



"The LORD, My Joy and My Strength"

Habakkuk 3:16-19

February 9, 2020

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters. I welcome you once again to this gathering of Bethel Grace Baptist Church. I also welcome you to our last study with our brother, the prophet Habakkuk from that place that we have been calling wits' end.

We are going to be in Habakkuk Chapter 3 this morning as we close the book. Let's join ourselves together and center our attention on this closing portion of the book of Habakkuk. The title of this morning's message is *The LORD, My Joy and My Strength*.

As we prepare our hearts to dig into God's Word this morning, I have a question that I want to ask you. This is a question for you to reflect on in your own heart. The question is this: are you an optimist or are you a pessimist?

Is that proverbial glass half full or is it half empty in your eyes when you look at it? The optimist is the person who tends to see the good things in life, the bright side of things, while there also might be a tendency within them to not pay much attention to or carefully see the significant problems that may be taking place at the same time.

The pessimist is the person who is so aware and focused on problems that they might not be rightly seeing and enjoying the good things that are, in fact, around them. There is probably a whole range between the super-optimist way over here and the discouraged pessimist over there.

Where are you? What is your tendency. Are you an optimist, or are you a pessimist? I would like to think of our friend, Habakkuk, as a man who tended to lean on the optimistic side of things. He was a man who clearly knew the Lord.

As we study the things that Habakkuk wrote even in the difficult times, we see that he was clearly a man who loved the Lord. Habakkuk lived in Old Testament Jerusalem. He was a musician. He was mostly likely a temple musician. Habakkuk was probably of the tribe of the Levites.

What we find reading his book is that his theology ran deep. He had the understanding of who God is. His name Habakkuk means *embrace*. As I have studied this book, it has been clear to me that this was a brother who had been embraced by the grace of God. He belonged to the Lord.

The impression that I have gained of Habakkuk by reading the things he recorded in this book, is that he was a man who had the love of the Lord in his soul. I think he had the ability to see, truly see, the good things that were around him.

However, brothers and sisters, I wonder how many of you have come to recognize or experience the fact that there are times in life where things get so dim, where things get so dark, when things are so difficult in an ongoing way. It can become very difficult to even see the good things that are in our lives every single day.

There comes seasons of life, sometimes extended seasons, where it seem like there is nothing but hardship that keeps pressing in around us. When the new news comes in, why isn't it ever good news? It is always more bad news. It is just another difficulty that is to be faced. Repeated heartbreaks can happen and they run deep. If this keeps on going and going and going, you can come to a place where you feel like you are at the end of yourself, at the end of your wits, at the end of your rope. You are at wits' end.

This can maybe happen when you are in a situation where you have been praying for the restoration of a relationship. It could be a marriage or another relationship that has been foundational to your life. You call upon the Lord telling Him that He has the ability to change hearts, but it just seems like the disagreements get more and more entrenched and the discussions become more and more intense as you disagree with one another.

It could be that you have been praying for a child, even your adult child, who seems to be distancing themselves from the Lord. You have been praying that their hearts would be turned back to the Lord. Yet, they seem to be straying further and further away.

It could be that you are in a place in life where ends are not meeting. You are falling behind financially. You go to the Lord and ask for help, but then the engine of the car breaks down and the refrigerator stops working. You wonder what gives! This is so difficult. It just keeps going from what is seemingly bad to seemingly worse.

We can face these seasons of life where it gets so hard and our hearts can become heavy. That is where our brother Habakkuk was living. He was living at wits' end. Studying the historical circumstances of his life, we would understand that an earlier period of his life was lived under the godly reign of the good king Josiah.

Josiah was a king seeking after the ways of the Lord and his leadership was characteristic of that. Therefore, good things were happening in Jerusalem. Josiah tragically died in battle with Egypt. A bad king came after him and after the short reign of that bad king, an even worse king came.

Under Jehoiakim's leadership, there was such of a situation of decay that happened in Jerusalem and it was entering into Habakkuk's heart. It was getting worse and it was getting worse and it was getting worse.

Open sin was filling the streets of Jerusalem, corruption was filling all the structures of the land of southern Judah. It seemed like the people were having less and less restraint. People were being evil toward each other. This just kept getting worse and worse and worse. Habakkuk prayed and called upon the Lord in an ongoing way. Then as we have read in his book, the Lord answered him. Habakkuk was asking how long and why. What is going on.

