



## HABAKKUK 1:13

*"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"*

## 1 PETER 2:9

*"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."*

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:28

*"When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all."*

## START TALKING

1. What is your initial response to Sunday's message? What inspired you? Surprised you? Challenged you? Or confused you?
2. What has been your highlight over the last week?

## START THINKING

1. Read Habakkuk 1:13. How do you react to the bold and honest way in which Habakkuk cries out? Have you ever felt free to cry out to God like this? How do we cry out to God openly but still do so in reverence and awe?
2. Read 1 Peter 2:9. What are some of the ways that we can "*proclaim the excellencies of him*"?

## START SHARING

1. Who do you identify with in the parable of the workers in the vineyard - the early risers? The latecomers? Why?
2. Peter listed some of the struggles we face when it comes to the sovereignty of God:
  - a). Evil in the world
  - b). Trouble
  - c). Doubt
  - d). We want to be in chargeWhich of these struggles did you identify with? What do you need to do in order to right-size your view of God and overcome that struggle?

## START PRAYING

Father, we pray that we would begin to see you appropriately and discover afresh who You are. We glorify You because You're greater than all our doubts and troubles, greater than the enemy of this world! Amen.

## START DOING

With God on the throne, we can handle struggles and pain. "*When all things are subjected to him, then the son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that god may be all in all.*" 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Spend some quiet time alone with god this week, surrendering your struggles to him.



This Sunday, we began our Jesus series with a challenging message from Peter Rasmussen based on the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16).

In summary, a master hires labourers to work in his vineyard at four different times in the day: at sunrise, 9am, 12pm and 5pm. All the labourers were paid the same amount. The workers who had been labouring in the vineyard since sunrise were particularly unhappy about everyone being paid the same amount: *"And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last."* Matthew 20:11-16.

There are two important lessons in this parable:

1. From a theological perspective, it presents a timeline for the Gospel - the Jews having come in first and the gentiles coming in last. The central idea here is that both groups receive the same reward. If you look at the text this way, it isn't primarily about reward but salvation. We, the gentiles, are grafted in on the vine: *"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,"* Romans 11:17.
2. It highlights the sovereignty of God -our focus point for this message.

The first stumbling block to our view of God being sovereign is usually, *"Why does God allow evil in the world?" If God could stop it, why doesn't He? God does as He pleases - even if it looks unfair to us. "I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you."* Job 42:2 (NLT).

Sovereignty in a broken world is something we struggle to understand...

- If God knows all things, why the devil?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- If God is loving, why the Holocaust?
- How do you reconcile the angry God of the Old Testament with the loving God of the New Testament?

Even the prophet, Habakkuk, asks these questions when he is struggling with God's lack of intervention: *"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"* Habakkuk 1:13.

Some people might ask, Has God set the world in motion and then sat back to watch it wind down?

The truth is, God has always wanted people. He created people to declare His glory. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."* 1 Peter 2:9. Before the foundation of the world, God called us. His intent was for people who would worship Him out of free will - a heart that longed to worship Him.

The fact that we have free will means the possibility of evil. In other words, we also have a choice for wrong, for evil, for that which is not right. We cannot be free without this choice - even if it means people choose evil on the scale of the Twin Towers' destruction or war in Ukraine. While we deplore this evil and ask for God's intervention, we still demand our own freedom.

It's difficult to understand that God endured separation from Himself so our evil could be dealt with: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Matthew 27:46. But it was always part of God's plan. In His unchanging wisdom, God brought evil to a head so He could destroy it once and for all so we could be His.

The second struggle we have is a theology of trouble. Because we have such a narrow view of God, we think he's only there to protect and bless us. But it's not about us - it's His story! We are playing our part in His great plan. *"For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps."* Psalm 135:5-6.

A sovereign view of the world sees God at work even in trouble. A non-sovereign view blames all trouble on the devil.

The third struggle we face is doubt. When we make it about us, it begins to destroy our view of God. When trouble arrives on the horizon, we have no grace for it. If we don't have a sovereign view of God, we tend to blame everything that goes wrong on the devil.

This takes our view away from God. Don't be focused on the trouble in your life - be focused on Jesus Christ.

We have been discouraged from asking questions because we think questioning signifies doubt. And we feel that we are not allowed to doubt...we must live in faith. But what if being a questioner makes God bigger and not smaller? If all questions can be answered, then that basically says we have put God in a box. Unanswered questions tell us we know so little, and it right sizes God. Earl Stevens said: "Confidence never comes from having all the answers; it comes from being open to all the questions." It's a good thing to be an enquirer.

Our final struggle is that we want to be in charge. Most of us live somehow attempting to be God by being in control - usurping the throne that only belongs to God.

Who is sitting on the throne in your life?

John Ortberg said: "To maintain the illusion that you are the messiah, you must shout out any evidence to the contrary. If you want to be your own god, you have to settle for living in a tiny universe where there is room for only one person. Your world could grow infinitely bigger if you were only willing to become, appropriately small."

With God on the throne, we can handle struggles and pain. If we don't see Him for who He really is, we don't see our rightful place. *"When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all."* 1 Corinthians 15:28. When we come to Him, our minds collapse, and we can but worship.

Don't let your life contradict who you want on the throne!