

In Wrath Remember Mercy

Introduction

The Text

¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. ²O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3:1–2)

Something's Changed

A. As we come to [ch. 3](#) now in our study of Habakkuk, things start to shift here significantly.

1. You remember where we've been, perhaps, to this point. The whole book begins with Habakkuk lamenting—which is just a fancy way of saying: “complaining in God’s direction.” So it starts out: “² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? ³ Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ⁴ So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted” (Hab. 1:2–4).
 - a. He’s complaining here about the apparent absence of God’s intervention when it came to sins among his people there in Judah. “It feels like you’re not doing anything God! I see the sin. I see the injustice. Don’t you? Where are you? What are you doing?”
 - i. Have you ever felt like that? I know you have.
2. Well, God comes quickly it would seem and answers this complaint, albeit in an unsatisfactory way. He says: “Don’t you worry about Judah. I see it. And I’m raising the Babylonians as we speak, and they’ll come in and punish you, destroying the temple, dragging you out of the holy city into exile. How does that sound?”
3. So Habakkuk laments again. “Let me get this straight: You’re going to punish evil with evil? You’re going to put out fire with fire? I’m complaining about you not punishing sin, you say you’re going to punish sin by using a nation given even more over to sin? This is ridiculous!”
4. So God answers again, and that was the five woe oracles we just got done with that took us really through the whole of [ch. 2](#). God says: “Not to worry Habakkuk. I will permit and even use the evil of Babylon for a time, but I will not let them get away with their evil either. I will, in the end, judge the evildoer and save those who call on my name, those who live by faith.”

B. Now, this is the first time after all of this that we hear from Habakkuk again. And something has dramatically changed.

1. Because when Habakkuk opens up his mouth now, it's not to complain. Amazingly, it's to sing! (I'll show you a bit later in the sermon, but the whole of ch. 3 is a song. It's prayer and praise put to melody.)
- C. And we're left wondering: what exactly has happened? Where, how, did the change occur? Is he just finally giving up the fight, saying uncle as it were, or is he genuinely onto something, truly changed from the inside out?
1. Well, obviously, I think it is the latter. And this sermon is going to try to tease out a bit from [Hab. 3:2](#) there in particular, just what happened—with the hope that this same sort of thing can happen for us in our times of trouble and confusion.
- D. I see a string of four action steps as it were, beginning back from the last verse of [ch. 2](#), into these opening verses here in [ch. 3](#). And I just want to identify them and reflect on them a bit with you here this morning.
1. Here's what we see Habakkuk do as things transition: (1) He Keeps Silent; (2) He Hears the Report; (3) He Fears the LORD; (4) He Sings a New Song.

(1) He Keeps Silent

Hab. 2:20 → Hab. 3:1

- A. This first step obviously stretches back into what we looked at last week if you were here. It just seems too much of a coincidence to me that we go from silence in [Hab. 2:20](#) to song in the very next verse. And I think there's something to this. The two are connected.
1. I would daresay one of the reasons you and I don't often find ourselves singing to the Lord is we've not learned the secret of being silent before him.
- B. So look at [Hab. 2:20](#) again: “[But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.](#)”
1. There's a certain majestic sweep to these words. You just imagine God on his heavenly throne and everything else is just quiet.
 - a. Have you ever had moments like that before the Lord?
 - i. I think this is what Habakkuk enters into. I think this is where things start to significantly shift.
- C. I'm reminded of that equally profound text in [Eccl. 5:1-2](#): “[¹Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ²Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.](#)”

1. If you want a true grip on reality, it starts not with a bunch of your own thoughts or reflections . . . it starts with silence, silence before God.