Then the Lord said, *I see the wickedness. Now I am going to tell you that you would not believe it even if told, but I am telling you anyway. I am bringing the Chaldeans. I am the Babylonians. They are going to be My instrument of judgement and cleansing upon the sin that is filling Israel.*

Habakkuk responded with, *Did I just hear You correctly?* He did so with such reverence as we have read. Even calling out to the Lord as his Holy One, Habakkuk said, *But the Babylonians are so much worse than the Judeans. There are even more wicked. How does this solve the problem.*

To which the Lord replied, *I see the wickedness too. Habakkuk, I need you to understand that I see it and judgement also is going to come upon the Babylonians. I see that they are puffed up. The scales of justice will be balanced and set right. The day is coming when the glory of My Name will cover this earth as the waters cover the sea. That day is coming. In the meantime, Habakkuk, the righteous will live and thrive and be spiritually alive by his faith in Me, understanding that I see all, that I know all, that I will restore all to the place that they ought to be.*

We have been observing and following along as our brother Habakkuk was wrestling with and praying to the Lord. As I like to think about it, he was journaling before the Lord; writing things down. We have seen him come to the place where he was releasing these things to the Lord and growing in his faith.

As we come to the end of this book, to the last of these series of journal entries, my brothers and sisters, we will see that it in fact concludes in the most remarkable way, as we see our brother Habakkuk resolved to walk by faith in his God. It is an amazing display of trust at wits' end that is exemplary for us all.

As we dive into this final paragraph, it is as though Habakkuk could hear the sound of the massive Babylonian army approaching. He could hear the drums pounding. He could hear the collective boots stomping. He could hear the clash of the swords. They were coming and getting closer.

Yet, even still, Habakkuk was absolutely resolved that he would rejoice in the Lord, who had embraced him and who he then embraced by faith. What an amazing picture that we close with. Let's see this. Habakkuk Chapter 3 and Verses 16 through 19:

16 **I hear, and my body trembles;
 my lips quiver at the sound;
 rottenness enters into my bones;
 my legs tremble beneath me.
 Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble
 to come upon people who invade us.**

17 **Though the fig tree should not blossom,
 nor fruit be on the vines,
 the produce of the olive fail**

**and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
19 God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.**

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

Get it to the choir. Let them sing what I have just written.

So the prophecy of Habakkuk, his prophetic journal, closed with what I would call one of the greatest statements of faith to be found in the pages of the Bible. In what Habakkuk had just written down for us to consume and feed upon, I would see him as standing shoulder to shoulder with men like Job in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament, who were resolved by the help of the Holy Spirit to walk by faith and to commune with God, even if and even as everything else was being stripped away from their lives.

Even in the midst of such loss, they recognized that God had them. They had God. That was enough so they would walk with Him by faith and they would resolve to rejoice in what they had in the Living God, knowing that this world is fleeting and there is an eternal experience of God's grace, majesty and love that is to be experienced forevermore by every child of God who comes to Him by faith.

These men were resolved to live by faith no matter what! That is what I read in Job. That is what I read in Paul. That is what I read with Habakkuk. He was saying that he would rejoice in the Lord no matter what! God is that good. That is the fount that had been opened up in his heart. It is a wonder to behold. It is a miracle to behold. This is the work of the Holy Spirit upon a human being.

As we look at what Habakkuk wrote, I pray that that same fountain would be opened up by the Holy Spirit in our lives too, that this world is over in a flash; that God's Kingdom is forever and if we have God, we have everything. We have everything that we need.

I pray that seeing Habakkuk rise in the faith produced in him by the power of the Holy Spirit, we would say, *Lord, change my heart. I want to walk in faith like that. Open that fount within me too.* I pray that is our heart's cry, even that cry being produced by the Holy Spirit.

We want to be people who walk and grow by faith. Understand, this kind of faith that characterizes the Christian life begins with an initial step of faith. There is an initial moment of faith that initiates it all. That moment of faith begins when we recognize and confess our tendency to God to resist and to reject all the fallenness of our own sin.

Going back to the Garden of Eden, just like Adam and Eve, there is a tendency within each and every one of us to feel like God is withholding from us, God is holding out on us, and He is not giving us all that we deserve. So, we take matters into our own hands and we forget all the things that we have been given, and we take that one piece of fruit that God has said no to.

