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Sermon Notes

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## **Sounds and Silence**

### **Habakkuk 2:18-20**

#### I. The Beauty of Sound, the Need for Silence

- A. Air Carries Sound
- B. The Sounds of Creation
- C. Modern Life: An Assault of Sound

#### II. God's Silence, Habakkuk's Silence

- A. Habakkuk's Distressed Cry
- B. God's Distressing Silence
- C. God's Silence Misunderstood
- D. Habakkuk Waits Silently on God

#### III. God Speaks to Idolaters

***Habakkuk 2:18-20 "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. 19 Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it. 20 But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."***

##### A. What Is Idolatry?

###### 1. Descriptions

- a. worthless

***"Of what value...?" "cannot speak" "cannot give guidance" CANNOT SAVE!!!***

b. manufactured

***“a man has carved it” “his own creation” “wood” “stone” “gold” “silver”***

c. image

d. lifeless

***“lifeless stone” “there is no breath in it”***

By contrast: God is of infinite value, He can speak, He can give guidance, He is powerful and He can save from all harm; God is uncreated, not manufactured... not even imagined in the heart of man; God transcends all understanding; no physical image can represent Him, for He is holy and separate from all creation; God is spirit, not made of atoms and molecules; above all, He is ALIVE... he is the one, the true, the living God... and all life comes from Him

## 2. The Commandment

***Exodus 20:2-6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.***

## 3. Definitions

### 4. Israelite idolatry: A Long, Tragic History

a. golden calf: the horrible exchange

***Psalm 106:19-22 At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. 20 They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. 21 They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt, 22 miracles in the land of Ham and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.***

The devastation of idolatry: it destroys the knowledge of the glory of the Lord! Instead, God is degraded in the minds of men... the horrible exchange is made:

***Hosea 4:6-7 my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your***

*God, I also will ignore your children. 7 The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their Glory for something disgraceful.*

*Romans 1:20-23 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

Idolatry is what people do when no longer satisfied with the true God. They exchange Him for a lie... they trade in the mighty, living God for a mute idol of stone or wood

- b. Canaanite practices
- c. prophetic warnings
- 5. Babylonian idolatry
  - a. self-worship

*Habakkuk 1:7 They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor.*

Everything the Babylonians did was for their own glory. Their military conquests, their massive building projects... all of it for their own glory

It was all a form of self-worship

- b. military worship

*Habakkuk 1:11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on-- guilty men, whose own strength is their god*

*Habakkuk 1:14-17 You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. 15 The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. 17 Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?*

The Babylonians worshipped their own military prowess; their idols were military

Because of their great military skill and power they had conquered the world... therefore, they worshipped themselves

Ancient idolatry: a constant enemy to God's goal:

***“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”***

#### 6. Modern idolatry

J.I. Packer, ***Knowing God***: “What does the word ‘idolatry’ suggest to your mind? Savages groveling before a totem-pole? Cruel faced statues in Hindu temples? The dervish-dance of the priests of Baal around Elijah’s altar? These things are certainly idolatrous in a very obvious way; but we need to realize that there are more subtle forms of idolatry as well.”

It’s not only ancient cultures that fell for idolatry... nor is it only stone-age tribes in Irian-Jaya, or polytheists in India or Buddhists in Japan that worship idols

##### a. greed (covetousness)

***Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.***

Paul equates greed with idol-worship... thus the Ten Commandments begin and end with essentially the same command:

***“I am the Lord your God... you shall have no other gods before me...”***

***“You shall not covet...”***

John Piper: “Covetousness is desiring something so much you lose your desire for God. The opposite of covetousness is contentment in God. When contentment for God decreases, covetousness for gain increases.... Covetousness is idolatry because the contentment the heart should be getting from God, it starts to get from something else.”

##### b. false doctrine

Idolatry also comes from making up a god of your own imagination, rather than simply accepting the self-revelation God has given us in His word

Anytime God reveals something about Himself and people reject it as untrue, they have chosen the way of idolatry

Any time people make up attributes or names of God from their own minds rather than from His word, they have chosen the way of idolatry

c. self-worship... in three steps

i) worship of the true God in a self-styled way

This is how it begins... like the Golden Bull just described; "I like to think of God this way"

ii) worship of false gods out of self-imagination

The God of the Bible is too demanding, too exclusive... people reject Him and begin to fashion other gods out of their own imagination

iii) worship of self... period!!

