

A Vision of Meeting

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This week, the APEC meeting was held in South Korea, bringing together countless political leaders and heads of state for high-level bilateral summits. Some leaders met under difficult circumstances, with tensions and discomfort evident in their expressions. Yet, many managed to forge agreements and cooperation that transcended these challenges. Their encounters were not always smooth, but they resulted in productive engagements. On the other hand, some meetings remained awkward, revealing unresolved discomfort. Even the gifts exchanged became a subject of intense public scrutiny—highlighting just how delicate and influential the choice of words and gifts can be in shaping the atmosphere and outcomes of such meetings.

In our own lives, we engage in numerous encounters. Yet, the most crucial encounter we can experience is our meeting with the Lord. This All Saints Sunday, as we reflect on those who have gone before us in faith, we see that what united all these saints was not their perfection but their transformative encounter with the living God. Like the diplomatic summits, our meetings with God do not always happen under comfortable or ideal circumstances. Sometimes, we come with sharp complaints—as Habakkuk did. Sometimes, we come from places of social exclusion and yearning, like Zacchaeus. But the vision we receive in these meetings—the vision of who God is and who we are called to be—transforms everything.

The prophet Habakkuk opens his oracle not with praise but with a powerful protest: “*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?*” (v. 2). He is not a person comfortably settled in faith. Instead, he is someone who has watched, waited, and increasingly wondered why God seems absent in the face of mounting injustice and violence.

His complaint is urgent and pointed. Habakkuk witnesses violence, injustice, and the collapse of societal order. The law is paralyzed, and justice is twisted to favor the wicked while oppressing the righteous. These are not abstract issues but the harsh reality Habakkuk lives in—a society unraveling morally, watched over by a God who seems silent.

How often have we found ourselves in the same position? We see the suffering of innocents, the injustice in our communities, the pain of broken systems—and we ask, “God, where are you?” Habakkuk’s honesty is both refreshing and challenging. He does not mask his pain or voice safe platitudes; he brings his raw grief and frustration before God.

But then something remarkable happens in chapter 2. Habakkuk says, “*I will stand at my watchpost and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me and what he will answer concerning my complaint*” (v. 1). He assumes an active posture, not storming away or giving up on God, but positioning himself to receive a vision. He creates a sacred space to encounter God’s response.

God’s word to Habakkuk is striking: “*Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay*” (vv. 2-3).

God does not answer all Habakkuk’s questions immediately. Instead, God gives him a vision—a promise to hold onto and proclaim. It is a vision of justice and restoration that requires patient waiting. And then comes the profound declaration: “*The righteous will live by their faith(fulness)*” (v. 4). Amidst violence and chaos, righteousness means living by faithfulness to the vision God gives, not by what we immediately see.

This teaches us that meeting God sometimes means waiting patiently with faith, even through tragedy or injustice, trusting in God’s perfect and timely fulfillment of promises.

Our second scripture introduces Zacchaeus, a man who desperately wants to meet Jesus but faces barriers. He is short, socially despised as a tax collector who collaborated with Roman oppressors, and therefore unlikely to be welcomed close to Jesus.

Yet Zacchaeus's desire pushes him to an undignified act: climbing a sycamore tree. Imagine a wealthy man, much ridiculed, scrambling like a child to see Jesus. The crowd surely mocked him, but Zacchaeus needed to see the Lord.

What he did not expect was for Jesus to see him first. "*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today*" (v. 5). The word "must" (Greek *dei*) underscores divine necessity. This meeting is not optional or a coincidence—it is God-ordained.

The crowd grumbles at Jesus associating with a sinner, seeing the meeting as a scandal rather than grace. But Zacchaeus experiences profound transformation. He commits to give half his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold those he has cheated. In Jesus' presence, grace overflows into repentance and restoration.

Jesus declares, "*Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost*" (vv. 9-10).

This story invites us to recognize that God meets us where we are—whether on a spiritual tree or in social exclusion—and calls us into life-changing grace. God's timing and initiative are perfect, and that encounter transforms both individuals and communities.

On this All Saints Sunday, we remember those beloved members of our congregation who have passed in recent years. Their absence is tangible—felt in our pews, in our fellowship, and in our hearts. We grieve deeply, yet we gather not merely to mourn but to hold fast to the hope we have in Christ: the hope that our encounter with these saints is interrupted, not ended.

Habakkuk's vision of justice and Zacchaeus's salvation both point us toward a future meeting—a reunion promised and certain. Those who have gone before us now rest in God's full presence, and we, the living, are called to live by faith in that glorious hope.

Personally, I dream of the day when I will be reunited with my mother, father-in-law, grandparents, and brothers and sisters in Christ. I imagine that joyful reunion, free from pain and division, standing together in the light of God's presence.

This vision is not sentimental fantasy but the core hope of the gospel. It is the vision God made plain to Habakkuk to write down and proclaim: "*If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay*" (v. 3).

The saints we honor today—whether the great figures of history or our own loved ones—were not perfect. Like us, they wrestled with doubt, injustice, and failure. But they positioned themselves to meet the living God. They climbed their own sycamore trees, they stood watch at their ramparts, they waited for God's vision.

And what vision did they receive? The assurance that God sees us, calls us by name, and offers salvation not by our own effort but by grace. That death is not the end but a passage into deeper communion.

Just as the gifts exchanged at international summits can set the tone for diplomacy, the gift we receive in God's encounter shapes our lives. Unlike human dealings, though, our meeting with God is pure grace—we bring only our need, our pain, our failures; God brings vision, salvation, transformation, and the promise of reunion.

The question is not whether God is willing to meet us—Jesus makes clear that God must meet us—but whether we are willing to position ourselves to be met. Will we stand at the watchpost and wait expectantly? Will we climb the tree, undeterred by the crowd's mockery? Will we open our hearts fully and allow God to see us, know us, and call us by name?

On this day, surrounded by witnesses seen and unseen, may we find courage to seek such encounters and patience to wait for the vision fully realized. The righteous live by faith—that is, a faith that God sees, speaks, saves, and reunites.

May we live prepared for that moment when we see face to face those we love and lost and together behold the face of God in unending peace and joy. Amen.