

Ordinary Time, Proper 26

Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision.—Habakkuk 2:2 NRSV

Explore

current newspapers, glue, scissors, newsprint, tape, marker

In the News Today

Collect several current newspapers, and have the students look through them to identify issues that disturb them. Ask: “What do you wish you could do about these issues?” Have them discuss what they think it takes to change difficult problems in the world. Cut out some of the articles and glue or tape them on half of a large sheet of newsprint with the title “Write the vision: We can make a difference!” (The other half of the paper will be used for another activity later in the session.)

Extract

God’s Justice Will Come

Habakkuk is one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament that we know very little about. The book presents an interesting exchange between Habakkuk and God about the disturbing scene of violence he saw around him, and why God seemed to allow it when God is suppose to be just. Read Habakkuk 1:1–4 where the stage is set for his complaint. It is believed Habakkuk’s writing most likely occurred during the height of the Babylonian Empire. After the Babylonians conquered the lands of the Israelites, large groups of them were sent to live in other countries. It is understandable how confusing it would be for the prophet Habakkuk that God’s chosen people, the Israelites, were allowed to be captured and scattered by a race of people who did not even acknowledge God. However, in God’s response to the prophet, Habakkuk was offered words of encouragement. He was told that God still had a vision for the people, and it would not be frustrated. God promised that those who remained faithful, despite the circumstances around them, would be a part of that promised vision. Read Habakkuk 2:1–4.

Bible, Doctrine and Covenants, articles from newspapers, paper, pens

Habakkuk 1:1–4
Habakkuk 2:1–4
Doctrine and Covenants 158:11a–b

These same words echo down to us today. We find ourselves in similar situations as the prophet Habakkuk. There are many injustices and evils that confuse and upset us. We might find ourselves asking, “Why, God?” We have been given words of modern counsel that encourage us to be faithful to the vision. Have a student read Doctrine and Covenants 158:11a–b given in 1992 by President-Prophet Wallace B. Smith. These words of counsel indicate that the degree to which God is able to respond is dependent on our own faith and preparation. We are not just idle observers of God’s plans, but are active participants in bringing God’s vision to reality.

Divide the students into groups of three or four, and have each group pick one of the issues identified from the newspaper activity as a focus for the following three questions. Have one group member record notes so they can report back to the other groups. (For small classes, select one or two of the newspaper issues to work on together.)

1. How do you think God feels about this problem?
2. What do you think God would rather see happening?
3. What are some ways people can assist God in trying to change this situation?
4. What can people your age do to get involved, to be an advocate?
5. Is there any organization or group currently working on the issue?

Experience

What's the Kingdom?

The kingdom of God is a mystery for many. Provide time for the students to do the following: Have them identify what they believe the main elements of God's kingdom will be. How will it look? How will people interact with one another? How will it feel? Then using colored pencils, markers, or crayons, and the remaining half of the newsprint, have them cooperatively draw their world vision of God's ultimate desire for creation. Once complete, have them use a black permanent marker to randomly write across their picture, words or short phrases that express things people can do to help bring about the vision. When complete, have them post the page in or close to the sanctuary where those coming for worship can see and reflect on its message.

colored pencils,
markers or
crayons,
newsprint, black
permanent marker,
tape

Expand

For You, for Me, for Community

In order to help God change the world, the student's relationship with God needs to be a priority. Part of that relationship is learning to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Allow any student that participated last week and did the "Spiritual Exercising" to share what it was like for them. How did they feel? Did they learn anything new about themselves or their relationship with God or others? (If no one did the activity, you may want to take class time to do a shortened version of it together.)

Improving our relationship with God is not just for us as this lesson has already implied. It also is for the benefit of those around us or in our homes, schools, communities, and world. What can be done to help others who are affected by the injustices of our world? What kind of service project might your youth group organize? Elderly citizens, nursing homes, single mothers, poor families, children of prison inmates, and the homeless are possible recipients of acts of caring that contribute to changing the world around you. Creatively brainstorm ways you can be of help. Choose a project by consensus.

paper, pens

As a closing activity, have the students respond to the following questions on the paper provided:

1. What is one injustice that I vow to faithfully give energy to changing, even if it's for the rest of my life?
2. Why is it important to me to see it changed?

Close with a prayer from a volunteer.