

Waiting for vindication (Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4)

God's answer to Habakkuk? Wait.

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I went to a Catholic high school that was predominantly white. My Dad was always concerned when I hung out with my white female friends.

I never really understood what the big deal was—I had no interest in *dating* them, just hanging out with them.

A few years later, I started to understand what Dad was getting at. A good friend and I had both moved to Washington, DC. At Thanksgiving, we drove the 12 hours from DC back home to Flint, Michigan. Somewhere in western Maryland, the muffler on my car decided to give out. We kept going until we crossed over into Pennsylvania to stop at a Chevy dealership to get it replaced. While that was happening, we went to get something to eat.

As we were chatting and eating our lunch, I looked over to an elderly man who was looking intently at me. He had a scowl on his face—he looked like he was disgusted.

At that moment, I realized what my father was talking about. Dad grew up in Jim Crow-era Louisiana, and he was aware of the danger to a black man seen in public with a white woman. Now, this wasn't 1940s Louisiana; it was 1990s Pennsylvania. However, the man's scowl reminded me that even though we had made advances in civil rights, there were still lingering threads of a nightmarish past.

In the summer of 2016, just down the road from where I live in Minneapolis, Philando Castile was shot by a cop at a traffic stop. I remember my husband worrying about whether what happened to Castile could happen to me. I could tell him probably not, but the fact of the matter is I really didn't know.

The prophet Habakkuk wonders why God is silent in the midst of injustice. Where is God? Does God care? "O LORD," says the prophet, "How long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save?"

It's a familiar scene, from the concentration camps to shacks in Soweto during Apartheid. At some point people look at the horrors of the world and wonder why God seems absent in the midst of suffering.

Habakkuk does get an answer from God. But it's just like God to not give him the answer he so desperately wants. God's answer? Wait.

Huh?

God tells the prophet to wait. God will come, God will answer, but for now you have to wait. We aren't given a reason why the prophet has to wait; we're just given the call to wait. And trust, and hope. Habakkuk has to learn to wait for vindication. God is calling the prophet to trust in the midst of waiting, to live a holy life expecting that God will answer in due time.

That's quite a challenge. It's hard to wait for God's justice when injustice seems to be running amok in the land.

Dealing with injustices like systemic racism in our social institutions is hard work. People wonder where God is. But I think God calls us to be faithful, to do what God would have us do in a time of injustice. Habakkuk reminds us that God is with us as we faithfully wait. Even when it might seem dark, we can hope that the barriers that keep our society from wholeness will fall. God has promised this and God will do it.