

I need to make a singular point today. That's all I need to do. I need to make one solid point. I'm telling you from the onset that it's a wildly unpopular point that really goes against the grain of the air we breathe in our context, not just in Dallas but in the modern Western world. So I know I'm swimming upstream, but here's what I need you to hear me say. It is for your deepest possible joy to understand where we're going today and for you to really get and understand the weight of what is being said today. Because if we get this, then we've got a shot for joy. Now I didn't say "happiness." I'm not after that spirit sprinkled, "Yea life" thing. Happiness is fleeting. It can disappear in a second, and everyone in this room knows it. Everyone in this room has been euphoric one day and melancholic the next and had no idea why. So happiness is fleeting. I have no intention of spending my time with you trying to impart to you through the Word of God something that could be taken from you in a second, sometimes by no real circumstances. Sometimes it simply just happens. Just all of a sudden, happiness is gone and what brought you joy no longer brings you joy. What I'm talking about when I say "your deepest possible joy" is an understanding of how the universe works in such a way that nothing can be taken from you. So at the loss of anything, we can mourn and hurt, but our foundation is not removed from us. So we've got some work to do, and I'll have to attack some of our culture for the good of our culture.

To do that, let's read Habakkuk 1. If you've missed the first three weeks of this, let me catch you up. Josiah is the king of Judah. He has brought the nation of Judah back to repentance. They were worshiping pagan gods and pagan deities. Josiah finds a scroll, the Torah, in the temple, begins to preach it and proclaim it, there is mass repentance, there is revival breaking out in all the domains of society and then Josiah, like the man he was, goes out to battle against the Egyptians and is killed in that battle. And all the reforms of Josiah died with him, and his sons almost immediately begin to rebuild the pagan temples and worship foreign Gods. Habakkuk grows enraged, not at God for the death of Josiah. He's mad that God is letting His people behave this way. He's like, "Why are You idly watching Your people do these things?" So God answers him in the affirmative. He gives Habakkuk the answer he kind of wanted. He said, "Oh, I'm not idle, bro. In fact, I'm sending the Chaldeans, that hasty, bitter, violent, horrific nation, as a tool of My judgment on you and on the people of Judah."

And then now, look at Habakkuk in verse 12. "Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One?" So we'll see here in a second that this is just flattery. "We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. 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?" Now he has already backed himself in a corner with his first complaint. His first complaint is, "You're idle about wickedness." And God goes, "Oh no I'm not. There's always justice and judgment for wickedness. I'm not idle. Here, I'm bringing it right now." And then Habakkuk is now going, "Wait a minute. I don't like that that's how You're doing it. Because they're more wicked than we are. Now we're wicked. I already said that earlier on, but they're more wicked. And You're so pure in Your eyes and You're so everlasting, how could this possibly be. We surely will not die. That surely can't be what You're doing." Do you see what's happening? He's flattering God while making an accusation at Him. That is very, very human.

Verse 14, here's your accusation. "You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?" His accusation against God is

that He is using what is unrighteous to punish what is unrighteous and in so doing is going to allow the unrighteous to celebrate in its own strength, in its own might and in its own glory. He's basically saying, "The Chaldeans are simply going to sacrifice to their gods and exalt their demonic activity because You're using them." And then look at the swagger in Habakkuk 2:1. "I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint." So God has dealt with him very generously, and now our boy has a bit of swagger. "Well, I'll just go position myself at the wall and see what He has to say about this."

Now if we could be real honest here, if you live long enough, there is going to be a day, there is going to be an hour, there is going to be a season, there is going to be a time where you are lost as to what God is doing. It doesn't make any sense, you're not going to be able to see well and it's going to hurt. Anyone who lives long enough will get there. Just live long enough and you'll get there. So I don't want you to hear me saying that we're not allowed to ask questions of God or we're not allowed to plead with God on certain things. We've already seen that not to be true in Habakkuk. We already started our welcome time by talking about Psalm 51, "The broken and contrite in heart I will not despise." When we go, "Help me, God. Where are You?" God says, "I never despise that."