Allergic Reaction

- A. Now we have a problem. Because most in our modern, western culture it seems to me, have a sort of allergic reaction to the idea of silence and quiet. We don't know what to do with it. It makes us uncomfortable. We've been conditioned to always need something of the buzz and hum of activity and noise.
 1. We've got our phones and watches pinging at us at all hours; our TV is on in the background; our Spotify app is playing the latest hits; we've got our browser with 10 tabs open on our laptops; we're scrolling social media, chatting with friends, texting, posting, messaging, GIFing, snapchatting, tiktoking, and on.
 - a. We maintain a constant level of distraction. And we like it that way.
- B. Silence, if we're honest, is not just awkward, it's a bit scary.
 1. Because in the silence we can't hide. We see more of ourselves for who we really are, and that's not always flattering. We're forced to deal with our feelings and the knotted up stuff inside, and we don't want to.
 2. But, listen, in the silence, if we go as Habakkuk is going here, we also will come to see more of God for who he really is, and it's amazing. It's just what we need. We return to our place in the universe. We get smaller, he gets bigger.
 - a. And while, initially, that first part stings a bit, as we move into the silence with God, as we "keep silence before him" and consider him as he is "in his holy temple" on his throne in heaven (cf. Ps. 11:4), we find ourselves strangely comforted, stabilized, humbled and elevated at the same time.
- C. You know, I had a revelation the other day.
 1. I walked into my bedroom and there's all this dust, like big dust-bunny things, all over the place—on the bed, the dresser, the carpet. And I'm thinking: what in the world, where did all this come from?
 2. Now, nine times out of ten the answer is simple: Levi. But still, even if it was him, how did he pull this off?
 3. Well, here's what I realized. He loves buttons and things. And our ceiling fan has this remote to it. Now we always keep the thing on, the lowest speed, just humming but nothing crazy, and I guess Levi turned that thing on full blast, and wouldn't you know it, all this dust comes flying off of the fan and floating down to the ground like some kind of filthy snow.
 4. But you see here's what struck me: I didn't know there was dust up there. Why? Because the thing was always moving. We never stopped it and looked at it. I thought if it's moving, it's not collecting dust, right? But I was wrong.

5. In fact, because it was always moving and we never gave it a break, a sabbath if you will, a time of silence, we never realized how much dust was really up there.
 - a. And, here's where I'm going with this: I think we can get caught in the same sort of thing spiritually, when we never really stop, when we never really get quiet before God. We think as long as we're moving, we're good, we're healthy, we're doing okay. I mean, look, we're serving in church, we're discipling our kids, and all this.
 - i. But we don't realize amongst all the activity, all the noise, that we're collecting a lot of dust. And every now and then when something comes that really shakes us up, pushes our buttons, man it all just flies out, doesn't it?
 - (1) And we're like where did that come from? Our hearts. We haven't been stopping and getting quiet before the Lord, where we see this stuff and we can get it cleaned up, get it right.

Getting Practical

- A. So let's get practical for just a moment. How do we do it?
 1. Well, for this, and actually at other points in the sermon as well, I'm going to draw on some of the things I've said in Next Steps booklet in the back: [Walk the Sacred Path](#). The whole thing there is about how you get alone with God—and one of the steps along that path is learning the spiritual discipline of silence.
 - a. So if you want more elaboration on the subject, you can check that out later. But for now, let me at least say this . . .
- B. I try to spend time alone with God every day, usually in the morning. And I open that time with a brief, perhaps five minutes or so, attempt at silence.
 1. I'll settle in with my Bible and my coffee, and I'll just close my eyes and start to quiet my heart. I'll try to sync my breath up with a verse, usually something like [Ps. 46:10: "Be still, and know that \[you are\] God."](#) And I'll just breathe in: "[be still and know](#)". . . and breath out: "[that you are God.](#)"
 - a. Now, you could obviously take any verse that means something to you and helps you quiet internally and move Godward and just breathe around it. Even this verse here would be great: "[\[T\]he LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.](#)"
- C. And as I'm doing this, of course I start to become aware of that dust that's been collecting in my heart. Worries start to burglarize my thoughts. Items on my to-do list start buzzing around like flies in my subconscious.
 1. Whatever it is, I try to turn it to a quick prayer, roll it over to the Lord. "I give that to you God. Help me to see you, to hear from you." And I keep going.

