's maybe even beyond that. It's the moment in the middle of the prayer, in the middle of life, and God says, "Be still. Because when you're silent, you will discover that I am God."

When you pause -- see, I think the ladies this weekend had a selah -- they did. They got away from their family -- oh, you know, they love their kids, but they needed that selah. Why? Because it's in that place that your heart is open, and what are the movements that happen? Well, number one -- it's a moment of review. What happens in this prayer is, he reviews, and it is one of the most beautiful prayers in the world. He is simply so God-oriented, one of the most beautiful prayers -- I encourage you to commit it to memory. I haven't, so I'm going to read it. But it's a beauty. "Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds. Renew them in our day. In our time, make them known in wrath, remember mercy." In the first 15 verses, only one verse does not speak of the grandeur and the glory of God. He's overtaken with God, and it's in that review that he is just reminding himself of all the beauty of what God has done. It's what Pastor Jeff led us through tonight. That's the importance of communion. He took me back to that place tonight where the body of Christ was broken. He took me back -- probably my favorite verse -

- "God made him who had no sin to become sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God." Oh, I agree with Pastor Jeff. The pain of the cross was not at its height when the nails were going into His body. The pain was when the cup of wrath was poured upon Him and His father turned away, and the first time in eternity ever, that relationship felt the separation of sin. What is review? It is taking a journey in communion. It's being reminded in worship of the journey that God has taken us. That's what Habakkuk does. He stood and he shook the earth. "Were you angry with the rivers, oh Lord?" Verse eight. "Was your wrath against the streams? Did you rage against the sea? Oh, yes, you uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. The mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by. There was a day, God, that the sun and the moon stood still." Try that one if you want to see how powerful you are. What's the journey of silence? It is to review and to remind yourself of who God is. It is to rest.

Verses 16 and 17 -- "I heard my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I've made the decision to wait patiently for God. I will move my heart onto God's timetable, and though nothing happens in this world that I normally need and want, I want a good harvest. I want the fig tree to blossom and produce. But if it all goes, I've made a commitment -- I'm going to trust in God's good timing." It's not a glib "just trust God." It is facing the death of a marriage and saying, "I will praise you." It is facing the death of a business because of COVID, and saying, "I will praise you." It is facing the loss of a good friend and saying, "I will praise you." It is walking out of a hospital, grabbing the hand of a friend, thankful that you didn't take your life and that you get to go home and see your baby, and trusting that God will be with you when you have to face your husband. "Yet I will praise you." It is the embrace of a challenge of trusting God so much that I will risk the relationship that I have with my kids and my grandkids so that my grandkids might live. "Yet I will praise you."

What does it mean to rest? It means to place my heart in the hands of God and in the timing of God and making the commitment to rejoice. Verse 18 says this -- "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights." I've never seen a deer lose its footing. Maybe that's the reason. I've seen deer go places where it seemed that wind would have a hard time getting. Maybe that's the reason. Because what Habakkuk is saying in his prayer is, "God, you are going to do something in me that enables me to make it, to stand, to endure, to see this thing through."

Can you imagine if God came to you one day and said to you, "The United States does not have a long future. In fact, what's gonna happen is that your economy is going to completely crash. You're going to go from a 31K stock market down to an 8K stock market." I'm not predicting anything. Imagine. And imagine that this goes down to 8K and then God tells you, "You are going to be invaded. Oh yes, we heard that there's great things going on in Iran, and God is moving, but the leadership has conspired with North Korea and they're moving through Canada, and Isis is leading the way, and what you have known as the United States will cease to exist. And by the way, that property that you own -- is gone. You will have nothing." Now ask yourself the question: when I come to church, do I lament or do I praise?

The only way that we'll do that is if God is so firmly planted in our hearts and our mind of His goodness, of His superiority, of His sovereign grace, and if I'm willing to submit my heart to God's purposes and God's timetable, that's the only way in the midst of this craziness that I'm going to lift my heart and say, "Yet I will praise you." I think, honestly, if we were speaking candid with each other, there's a lot of us that favorable circumstances unleash praise, but what about when they're horrible? The pathway to get there is to review the glory of God. And my friends, don't wait until it gets bad to do that. I hope you never look at communion the same way. I hope every time you allow it to remind you of the glory and the strength and the sacrifice of God. But rest and rejoice. How do I get there? There's some questions that you have to ask. Number one -- is God good? Do I believe that? Do I believe at the end of the day that God is good, no matter what happens, God is good? Do I believe and trust Him and understand that the cross was personally for me? Do I settle the question, "Does God love me?" Do I settle it with one answer, the cross? Yes. Do I come to communion and bring my questions, "God, do you provide for

us?" "Yes." "Do you love us?" "Yes." "Are you gracious?" "Yes." "Then I'm ready. I'm ready for whatever comes." And God says, in that moment, "You will stand. You will make it. You will endure, because I will make your feet like the feet of a deer."

I have a poem I want to finish with us tonight. "Give me hinds feet, Lord, like yours. You are the hind of the morning. Walk with me in the heights. Help me to jump, to leap over the crevices -- you go first. Show me how. Land me safely on sure ground, and give me a high view of Scripture, of the purposes and the promises of God, and -- Lord, would you give me a vision from the heights of the whole panorama of your purposes. Preserve me from the mountain lion that would terrorize me. Give me fleet feet when the lion comes, and if he pants and brings me down, help me to bear it well. Meet me on the other side of sorrow in a new place, in a new race, in a new age, on a new page of eternal history. And until then, Lord, oh heavenly hind of the morning, talk to me and tell me often about the dawn of the new day. Toughen me now. Don't make my life easier. Toughen me now, tenderly, and give me hind's feet."

How do I know that God will do that? "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ." You're gonna make it. We're gonna make it. We're gonna be a church for the city. God will determine in many ways what that looks like, but we're gonna make it. In this new weird era that we live in, you're gonna make it. How do I know? Because you will review. You will rest. You will submit. And we will together rejoice. "God, are we gonna make it?" "Yes. I will make your feet like the hind feet of a deer that has never found a mountain it couldn't climb."

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