

Faithfulness in Scary Times

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See how puffed-up are the proud, those whose souls are not right. But the upright will live by faithfulness. - Habakkuk 2:4

Habakkuk was confronted by the injustice of his society daily. He thought Judah was bad enough under their king and his flunkies, but then Babylonia took over. Life as a colony of Babylon was even worse. His task was maintaining his belief in the justice of God's rule over the world when there was so little evidence of God's goodness.

In response to his complaint, God answers. It may take a while, even a long while, but the fortune of tyrants will be reversed. Those who accumulate wealth through the exploitation of economies, will lose their fortunes. Those who build up security will see their castle's collapse. Those who use violence to attain their goals exhaust themselves for nothing. Those who pursue fame and honor while grinding others down will be shamed. And those who worship false gods will be let down... hard.

Habakkuk has a vision of how great life is when God is in charge. God tells him to remain faithful to this vision, give God time to bring it to fruition. Yes, *the puffed-up, the proud, those whose souls are not right*, are making trouble for you right now. *But the upright will live by faithfulness* to their vision of life in which God is in charge.

The insightful Christian farmer, Wendell Berry, states an insight similar to Habakkuk 2:4 in his poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front."

He says, "Be joyful though you have considered all the facts." Be happy even though you understand what you're up against. Berry then proposes a profound response to injustice that goes something like this. The upright have the strength to go on, not because the world is just or because it rewards those who work for justice, but because the upright possess a larger vision of the way things should be. They possess the vision, as did Habakkuk, of God's just reign. There will always be a discrepancy between such a vision and the real world. But the upright place greater trust in the truth and reliability of the vision than in the brute facts of existence.

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front
by Wendell Berry (published early 1990s)

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.
So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.

Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.
Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Listen to carrion — put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?
Go with your love to the fields.
Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.