- a. The stuff that's often pulling and dragging on my thoughts with particular force is usually something that's starting to mean too much to me. I can't let it go. It's become too big a deal. And I won't really see that rightly until I surrender it, lay it down before him, hit pause on that, and get my priorities right.
 - i. So I give it to him, and I give it to him, and I keep coming back: "Be still, and know that [you are] God."
- D. In a very real sense, then, practicing silence before God is a tangible act of picking up your cross to follow him. You are dying to whatever else you think should have your attention, your energy, etc. and you are saying: "There is nothing more important to me than you. You're the one who makes all this other stuff right."
- E. To give you an example, maybe I'm thinking I've just got to get my sermon done. That was the struggle on Friday—sermon prep day. I've got all this stuff on my plate, I don't have time to sit here quietly, I need to get going.
 - 1. Well, I'll tell you, I can run off into sermon prep, but I won't do it with a peace or calm or sense of God's presence and help, I'll do it with anxiety, with low-grade panic, with fear of man, in a rush. And if I get interrupted I'll be snappy, I'll be irritable, because I have so much and I can't be bothered.
 - a. It won't be an act of worship from a place of faith and love. Because I never surrendered it. I never got quiet. I gave into the noise, instead of putting it in its place. I'm collecting dust.
- F. And we all have that stuff, right? So the first step here is just try to get quiet before the Lord.
 - 1. Now, to be clear, it's not that our goal here is mere silence in and of itself. It's silence "before him" (the Lord). It's silence on our end because we're anticipating that he's going to speak. We want to give him the first word in our lives.
 - a. It's in that place of silence that we're ready to truly hear, because we dropped our agenda, we've surrendered, we're listening.
 - i. And that leads to action step #2 . . .

(2) He Hears the Report

In the Scriptures

- A. So Habakkuk breaks his silence in [Hab. 2:2](#) and says this: "O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work"
 - 1. And, again, I think we're supposed to connect the dots. You see, the point of keeping silence was so that he could truly hear.

- B. But hear what exactly? And how? God had been speaking to him personally, it would seem, in previous encounters. Is that what we have here?
1. Well, I actually think something a bit different is taking place here. I think Habakkuk is referring to the way God has revealed himself, or spoken to him in the holy Scriptures, in the Bible.
- C. Now where do I get that idea? Well, there are two clues that point me in such a direction:
1. First, he says what he's heard here is "the report of you, and your work." He's heard a report of what YHWH has done in years past—this is referring to what others have recorded and handed down concerning God. So already it's the Scriptures that we have in mind.
 2. But this becomes all the clearer when we consider, secondly, what Habakkuk goes on in the rest of [ch. 3](#) to say this report consisted of.
 - a. We'll look at it in much more detail next week, but the whole song is recounting in many ways God's saving work in the exodus from Egypt and he's saying: "God, if you did that for your people there you'll be faithful to save us again here. It's the kind of God you are. I've heard the report of you and your redemptive accomplishments."
 - i. Again, where? "In the Scriptures. I've been reading my Bible. I've been in the temple. I've heard your word expounded. I've been quieting the noise in my soul and making space to reflect on it. I hear you."

Going Back to Go Forward

- A. I thought of [Ps. 77](#) at this point. The Psalmist is in pain. He's struggling. He feels like God's abandoned him. So what's he going to do?
- "⁷ 'Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?'⁸ Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?'⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?' Selah¹⁰ Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.'¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.¹² I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.¹³ Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?'¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.¹⁵ You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah" (vv. 7–15). And he goes on to recount, in poetical fashion, the work of God in the exodus.
- B. I could take you to countless other examples in the Bible where this sort of thing occurs. God's people go to the reports of his work in the past for help in the present, to get hope for the future.
1. They go back to go forward. They open up their Bibles, as it were, and they listen. They let God reveal himself, they let him speak through the Scripture.

- C. Sometimes, especially here in America—especially here in the burn-it-on-both-ends, break-neck-paced Silicon Valley—we are so consumed with what’s coming next we don’t go back. We don’t remember what God’s already done, where he’s already been faithful, because we don’t have time.
 - 1. It’s always: what’s pressing today?; what’s coming tomorrow? The past feels irrelevant to the present and future. We need God to show up now, today. We’ve got deadlines coming tomorrow. I don’t so much care what he did back then.
- D. But what we learn here, and it’s so important, is that who God is there and then is connected to who he is here and now. And the way we get fresh help and hope here and now is by going back and letting him remind us of what he did there and then.
 - 1. We get quiet before him, we open our Bibles, and we hear the report of him and his work.