But it's important to understand positioning when you argue. So Lauren and I argue a certain way that Audrey and I do not argue. So there is a positioning with Lauren and me where I'm not lording my authority over her and she's not lording her authority over me. But we're in a dialogue where we are disagreeing. Sometimes that dialogue is what I would call "robust." And sometimes she can say, "Well I don't think that's what we should do. . . I don't think that's the way we should go." Very few times have I ever said, "This is what we're doing." I lose every battle I can on purpose to win the war. So in the end, "You pick the music, you pick the movies, you pick the color of the drapes, you pick the couch, she picks the TV and all of that. Because when it's time for God to call us out of the house we just built in Dallas to come to Highland Village First Baptist Church, then I need you to come." So that's how I have walked with Lauren. But when Audrey and I argue, it doesn't work that way. When my eight-year-old and I argue, it's not like when Lauren and I argue. Because her position is one well underneath me. And if you grew up in a home where your parents were engaged, you know this. Because if you took the wrong tone, what happened? Most of you are old enough to remember what happened. There wasn't a corner when we were growing up. There wasn't a, "You sit there and think about that." That didn't exist. Time out is what happened if you got knocked unconscious. So if you took that tone, there was trouble. That's a positioning thing. So it's okay to hurt, to be bothered and to have questions for God, but we must understand our position in it. Man loves man. Mankind loves to celebrate mankind. We think we are unreal. If you watch the Super Bowl tonight, watch how they talk about the rookies, not the guys who have played in the league for a while. They will be like, "He's got unlimited potential." No, it's limited. It is very, very limited. You can stick all the Deka, the steroids and the testosterone all you want in your system. You have limited potential. Every one of you. I don't care how big your brain is, how well it functions, how good of an athlete you are, you are limited. But man loves to exalt man. The problem with this is there's a gaping hole in that understanding of us being what's best for us, us being able to solve anything that bothers us and us being able to overcome anything that happens to us. That is a very Westernized, Oprah-ific kind of way of seeing the world. "You can do it. You can overcome it. You can make it happen. You can live the dream." That's the air we breathe. So my simple point is, "No, you can't."

Even the Greeks saw this one. The Greeks were some of the best storytellers the world has ever known. I know some of you are like, "Well, what about our movies?" Our movies are based on stuff the Greeks pointed out. So the Greeks had this great story about the beginning of man. It was how they dealt with this idea of human limitations. The Greeks said that Zeus created mankind, except he created man a certain way. Zeus created man to know the exact time of his death. So it wasn't some sort of ethereal, ambiguous, "I'm going to die one day." But it was an acute awareness that it was coming. It was, "I am going to die on June 17, at this time, in this place," and they knew it. It was locked in and they could see it. And the weight of it crushed them so that they weren't motivated to do anything. They knew they were