We use His gifts in ways that He did not intend. We break God's commands. We break God's Law, taking matters into our own hands. We don't trust Him, but we decide that we are going to get what we think we have coming. And we sin. We sin and we don't trust the Lord.

Initial faith begins by recognizing that we are fallen and disconnected from God and are under His judgement for our rebellion. And the initial moment of faith comes when we recognize that we are sinners and our eyes are drawn to a cross on which the Messiah died; when we see that the shed blood miraculously applied to us washes every stain away.

We see the life of the Messiah lived in perfect trust in His Father. He lived in perfect holiness and love and obedience. We come to recognize that He lived that life as a gift to His people, that they might be covered in His merit. We come to that place where we say, *Lord, my desires are so twisted up and rebellious and awry that I need to be cleansed and forgiven, and I need to be reborn and made new.*

This is entering into a relationship with our God through faith, through the provision that God has provided and His Name is Jesus. We trust in Jesus. We get united to Jesus. Then walking in Jesus, life becomes new. There is new life in Jesus.

We receive from God another gift. It is the Spirit of Jesus. While we still combat against the fallen tendencies and desires of our flesh, the Spirit starts recreating us from the inside out. Our desires start to change. We say, *Lord, I want to walk in Your ways. I want to trust in You, and I want to do Your will and I want to be an agent for Your Kingdom in this fallen world. So, Lord, change me.*

We can't just conjure up these new desires. It comes with us going humbly before the Lord, saying, *By a work of Your grace, will you change my heart and make me new? Now connected to Christ, even in a fallen world that has so much pain and heartache and frustration, and darkness encroaching into this world, help me to walk by faith in You. My life and times are in Your hands, and I will enter into an eternal Kingdom that will never ever end. It will be filled with holiness, joy, dancing, and all good things.*

We want to be those who live by faith and grow in faith in a fallen world. As we see how Habakkuk concluded his book, we see a man who had been receiving the work of the Holy Spirit. He had been a man in process. He was probably still going to struggle. How many of you find that your are resolved to walk by faith, but it is an up and down experience?

But we see Habakkuk on a surge that is so beautiful and wonderful. This is what is to characterize our lives as we are filled with the Holy Spirit. So, we talk about growing in faith. We have been talking about this a lot in Habakkuk, because this is the theme of the book.

As we look at what is written in this final paragraph, we see that Habakkuk was resolved to grow in his faith by taking his rest in the Lord; by taking his joy in the Lord; by taking his strength in the Lord.

First, Habakkuk was resolved to:

1. Take Rest in the LORD (3:16)

Once again, Verse 16 presents Habakkuk as a man shaken to the core with the encroaching of the Babylonian army. God had described their arrogance and violence and their power in chilling detail.

It seems that Habakkuk may have even see these things as a vision, having actual pictures in his mind of who these people were. Like we said earlier in the study, it might have looked to him like the goblins and the orcs and the gremlins were being released from the heart of Mordor in a scene from the Lord of the Rings. It was crazy.

It was entering deep inside of Habakkuk. He was shaken, yet even in the midst of that, how was he resolved to handle it? He was resolved to let the Lord handle it. Do you see that in Verse 16?

Not only did what Habakkuk experience affect him psychologically, but it ran so deep that it also affected him physically. In Verse 16, he said:

¹⁶ **Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble
to come upon people who invade us.**

I will wait. I will quietly wait. In other words, I will hand it over to God. I will entrust it to Him. Look carefully at the text at the end of Verse 16, *I will quietly wait*.

That phrase for *wait quietly* is the same word that is found in the Fourth Commandment when God gave the Sabbath day to the people of Israel when He told them that there was to be this rest. The word means to cease; to be still; to stop.

That is what Habakkuk was resolving to do. I will cease. I will be still and know that He is God. I will Sabbath in the Lord. I will let God handle this. Understand something, this is the language of surrender but Habakkuk in this language, he was not surrendering to the Babylonians. He was surrendering to the Lord.

Habakkuk was not laying down to give the Chaldeans the victory. He was stepping back with faith in God to handle justice and judgement, to intervene at His time and in His way with perfect justice in a way only He can. Habakkuk was pulling back, waiting and trusting in God by faith.

There comes time in life where we need to cease and let God go to battle for us. Psalm 37:5-7 echoes this.

**⁵Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.
⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!**

It occurs to me that there are times in the Christian life where God calls us to be active, and there are times in the Christian life where He calls us to just be still. Even when we are active there is to be a stillness of faith before the Lord.