Getting Practical

- A. So, again, getting practical: are we putting ourselves in position to hear this report, to hear the voice of God? In other words: are we opening our Bibles?
- B. Again, drawing from the [Walk the Sacred Path](#) booklet, I mention there that at any given time I’m always reading from three places in the Scriptures.
 - 1. If you start from Genesis, and then Job, and then Matthew, and you progress reading one chapter a day from each of those three places, you’ll finish those three sections at about the same time and you’ll finish reading through the Bible in a year. I call it the 3x3 Plan—3 books, 3 chapters. Find a checklist in the back of the booklet or online on our Sacred Path page.
- C. Now, full disclosure: I’ve never read through the Bible in a year. I’ll read maybe a chapter a day, because I read a little deeper, I like to dig a bit. But I’m always moving—maybe I’ll focus on this section until I’m done with that book, then I’ll move to the next section and slowly make my way through a book.
 - 1. The point is: I know, if I’m not opening my Bible, I will forget who God is, what he’s like, I won’t hear from him, and my soul will languish.
- D. So I’ve got to be in the Bible. We have to be in the Bible. You figure out what works for you, but whatever you do, please: put yourself in position to hear the report!

(3) He Fears the LORD

Do I Actually Believe This?

- A. But then, of course, there’s something else that we see here with Habakkuk that’s of crucial importance. He hears the report of God and his works, but how does he respond?
 - 1. Look at how that opening sentence in v. 2 finishes: “O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear.”

- a. The revelation of God in the Scriptures is met in Habakkuk with faith. He hears of who God is and he trembles before him.

- B. Now, I wanted to settle in here just for a moment, because you're going to go home and say: "Alright, Nick told me I need to read my Bible, fine I guess I will." You'll get up, you'll try some of these things.
 - 1. And you know what will happen? Nothing. You're not going to start singing, you're going to start yawning.
 - a. You see, there's a step in between hearing from God in his Word and singing for joy over it. It's not automatic. It's what the Scriptures call the "fight for faith." It's not just: "Am I hearing?"; but: "Am I believing? Do I actually believe what God is revealing to me here?"

- C. Again, in the [Walk the Sacred Path](#) booklet I talk about the DNA Method of Bible Study that I use—Discover-Nurture-Apply—and this is the Nurture portion of that.
 - 1. It's one thing to discover things in the Scriptures.
 - 2. But then we have to stop and ask: "So what? Do I believe this? Where is this being tested in what I'm facing in my own life right now? God did that in the Exodus, great. Do I believe that he can work for my good even in the midst of this mess I have at work or with my health or with my spouse? Can he redeem that?!"

- D. That's why I say I only read from, at most, a chapter a day. Because I want to do this deeper heart work of repentance and faith.
 - 1. I don't just want to read and let it go in through one ear and out the other.
 - 2. I want to draw it down. I want it to start a fire in my heart.
 - a. That's where the song comes from—when you see who God is and what he's done maps onto who you are and where you are in your own life.

- E. You see, some of us need to get real about where we stand with our faith, what we really believe.
 - 1. We're familiar with the truths of Christianity, and we kind of live around the gospel. We can talk it up with the best of Christians . . . but we don't really believe it.
 - a. Our lives betray a breach of faith. We're functional atheists—living like God doesn't exist, like he isn't in his holy temple, like we've peered in and found the throne vacant. So it's up to us. We're orphans. We're alone.

What Are You So Afraid of?

- A. Now, there are many ways you can start to clue into this sort of thing happening in your heart but one of the ways you can test this is actually by searching out this issue of "fear".