Nebuchadnezzar made a monstrous statue of a golden man and ordered everyone to bow down to it

Pride gone wild... the ultimate end of pride is self-worship... "I place all ultimate value on myself... I believe in myself, I love myself, I will be what I will be, I will do what I will do"

Satan wanted to be worshipped, and so do we!

***Matthew 4:8-10 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"***

B. What Is the Danger of Idolatry?

1. Obscures God's Glory

- a. God's glory is above all things
- b. God's Kingdom advances when people see and KNOW His glory in all things
- c. idolatry greatly abases God in our MINDS

2. Teaches Lies

***vs. 18 "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies?"***

- a. teaches lies about God

Idolatry is a way of limiting truths about God to far less than their proper (infinite) level:

Idolator thinks about God, makes a representation out of his own imagination:

God is powerful... a bull is powerful; make a Golden Bull to represent God's perfect power... worshipping the bull (which we can see) helps us to worship the power of God which we cannot see

Two Problems:

- 1) God is more than just power... to focus too much on God's power makes a slanted picture of God and diminishes His glory... if we constantly worship a substitute that represents only one of God's attributes, we pervert our view of God... He is not only power... He is also love, mercy, patience, kindness, grace, wrath, justice, wisdom, etc. The Bull fails to capture any of these
- 2) God's power is FAR GREATER than that of any bull or any earthly thing at all; the Bull fails to do even the limited thing it was seeking to do!!

Idolatry always diminishes God's glory by leaving out some of His attributes and by comparing others of His attributes to earthly created beings

Idolatry thus teaches lies about God

- b. teaches lies about ourselves

That we can imagine God correctly out of our own minds

That we can accurately make a representation of Him

That we have the right to choose what parts of God we like and what parts we don't

3. Destroys Saving Faith

*vs. 4 "The righteous will live by faith"*

- a. faith in God alone saves us
- b. idolatry destroys saving faith by substituting a false gods

*vs. 18 "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak.*

- c. idolator is trusting in his own power to save him

4. Establishes False Hope

*Judges 10:13-14 But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. 14 Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!"*

***Jeremiah 2:27-28 They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' 28 Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.***

- a. in time of trouble, we revert to what we really trust in
- b. false gods promote a false hope... and it will sink us on Judgment Day
- c. false gods are “do-nothings”.. they do not exist so they cannot save
- d. but false gods DO prevent us from crying out to the true God
- e. because of false gods, we are confident, at ease, and certain... at the very time we should be crying out for mercy to God!!

***Jonah 2:7-9 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. 8 "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. 9 But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD."***

#### 5. Displays Pride

- a. faith receives God's word and believes
- b. faith passively accepts God's description of Himself
- c. idolatry involves man taking control even of God Himself
- d. out of imagination comes deity

"I like to think of God as a \_\_\_\_\_ god"

"My God is a \_\_\_\_\_ god"

"The Jesus I know would never do \_\_\_\_\_"

#### C. What Is the Result of Idolatry?

##### 1. Transformation of Character

Basic spiritual principle: you will become like what you worship

***Psalm 115:2-8 Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.***

## 2. Temporal Judgments

***Psalm 16:4 The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.***

Idolatry leads to a sorrowful life... a life of constant search, of demonic restlessness

- The greedy and covetous, who makes money their god, never have enough
- The ambitious, who make their career their god, never achieve enough
- The lustful, who make sensual pleasure their god, are constantly inflamed with passion and never satisfied
- Those who worship sports teams are never satisfied with just one championship... they must win it every year
- Those who make a person an idol are constantly insecure... their whole world will fall apart if that person leaves or dies

Also... God actively judges people who worship false gods in this world... it kindles His anger

But these temporal judgments are nothing compared to the final Judgment for Idolators

