

Prophet
Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you 'Violence!'
and you will not save?

³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

⁴ So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgement comes forth perverted....

...I will stand at my watch-post,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

² Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.

³ For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.

⁴ Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous live by their faith.

Reading the Prophet This Week

Habakkuk is another of 'The 12', or 'Minor Prophets'
We're back around 600BCE, from Josiah's reform
To Babylon exiling the elites from Jerusalem

This prophet doesn't just speak for God to us
(Thus says the Lord) – but to God with us, in lament
Informing and expressing human dialogue with God

Can you read it aloud in your own voice, or ours,
In the first person, here and now,
From our community of faith, in our context?

'Violence' – *hāmās* is a key, used 6X in Habakkuk
(only 14X in all Psalms, 7X in all Proverbs, few others)
What is 'violence'? Just physical brutality?

God replies in 1:5, but we read a renewed "I" call:
The image of a watch on besieged walls, 2:1
Beloved by 'Watchtower' Jehovah's Witnesses!

We get an opening to a 2nd divine reply, 2:2-20
Framing a job – for the prophet, or for us
'managing expectations' in our idioms

The lectionary lets us end on 2:4,
Open to a self-righteous complacent claim –
But do read ahead a bit for study!

You'll recognize the text from my use in worship,
Stolen from Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan*
'Write the vision, and make it plain...'

What's our role in the face of violence?
What's providential about delayed justice?
What's God's work – and the church's response?
'In the meantime...'

Gospel
Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it.

²A man was there named Zacchaeus;
he was a chief tax-collector and was rich.

³He was trying to see who Jesus was,
but on account of the crowd he could not,
because he was short in stature.

⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him,
because he was going to pass that way.

⁵When Jesus came to the place,
he looked up and said to him,
'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down;
for I must stay at your house today.'

⁶So he hurried down
and was happy to welcome him.

⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said,
'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.'

⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
'Look, half of my possessions, Lord,
I will give to the poor;
and if I have defrauded anyone of anything,
I will pay back four times as much.'

⁹Then Jesus said to him,
'Today salvation has come to this house,
because he too is a son of Abraham.

¹⁰For the Son of Man came
to seek out and to save the lost.

Reading the Gospel This Week

As Luke merges back in with Mark and Matthew,
Out of unique Luke stuff, into 'Judean' context
(after Galilee origins, and Jerusalem passion)
Here's one last only-in-Luke story

These are Luke's familiar issues:
Rich, tax-collector, unpopular figure
Zacchaeus – beloved of children for being short

Amidst a crowd, Jesus chooses Zacchaeus as host,
Replay of 'Jesus keeping bad company',
'all' grumbling – not just religious or disciples

One variation of Luke's pattern is Zacchaeus' response –
Or at least his over-promising...
Half is one thing – but 4X his fraud?

Another variation is 'son of Abraham'
This gospel's genealogy rooted in Adam
And the promise extended to all nations
Israel is starting, not ending point of 'us'

The closing line goes wider, 'Son of Man' –
Bigger than 'Son of David' as a messianic title –
And echoes Ezekiel 34:16

What have you been taught about 'tax collector' and rich,
In applying those labels to people in our context,
Including ourselves?

How does this outreach to Zacchaeus apply –
Is it a sequential step in reaching out to all?
A necessary starting point, the lost of Israel?

What constitutes 'lost', or 'saved'?
From what, for what? From whom, into whom?

Romans 12:9-18

9 Let love be genuine;
hate what is evil,
hold fast to what is good;

¹⁰love one another
with mutual affection;
outdo one another
in showing honour.

¹¹Do not lag in zeal,
be ardent in spirit,
serve the Lord.

¹²Rejoice in hope,
be patient in suffering,
persevere in prayer.

¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints;
extend hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you;
bless and do not curse them.

¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.

¹⁶Live in harmony with one another;
do not be haughty,
but associate with the lowly;
do not claim to be wiser than you are.

¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil,
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

¹⁸If it is possible,
so far as it depends on you,
live peaceably with all.

Reading the Epistle This Week

The UCW service will use this text from Romans
About the moral expectations of 'us', the 'elect'
Once justified, how will we act to be sanctified?

This is good moral exhortation,
Encouraging character, attitude, behaviour
That's a lot of imperatives, and 'shoulds'

The assumption is '*agapē*' and charism gifts,
Living in community, owing mutual duties
With other duties toward wider circles

We might ask Marnie to lead us through this one,
If not Thursday, then on Sunday!

The last time I read this through online,
You'd get a couple of alternate translations,
And my comments in context...

<http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2018/08/tuesday-week-4-romans-12.html>

The next chapter, Romans 13,
Opens the political can of worms,
Obedience to the powers that be!