going to die, they knew it wasn't going to matter and they knew that whatever they accomplished ultimately wasn't going to change anything. So the Greeks thought that the gods who had foreknowledge and could do something about this simply were cruel and wouldn't do anything about it. So in the beginning, man is completely aware of his limits, completely aware of his mortality and is crushed by them. He is helpless and hopeless, living in darkness and despair. Enter Prometheus. For whatever reason, Prometheus, also a god, has compassion on mankind and takes issue with Zeus. So to get back at Zeus, he gives mankind three gifts. He takes away the knowledge of the day of death. He took away man's understanding of his own mortality. He gives to man a blind, intrinsic desire to overcome and be more than he could possibly be. And then he gives the man fire. This is the Greek's way of unpacking technology. "With fire, I can make pottery. With fire, I can make weapons. With fire, I can make food. With fire, I can correct the world around me." So while Prometheus is doing all of this, Zeus is unaware, and he comes back up to Mount Olympus, looks down and goes, "Where did men get fire?" So he brings in Prometheus and in a rage explains to him that mankind, because he lacks foreknowledge and because he can't see all that is, is going to create far more problems in this state for himself than he would if he would have stayed ignorant. So he binds Prometheus to a rock and causes buzzards to come everyday and eat out his liver. And then his liver will grow back, and the birds will come back the next to eat it out again. Here's the problem with most Greek mythology. It's awesome at identifying the problem, but it offers no solutions. So the Greeks are trying to unpack this reality. Mankind as a whole is unaware of his mortality. Now we all know we're going to die, right? That's not news to you. Nobody just went, "What?" Everyone in this room knows you're going to die. But nobody feels the weight of that, and nobody thinks it's happening today. We don't even think it's happening this week. If we're honest, we don't think it's happening this month or this year. Today is my daughter's birthday. Nothing in me is going, "This is the last one. I had better enjoy this one." Nobody feels the weight of it. So we behave as though we're gods. We behave as though we're immortal.

The other thing is few of us have any real ability to grasp and comprehend how our behaviors today create a mess of things tomorrow. So what I want to do today is point out the double-edged sword of human ingenuity to you, and then I want to show you our actual place in the universe from the Scriptures. How many of you have been on the Internet this week? All of us. Has anything changed the world like the Internet? When is the last time you called a movie theater to see what time something was showing? Do you remember when we had to do that? You had to listen to all the showings, and your movie was always the last one listed. So you had to sit there for 20 minutes until it got there. Then technology jumped and you could press a button to hear your movie. Nobody does that anymore. When is the last time you unfolded a map? We don't do that anymore. You tell your phone, "I need to get to Chuck's," and then just set it on the dash and follow the arrow. It has completely changed how we operate in this world. Even now, I can access online thousands and thousands of books, journal articles and everything from how to break down Greek words to how often they're used in the New Testament to what's their correlation to Hebrew words. All of that I can do from my computer anywhere in the world. All I need is Wi-Fi. It's a glorious invention, but it has a dark side to it. You can research it yourself or you can just read Justin Holcomb's book *Rid of My Disgrace*, which is phenomenal. If you'll track the growth of pornography with the growth of sexual assault and abuse, you will see that they hang very closely together. We have brought into our homes what was one time extremely difficult to get our hands, and we have made it culturally okay, to the detriment of our women and the detriment of our relationships with one another. The Internet, for all its connectivity, has shallowed out relationships to the point where we have Facebook friends. Think about that. They're not your friends. You live vicariously through what they did on Friday and feel bad because you weren't invited. And on and on we could go here. We have hollowed out relationships, and we have brought things into our home that you would have not been able to get into your home twenty years ago without having to be very, very shady.

I'll point to just a couple more to prove my point. Because I don't think there's anything you can mention, from the car to e-mail, that doesn't help us while at the same time create some problems for us. Let me just give you a couple more. Has anybody been on antibiotics this year? So here's what they're starting to figure out. Antibiotics, because of the rate

at which we're taking them, is creating these strains of bacteria that are resistant to the antibiotics. So here's the solution – make stronger antibiotics. Now we know how this ends – we're all zombies and we're eating each other. We've seen enough movies to know that's how this ends. So watch man. "Here's the problem. Let's fix it." And in fixing it, he made the problem worse. And in fixing the worse problem, he's going to just make it worse. And on and on we go.

I'd love to get into splitting the atom and nuclear reactions that could power cities without any tax on the world's resources and then I could get into the fact that we've weaponized it and don't watch over it, so you have accidents like Chernobyl, but I'm going to leave that one alone even though I kind of just didn't. But I'll give you one of my favorites. We can make more food now at less expense than anytime in the history of humanity, and yet that food lacks the nutrients we need to live healthy. For very cheap, you can fill a basket full of food, and yet it is a proven reality that that food is causing diabetes, obesity and heart disease. "We need a lot of food cheap. We need to do something with this World War II machine that we built to fight the Axis of Evil. And then let's produce this kind of food." Almost all of it is corn based, almost all of it is absent of any type of vitamins and minerals that we need to survive. So we are stuffing our faces with stuff that's going to shorten the amount of time we're alive and cause the amount of time we are here to be lessened in its vitality simply because we lack what we need to function properly. The Greeks were nailing this. We fix something, but we just create a bigger problem. This is the Greeks' way of saying we are not the answer.