But there are times when God calls us to get up and to get going and busy ourselves with something. I think that those times of activity come when we are serving others, when we see somebody else who is in need of aide. We go as the Spirit is prompting us to go and help them.

But there might be times when somebody else, even with evil intent, maligns your name. They seek to tarnish who you are. During those times you are to resemble Christ, who before His accusers was silent. He entrusted Himself to the Father. We wait for the Lord, the Father who loves us, to take up our cause on our behalf.

That is what Habakkuk was doing. That is what we see David doing in this psalm. And there are times where we need to let go and let God and rest in Him, knowing that He has our lives in His hands, and He is good. These times come when we need to be still and know that He is God.

That is growing in faith, because there may be a great tendency for us to tell the Lord that we will handle this situation. We don't trust God to handle it, so we tell Him that we have it and will handle it ourselves. It really boils down to this: do we believe that God is real and can we trust Him to act on our behalf in ways that we could have never even imagined?

We pray to Him. We call upon Him. Yes, He has established authorities in this world, swords of justice. But we don't go on the path of vigilante justice, taking matters into our own hands. We rest before the Lord.

Let's continue. Growing faith resolves to take rest in the Lord. Growing faith also resolves to:

2. Take Joy in the LORD (3:17-18)

Even when the earth is being stripped bare, growing faith will rejoice in the Lord. Now if Verse 16 was anticipating the invasion, Verse 17 portrays the aftermath. The land is left devastated.

I remember back in the early 80s when the nuclear tension between the United States and Russia was at a very high place, there was a made for tv movie that came out that my mom would not let me stay up and watch. I think it was called *The Day After*.

That movie was a description of what came after the time of World War III. I think a nuclear holocaust is what happened. I don't know. I have never seen the movie. Mom would not let me.

The aftermath is what is portrayed for us here as we see what is in Verse 17. Habakkuk pictured to himself that the invasion had occurred. The Babylonians had swept through the land . Habakkuk pictured himself on a walk through the agricultural outskirts and hamlets of Jerusalem and southern Israel.

Habakkuk went first to the fig tree grove and found nothing. Figs were a part of their staple diet. Lately I have been finding out why! Figs are good. I am hooked on figs. This item was a staple in their diet. They are filling and nutritious. When Habakkuk went to the fig tree, there was not even a blossom left, let alone fruit or any kind of budding fruit.

He went from there to the vineyard and found it totally wasted. There were no grapes or even vines. There was nothing. Then Habakkuk went from the vineyard to the Mount of Olives. He may have very well in his mind's gone to the Garden of Gethsemane itself, the place of the olive press in Jerusalem. But there were no olives and there were no jars of oil that survived the attack. It was all devastated.

So Habakkuk continued on his tour. He went out to the wheat field and found nothing. He went to the barley field, and he found nothing. He went out to the place where the sheep pens were, and he found nothing. The goats herds were gone. All of the staples were gone.

On the day after, imagine you survived and went to check out Sam's Club. Anything with any kind of nutritional value was gone. So from there you went to the Grocery Bargain Outlet and everything was devastated there. Then you go to Sprouts and none of its produce were left.

You go everywhere you can think to go. You even remember from your walks through the neighborhood certain houses that had fruit trees that were growing. You go everywhere you can think to go, and you find nothing. That is what Habakkuk was describing here.

It was a time that was devastated because of the warfare. Then it was a time of human inflicted famine in the land. Habakkuk surveyed the landscape, taking it all in, but then he realized that there was in fact something there.

To put it more properly, Habakkuk came to realize that there was Someone there. Someone with the power of restoration and renewal, even resurrection in His hands; the One who has the ability to give all gifts and to provide all needs and to make all things new. Habakkuk realized that whatever happened to the land, the Lord, His God, was there with His love and His ability to provide for every need. The Lord was there!

So what is this great statement of faith that we read here? Despite all that had happened, Verse 18:

18 **yet I will rejoice in the LORD;**

I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Everything else was gone. God was there and Habakkuk said that was enough. He would rejoice. This is supernatural Holy Spirit-produced faith. I pray that the Spirit will put more of it in me and more of in you too, because this is an awesome thing that we are beholding here.

Do you see Habakkuk's optimism rising up when there was reason for every single last shred of pessimism? It is as though he had a set of cosmic scales in front of him. Habakkuk was saying that on this side of the scale, there is the Lord. On the other side of the scale, there is everything else.