## 3. Eternal Judgment

***Revelation 21:6-8 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."***

***Revelation 21:6-8 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First***



***and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."***

God will judge all idolators... all who worship false gods of their own imaginations

That includes people who claim to be Christians, but yet reject what the Bible teaches about God and choose to fashion a mental image of Christ after their own imagination

#### IV. In Silence Before God

***Habakkuk 2: 20 "But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."***

##### A. God's Awesome Power

1. God is in His Holy Temple = God is ruling heaven and earth
2. God is absolutely sovereign over the nations AND their idols
3. God is seated on His throne

Idolatry lowers God to the very dust... but His prophetic word elevates Him back to His rightful place... enthroned in heaven, ruling in His Holy Temple

##### B. God's Holy Temple

1. Physical temple about to be destroyed... brutal shock to all Jews
2. It was but a dim reflection of God's true Holy Temple

***Isaiah 66:1-2 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? 2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."***

3. Destruction of Jerusalem's temple won't touch God's holy temple in the least

##### C. Silence Before Him

***Habakkuk 2: 20 "But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."***

Here in Habakkuk 2, God summons the whole earth for judgment... all the nations stand before Him in silence:

***Psalm 50:1 The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.***

1. Silence produced by awe

***Revelation 8:1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.***

All vocal worship stopped... every archangel, angel, living creature... every white-robed martyr, every righteous saint in heaven... all of them stop in stunned silence

AT THE JUDGMENT ABOUT TO BE POURED OUT ON EARTH... God's power, God's holiness, God's righteousness, God's wrath, God's unapproachable light... this produces AWE and SILENCE

***Job 40:3-5 Then Job answered the LORD: 4 "I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. 5 I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."***

2. Silence produced by guilt over sin

***Job 9:1 Then Job replied: 2 "Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? 3 Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.***

3. Silence produced by submission to divine will

We arrogantly argue with God... we are sassy back-talkers who think we know better than God

***Romans 9:20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?***

***Isaiah 45:9 "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"***

***Daniel 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"***

Habakkuk 2:20 calls us to humble ourselves quietly under His mighty hand and accept His word which can save us

#### D. Acceptable Worship

1. America loves constant noise and sensory input
2. MTV generation loves big screens, PowerPoint, constant music or the ranting of a professional entertainer
3. Make a joyful noise and singing loudly to God is commanded
4. BUT SO ALSO IS SILENCE

***Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. 2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few....7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.***

***Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."***

5. True worship begins with a humbled heart, willing to listen as God tells you who He is
6. Worship must be done in spirit and in truth... truth comes when we quietly accept God's word as absolute truth... without that humble quiet acceptance, we cannot worship the true God

## V. Application

### A. Turn from Idols

1. What are your idols?

Idol = something you worship that isn't the true and living God

Do you have a God of your own imagination? Test: are there passages of the Bible that you cannot accept? Can you accept a God who would destroy the entire world by a flood of His wrath? Can you accept a God who is jealous for His own glory and His own name above all things? A God who sovereignly chooses one nation among all the nations of the earth and shows them His power? A God who delights in destroying His Son

Come to the Bible totally submissive to what it teaches about God

Accept His word... His teaching about Himself

Idol = something you trust in to save you that isn't the true and living God

Do you trust in your good works to save you? Self-salvation is the worst form of idolatry!

Do you trust in your church membership or baptism to save you? These are false hopes

Do you trust in anything but the shed blood of Christ? It is an idol!

Idol = something you place ultimate value in that isn't the true and living God

Are you living for earthly idols... for earthly goals that will fail you? Are you living for material prosperity? Are you living for a person... maybe you're in school and you've fallen for someone, and life itself would mean nothing to you if that person didn't love you! Maybe you're living for a career, for professional advancement

2. Will you turn from them now?

#### B. Trust Totally in Christ

1. Idols offer false hope
2. Christ alone offers true hope... the only one that truly saves
3. Habakkuk has already shown us the way: "The righteous will live by faith"
4. Christ demands, deserves and rewards true faith

#### C. Stand Silent Before God

1. Silence of awe
2. Silence of recognition of sinfulness
3. Silence of total submission to His will