1. Habakkuk says: “I fear you—you’re holy, you’re awesome, you’re great!”
- B. The fear of the Lord isn’t a bad thing. It’s the beginning of wisdom ([Prov. 9:10](#); cf. [1:7](#)).
1. You see him as he really is, yourself as you really are, and this life is put in proper perspective. You see reality. That’s what the fear of God means.
- C. Listen, when you fear God, you fear nothing else . . . not even Babylon.
1. But when you don’t truly fear God, you become afraid and anxious and worried about all sorts of other things:
 - a. You fear what people are thinking of you.
 - b. You fear what’s happening with the markets and the downturn of the economy.
 - c. You’re worried about how your next project will go at work.
 - d. You lay awake at night afraid for your kids: how do I keep them healthy and safe, how do I help them be successful, etc.
 - i. Now obviously, much of these things are worthy of being concerned with but they are not things to fear, to be controlled by—because God is in control, and we trust and fear him.
- D. A story from the gospels that I think vividly captures the movement from the fear of other stuff to the fear of God that we want, that actually sets us free, is when Jesus is in the boat with his disciples.
1. They’re looking to cross the Sea of Galilee and, you remember, the wind and waves are threatening to sink the thing, they’re taking on water, they’re going down.
 2. And, understandably, the disciples are afraid. Jesus, of course, with a brilliant stroke of irony, is asleep in the back, he’s totally at peace.
 3. And they come screaming in his ear, [v. 38 of Mark 4](#): “³⁸Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” ([vv. 38–41](#)).
- a. Do you see it? They went from fear to fear.
 - b. They went from the fear that fills the heart with endless anxieties to the fear that fills the heart with an inextinguishable peace.
 - i. Jesus didn’t just calm the raging sea, he calmed their raging hearts. “My God is greater than all else and he is good, he’s for me.”
- E. When you get that, you fear him and nothing else. When you get that . . . you feel like singing!

(4) He Sings a New Song

The Whole Chapter

- A. Now first, on this, let me real quick show you what makes us think this whole chapter is really a song, a psalm, a hymn to God, in the first place.
- B. If you look at v. 1, it's called a "prayer of Habakkuk the prophet . . ." which of course might initially throw you. "Here you are, Nick, saying this is a song, but the text itself says it's a prayer."
1. Well, for this we should first mention that there are plenty of Psalms that actually open with the same superscription: Pss. 17, 86, 90, 102, and 142 for example. They're all called "a prayer" of David, or Moses, or others.
 - a. And I think that's very interesting, isn't it? We think of praying as something we do on our knees before bed or things like this.
 - b. But have you ever thought of it as a song? When we sing a little later today, you see, this is not just praise, it's prayer.
 - i. We don't just sing in the overflow of joy, we sing also in the place of great need.
 - ii. We don't wait until we feel it to sing. We sing until we feel it.
 - iii. It's not just praise, it's a prayer. "God, come and make this true for me!"
- C. But, then things get even more clear that we're dealing with a song here.
1. For one thing, v. 1 closes out saying this prayer is "according to Shigionoth." This word only occurs elsewhere in Ps. 7:1 and it's likely referring to a type of psalm.
 2. But then as we'll see next week all throughout this chapter, it's punctuated with that word you're probably familiar with "Selah" (vv. 3, 9, 13). No one's totally sure what this means, but it's probably a musical or liturgical instruction of some sort, and here, in Hab. 3, this is the only place outside of the Psalms where that word is used.
 3. And then, of course, down at the close of this song, the last verse of the chapter, it's made abundantly plain. For the whole thing ends with this notice, as it were, v. 19: "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." And that's where the book ends. It's a song. People are singing, instruments are playing.
- D. We've gone from the grumbling cry of confusion in the opening lines of this book, to the soaring praise and prayer of a song! It's wonderful.

"In Wrath Remember Mercy"

- A. But now most importantly, consider with me what he starts off singing here. Look at v. 2 in its entirety once more: "O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."
1. So he's gotten quiet. He's revisited the Scriptural record recounting who God is, and what he's said and done. And he's trembling in view of it, afraid in the best kind of way. And he starts to pray and sing.