The Lord versus everything else. The Creator of all things versus all things created. Which side of the scale has more substance and worth? The Lord the Creator, the Living God or everything that He has made? The scale holding the Lord mightily outweighs the scale holding everything else.

The Lord is of so much value, so much worth, it is infinitely the case and Habakkuk realized that even if everything else in life is stripped away, here is the Living God who is eternal. Here is the Living God who is omnipotent. Here is the One who holds me close and if I have Him, I have everything.

I will take joy in the Lord. I will rejoice in the Lord, even when everything else is gone because God is the source of everything else. If I have Him, what else do I need? That is the kind of thing Habakkuk was saying to us, brothers and sisters. The flesh might say I don't buy it, but the Holy Spirit, when He is filling us, He will tell us to be convinced of it. If you have God you have everything.

If you are grafted in God by faith, you are a part of that which lasts forever. You will bask in His love forevermore whatever happens during the brief aerosol mist of this life. All of the things of this life are going to be over soon and very soon. But if we have God, we have it all.

I think that is what Habakkuk was saying. That is what is in my heart, and I pray it comes into your heart too. That is so easy for me to say when I drove here in my nice Toyota Sienna, wearing a clean-collared shirt and there are plenty figs in my cupboard.

This is not the work of Jeff Saltzmann within the work of Jeff Saltzmann or whoever. This is the work of the Lord. And I pray that if we should face such times, we will find that when God is all we have, God is all we need and our hearts will rejoice in the Living God, who has the ability to revive and restore and replenish according to His perfect will and design.

According to the Bible, that is going to happen for all those who are in Christ. But what do you love more? What do you desire more? What do you want more? The stuff or the One? Because the Holy Spirit is going to keep taking us to the One. That is His work.

I wonder how many of you might be in a season of life where you recognize that you are in a season of some kind of loss or decline. Maybe things are being stripped away. Maybe

relationships are changing, be it through bereavement, be it through relocation, be it through relational conflict—things are changing. And relationships you were standing upon are not what they were.

Maybe the successes of life that you were enjoying and counting on and finding security in, are turning into mediocrity. You are not able to keep up maybe even with the basic competencies of your occupation. Maybe you feel like your effectiveness is declining.

Maybe you are in a place where you feel like your body that has been so sturdy and dependable, now has all kinds of warning lights going off. Even health is declining. That is the path we all are going to be on. Health decline is a serious trial.

But even in the midst where so many things are being reduced, maybe it is that the will of the Lord is that His presence in our lives be increased, and He enters into our situations with a greater sense of His power, wisdom, and presence than ever before; that we, like Habakkuk, might be a great testimony of the wisdom, joy, and the peace of the Lord, even in hard times and we find that in God we have enough.

This is what Asaph was thinking in Psalm 73:

**²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

Growing faith resolves to take joy in the Lord, even when everything else is being stripped away. And finally, growing faith resolves to:

3. Take Strength in the LORD (3:19)

Reading through this, we see that Habakkuk was having a time where the fountain of faith was being opened in a very remarkable way. Taking his joy in the Lord, he found strength and energy for life, and being revived as well.

Not only was there joy, but now we see there was also strength. Verse 19:

**¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.**

I think Habakkuk might just be reflecting, telling himself that what was going on inside of him was incredible and remarkable.

Everything was so heavy. You and I know how that feels, right? Heavy, heavy! Heart heavy. Feet heavy, everything heavy! That's where Habakkuk had been living. Now he was saying,

I'm like a deer. Suddenly my feet are light. God, the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's. He makes me tread even upon the cliffs and the high places.

All this needs to go to the church master. This needs to be sung. This needs not only to be reflected upon, but this needs to be set to music so it can be remembered and set deep into the heart.

Last summer we spent some time in Zion National Park. What a great place! I recommend that you go. It is a cool place to hang out. If you can't go, then look at some high def pictures of it. It is an awesome place, because it is God's handiwork.

We were camping there inside the national park. Every morning and every evening, at dawn and at dusk, deer would come onto the campgrounds, and into the camp sites. Entire families of deer would come so close to us. Bucks with their antlers, the doe, and young ones would all come.

They were cruising around but whenever they detected that something was not right, they bolted away being so light on their feet. They were leaping over shrubs and leaping over rocks. They were gone so fast. They are made for this. It was so fun to watch.