Here's the Bible's way of saying the same thing. Psalm 39:5, "Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!" Psalm 103:15, "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." He says, "You're like a flower that sprouts in the morning, the wind blows you away and by the afternoon, the very ground you are on doesn't remember you." Even the place you were doesn't remember you. Now we know this is true. Most people in this room could not give me the name of their great-great-great grandfather, and none of you thought about him today. We might be able to put a picture of him in front of you and you'd be like, "I don't know who that is. Some old dude?" "No, that's family. That's your bloodline." So just to make it sting, that's you in the blink of an eye. Any type of illusion of grandeur you have where 200 years from now people are going to be looking at your life going, "This is where it all changed," is what the Greeks were pointing to. You've been deceived. It's not reality. The Bible says, "You're here for a second. That's it." So if we take all of known history and compress it into an hour, your time here is like half a millisecond. So when we've got issues with the Almighty, when we've got issues with how things are playing out, we must know that our limited time here affects how we're able to see. It's why I don't ask our two-year-old Norah for retirement advice. "Do you think we should do a Roth here? Or should we just go with the annuity? What do you think we should do here?" I don't ask those type of questions of Norah. She's two; she can't hardly talk. Now, as they grow older and learn a little more about life, they can tell me a little more about life. But Reid's not giving me marriage advice right now. "What do you think I should do about your mom?" He'll answer, "Chuck-E-Cheese." And I know that's not going to work. "What do you think I should do for Valentine's Day?" "Chuck-E-Cheese." "Okay, that would go really, really bad for me. So just go play." I don't do that. I don't take his advice. Why? Because he hasn't lived long enough to know anything. So if God is eternal and you're here for half a millisecond, you really can't argue from any position of authority.

Not only are we limited in time, we're limited in scope. Turn to Job 38. Like Habakkuk, Job has some issues with how God is playing things out. Except, for whatever reason, God is far more aggressive with Job. So with Habakkuk, He has been patient with him, He's being gracious and He's being slow. But with Job, He's just like, "Okay, let's do this." I'll let you see what I mean. Look at Job 38, starting in verse 1.

*Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the*

*line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'? Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!*

This goes on for four chapters. In the middle of it, Job goes, "Okay, I'm sorry. I won't open my mouth anymore." And God goes, "No, dress for action like a man. You wanted to have this conversation. Let's have this conversation." So God systematically breaks down Job's limitations. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Surely you know how all this works." If we were to keep reading, you'd see Him go, "Hey, how did I get Orion's belt up there like that? What about Pleiades (that's another constellation)? How did that get strung along? Tell Me how I did that, Job, oh brilliant one, oh scholar of the great." And then His conversation shifts and He starts going, "Hey, are there any goats being born right now? Are any bears hunting? Are they eating? Right now, do you see them? What about the deepest parts of the sea? What are the monsters like that are down there? What about the tops of the mountains? What are the rams doing up there? Surely you know. What about the birds flying in the air? What are they looking for? Who gave the hawk such sharp eyes? Was that your idea? Was that your idea to make the hawk fly so high and be able to see down into the ground?" He literally just dresses Job down. He tells him to dress for action like a man and then strips him. And this is God's way of communicating to Job and to us that we are limited in time and limited in scope. We simply can't see all that is at play.