- a. The latter part of that verse, the essence of it is simply this: “God if this is who you are, if this is the kind redemptive work you can do, revive it, show it off, do it again for us now. Help!”
- B. And we’re going to fasten onto that marvelous little plea there at the end: “in wrath remember mercy.”
 - 1. It’s a fascinating development. For you remember, as I’ve said, this whole book begins with the prophet, in effect, calling out for wrath. “Where is your judgment, God? You just let sinners in Judah and sinners in Babylon do their thing and get away with it? Where’s the justice? Where’s the wrath?”
 - 2. And then, as he realizes, perhaps all that God is planning, the way he will come in fury against the evildoers, and perhaps even as Habakkuk sees his own place in it, as we’ve said with Isaiah in [Isa. 6](#), woe is me, I’m not on the right side either, I deserve wrath—whatever the case, suddenly now he’s crying out not for wrath but for mercy.
 - a. Or I suppose I should more properly say: now he’s actually calling for both—“in wrath remember mercy.” Bring your judgment and justice O God, but don’t forget, in that, your grace and salvation!
- C. And, remember, it seems he’s getting this idea of God, who he is, what he does, from Scripture. He’s heard the report, and he’s singing it back to God now as a prayer.
 - 1. And this makes sense, of course, because it’s what we see of God all over the Scriptures. He is not just judgement and wrath. Nor is he just tenderness and mercy. He’s both wrapped into one.
- D. For one thing, God says as much himself, when he’s showing Moses his glory, proclaiming his name to him there on Mt. Sinai. So we read in [Exod. 34:5-7](#): “⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’”
 - 1. God is merciful, God is gracious, abundantly so, but he’s also just.
- E. And, of course, who God says he is, plays out time and again in what he does.
 - 1. So when he comes for Adam and Eve after the fall in [Gen. 3](#), does he come in wrath? Oh sure he does. He puts things under a curse because of man’s sin. But he also remembers mercy. He leaves them with a promise of a redeemer. And he covers their naked shame with skins of animal. In wrath, he remembers mercy.
 - 2. Or what about Noah and the flood? God has come in wrath no doubt. Man’s sin had become so ubiquitous and so foul it stunk to high heaven. And he’s going to put the earth through the wash. But he also remembers mercy. So we read, as he looks out over the floodwaters: “But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were

with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided” (Gen. 8:1).

3. Or what about the Exodus? He comes in wrath against the Egyptians there. But he doesn’t swallow up the people of Israel in it all. He remembers mercy. He provides the blood of the Passover Lamb that they put over the doorpost, that covers them. There’s judgment and salvation in the same moment, wrath and mercy.
 4. Or how about after Habakkuk’s day, in the exile. God has come in wrath, he’s spewed his people out of the holy land in response to their sin. But he hasn’t forgotten them. He remembers mercy. “⁵⁹ For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant,⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. . . .⁶³ I [will] atone for you for all that you have done . . .” (Ezek. 16:59–60, 63). “I’ll bring you back to the land, I’ll bring you back to me. In wrath, I’ll remember mercy.”
- F. And, of course, the greatest example of all, and the one that really all these other instances are pointing to, the one that holds both sides of God’s glory and name in perfect tension, is the cross of Jesus Christ.
1. For there God comes in wrath and judgment in its fullest and most ferocious form. He exacts from his beloved Son the full penalty due our sin.
 2. And yet there also, in a way even more spectacular than ever before, God remembers mercy. Indeed, it’s at the cross of Christ that he breaks open a fountain, as it were, that now forever flows for the forgiveness and the cleansing of sinners like you and me.
- G. So Mary, when she’s contemplating the arrival of Jesus sings out: “⁴⁶ My soul magnifies the Lord,⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, . . .⁵⁴ [for] he has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy” (Luke 1:46-47, 54).
1. “We’d been thinking he’s forgotten us. Truly he’s been preparing to bring all his redemptive work to its climax point!”
 - a. Jesus is the promised serpent-crusher of Gen. 3:15.
 - b. He’s the covering for our naked shame.
 - c. He’s the ark of God by which we pass safely through the floodwaters of God’s fury.
 - d. He’s the Passover Lamb, put to death in our place.
 - e. His body broken and blood poured out form the basis of the new and everlasting covenant.
 - f. He is God in wrath remembering mercy.
 - i. He is the reason we sing!
- H. You may be there with that Psalmist in Ps. 77: “⁷ Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?⁸ Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” (vv. 7-9). Does that sound familiar?

1. Maybe because of some hardship or trial. Nothing's going right.
2. Maybe because you see your failures and your sins and you're sure God is done with you.
 - a. Listen, if Habakkuk could open the OT and see that even in wrath God could be merciful, how much more can we who have the NT and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ see such things?!
 - i. We can now this morning throw ourselves down at the foot of the cross and cry out with full confidence: "O LORD, in wrath remember mercy." And he will. He will!