However, here in the setting of Habakkuk, he did not picture the deer in the campsite, he pictured the deer on the cliffside in a place that was kind of sketchy; a place that was kind of difficult. Habakkuk painted the picture of a female deer running in the heights of the mountains, steady and sure footed, uninhibited, unafraid, full of freedom and confidence as she scaled the heights. She had no problem with it because she was designed for it.

God is the one who took the deer there. He is the One who empowered her there. The Lord desires us to grow and to walk by faith; to face our fears; to enter into the struggles, trusting Him to guide our feet and our path.

It is interesting because you see the difference between the first point of resting and the third point of taking strength. There are times where the Lord says to stop, just stop, and trust in Him. Then there comes that time where it is time to get back to the occupation of life; to get back to living; getting back into the routine.

When we face our fears at wits' end and when we trust in the Lord, He gives us the sense of our shoulders being lifted by Him. How many of you have had the experience of being afraid of something? It could be the fear of either acting on something or giving it over to the Lord or somebody who is going to act for us.

There are things in life that are hard and we fear them, but the more we resist doing what God is calling us to do, the more we procrastinate, the more the heaviness sets in. We feel like we are being taken down and we might find ourselves in fetal positions on the bed, saying, *I am not getting out of bed or adulting today!* There is heaviness.

But when we face our fears and tell the Lord that we are going to do what He has called us to do, we find out it was not so bad after all. We find out that God actually helped. Maybe our fears

were lying to us. It was, and God made our feet sure. God helped us and saw us through. That is the picture of walking by faith.

As Habakkuk finished his book, he went back into his routine. He had been off at his watchtower, his place of retreat and refuge, he had been writing his journal, and then he walked straight up through the wicked streets of Jerusalem, straight into that place of difficulty. He would give his piece of music to the choirmaster to sing. He was getting back into his routine.

May the Lord help up to walk by faith on the cliffside and in the routines, everywhere, knowing that He loves us, that He is with us, that He is upholding us. He is helping us to hold it together. He is our God and He loves us and He will see us through.

We come to the end of the time at wits' end. However, wits' end might be beginning for some of us through the trials that are ahead, but as far this study of life at wits' end for Habakkuk, what we find is that the prophet found that for him, wits' end was not a dead end. Even when he was at wits' end, he found himself on the receiving end of new divine perspective and new understanding and fresh grace from God.

My prayer is that if you are finding yourself at wits' end, you will find it also as a means to an end, where you will find God filling your heart with His love and His grace and His truth in ways that you did not see coming, because that is the kind of God He is.

Each person individually, let's take a moment with the Lord. Let's bow our heads with a posture of prayer at this moment. Let me ask you a few questions for you to take before the Lord.

Ask the Lord: Father, is there anything in my life, any area, where I have been restless and striving and not trusting You?

Ask the Lord: Father, is there any area where I am attempting to take matters out of Your hands and placing them in my own hands?

Is there a place where you have been restless and striving, where He has been calling you to let go and let Him take charge and take the reins? Take it before Him.

Also, is there any area of life where you feel like life has been barren, like a fig tree with no blossoms to be found? While you are desiring fruitfulness in those areas, and while fruitfulness in those areas is a good thing, are your eyes on the other Tree altogether that needs to be foremost in your heart and mind?

Ask the Lord to show you the tree of life who was a person, who was Christ Jesus, who the Lord wants you to be grafted into in the most fruitful of ways. Ask Him to help you to see that in Christ, you have your all in all.

Ask the Lord if there is any area of life where you need to face fears, where you need to step up, where you need to walk by faith with the Lord, asking Him to make your feet sure. Is there

anything you have been avoiding and you know you ought not be avoiding it? Ask Him to help you to be like that deer, light on its feet, going where God leads.

Finally, if you are here this morning and you have come to the understanding that you need to express faith in Jesus Christ for the first time, you need to trust in Him for the forgiveness of sin, you need to look to Him that every stain might be washed away; that you might receive the gift of His righteousness; that you might receive eternal life in Him and enter into a relationship with Him by faith in Him. If that is you, just let Him know that you want Him and new life. Put your faith in Him and let God know.

If there is anything we can do to come along side of you in each one of these things, there is a prayer room toward the right on your way out. We would love to pray with you.

If you are here and you are coming to faith in Christ that is truly living and new for the first time, please let one of the pastors know. We want to come along side of you in your new faith in Christ.

Let's pray.