So right now we're sitting in this room. There are preschool things going on, there are children's things going on for your children and you have no idea what's going on in those rooms right now. Don't freak out. I'm not about to tell you, "We're letting bears out." That's not what's happening. I'm just saying you don't know. What's going on at your house right now? You don't know what's going on at your house right now. What's going on in the city? It's Super Bowl weekend. There's a lot going on. But we don't know. And even if we know that it's going on, we don't know what's actually happening there. We are limited in our scope of understanding. We don't know how things fit together to actually move history along. And here's the crazy part. Most of the time, we're unaware of that reality. We're unaware of those limitations. Because everything in our culture talks about our endless possibilities, our unlimited potential and how to grasp the power that's within. The largest section of books in the bookstore is self-help, fix yourself books.

I'm going to contend that no one has lied to you more than you have. No one has betrayed you more than you have betrayed yourself. You can blame or point fingers at whoever you want to blame point fingers at, but the biggest liar you know is you. And you are not going to be able to fix you. All I've got on my side is human history. If God would be merciful enough to give you just a clear picture today, you'd feel the weight of it. Watch how people in the suburbs and people in our culture right now are trying to solve the issues of our culture. "Marriage is just not really working between us, so we'll introduce new partners into this mix and we'll swap around a little bit and maybe that will fire up the spices in our relationship." I'll tell you how that ends – divorce and heartbreak. "Well not me." Not you yet. It all ends in the same place. We're bored, we're lonely, so we'll buy trinkets and toys that numb it for a second. Most of us are carrying a ridiculous amount of debt because we're trying to solve a problem that we cannot solve by ourselves. But we can numb

it for a second, can't we? New stuff really is cool. It numbs it for a second. And sometimes that's all we're wanting, just to numb it for a second.

Now I never want to minimize your pain or take away from your hurts, doubts and fears. They are legitimate and real. Here's the point and here's what you have to hear me say. You can't fix this. You are not awesome. And that is the foundation of your greatest joy. Because it will set you to seeking something outside of you to solve it. And that can be a trap too. We need to find something that is not limited like we are limited in regards to time and scope to solve this issue. Romans 8 puts it this way. "The mind set on the flesh is death." "Let me fix this, let me make this happen, let me correct this," is death. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. "I want to know God, I want to follow God and I want to chase God." Now do you see how screwy things have gotten in the church? What's the church known for? The church is known for going, "Don't do this. . .modify this. . .don't act like this. . .don't go here." So church, for the majority of people, becomes some sort of moral grid of behaviors, but Romans 8 says that leads to death. What leads to life and peace is life in the Spirit. Christ's life is the fulfillment of the law, not yours. Your life is not the fulfillment of the law. Christ's life is the fulfillment of the law. His crucifixion is the wrath-absorbing act that pulls the wrath off of us. The resurrection and expiation is God washing us clean from our shame and guilt. So not only do we have imputed righteousness and not only do we have wrath removed, but we also have been washed clean before the Lord so that there's this celebration in Christ over us for the purity of life we possess despite the fact that we don't possess it. And that's why we worship like we worship. So whatever is going on in your marriage, whatever is going on in your addictions, whatever is going on in your relationships, whatever is causing churning in your soul, you are not the answer to that. You cannot fix that. You need something that transcends your weaknesses.

Let's pray. "Father, if we're honest with You, a lot of us are tired. We're tired because we've been trying to earn what was freely given. And we're tired because we're trying to fix us, we're trying to fix our spouse and we're trying to fix our children. God, I just pray that You would grant us the weariness to just finally lay it down at Your feet. We're not going to be able to muster the type of passion that You deserve. We're not going to be able to muster the kind of majesty that You entail. So even in something as simple as singing to You, we need you. So we ask that, in Your mercy and in Your grace, You would show us our inadequacy. And instead of being beat up about that, I pray that we might finally be able to celebrate that, where we are weak, You fill in the gap and are our strength. So may You overcome our foolishness and overcome our fears. May You solve the great problem that the Greeks pointed out, and may we rest finally in the fact that You can. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."