



## St. Michael's Church CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2019, INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST HOMILY

GOSPEL PROJECT SERIES 15:4; HABAKKUK 1:1-6; LUKE 17:5-10

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

It's the story of little boy named Roman. There we were, our India mission team leading a Billy Graham like crusade-festival, one of five that we lead. But this one was in a remote village in Eastern India, the smallest of our festivals. We were well off the beaten path, so off the beaten path it's proof God was in charge, as there is no way I could find my way there again on my own! After the singing, preaching and testimonies, we began to pray for each person as they came forward, for faith, healing, and new life in Jesus Christ. After, we were directed to a mother, a father and their son Roman. Roman had what looked like Cerebral Palsy. We prayed, prayed, and prayed...and healing began to take place. As the healing power of Christ filled his body, he was able to walk without the gyrations, he began to speak, and his body just relaxed in the power of the Holy Spirit. I wish I could say when we left, Roman was high-fiving his parents and friends. It wasn't like that, but he was different, as if the first stage of healing had begun. There was no doubt Jesus was on the move in that remote village where Jesus had arranged a divine appointment. On the way back from the village though-I remember questions popping into my head:

*Why us? Sent from Charleston-8,354 miles away to a village of the least, last and lost. Lord, we're just a drop of water in a desert, could we really make a difference?*

As we continued to lead more festivals, witnessing more sickness and poverty than our souls could bear, I remember feeling almost angry at God:

*"Oh, Lord, how long can so many people live in such hopelessness? How long Lord, how long?"*

It was a similar yelling out to God by one of the most ignored prophets in the Bible - Habakkuk. When was the last time you heard a homily on Habakkuk? The first thing Habakkuk says in this little 3 chapter book: HOW LONG? How long Lord will my people suffer? Habakkuk is referring to the murderous King Jehoiakim, who 600 years before Christ ruled Judah. Jehoiakim was a tyrant who used the Jews for forced labor, tortured the Prophets, and practiced open idolatry. Which leads to Habakkuk's simple 2 word prayer: HOW LONG? Don't you love the honesty of Scripture? Habakkuk tells you and me it's okay to yell out to God when you've had it!

For all who pray for an end to violence on campuses and city streets-, and see only more violence; who pray for peace in the home, only to experience estrangement; who pray for the sick to be well-, only to see more sickness...How long Lord! Have you been there? Brace yourself because God is going to answer Habakkuk with devastating clarity. God replies, okay, I will rescue you, but I'm going to do it through your enemy: the armies of BABYLON! Habakkuk's jaw drops. Babylon? That wicked kingdom led by King Nebuchadnezzar? It would be like us praying, Lord save America! Reclaim marriage, faith, and a reverence for your Holy name. Bring revival! And God saying, Yes, but I'm going to use Russia to topple your country to bring about what you prayed for. Habakkuk can't believe God's answer. How could God use a nation more wicked than his own to punish Judah? Well, the prophesy comes true. Babylon, which is

modern day Iraq, would defeat Judah in 588 B.C. God hits the reset button to prepare Judah for the coming of Jesus Christ.

And this is what I call the boomerang principle of God. The boomerang is something you throw that makes a long circular pattern away from you, but ends up coming back to you. The first boomerangs were used by Australian hunters as flying decoys, flying above the grass to flush out birds of prey, then flying BACK into the hands of the hunters. The boomerang always comes full circle, returning to the hand that throws it.

God works this way. Prophets like Habakkuk threw the prophecies of God to the people, prophecies that always returned complete. Likewise, and personally, God's plan for us might appear to make no sense, but His plan always comes back complete. Kind of like taking the Amtrak train from here to Atlanta, you literally have to go to Washington DC, first, then to Atlanta. That's often the way God works. God always fulfills his promises but in ways that transcend human expectations and time. God sends the flood to judge the earth. The angel of death destroys the first born of Egypt, that paves the way for the Exodus.

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The proof of this Boomerang love is Jesus Christ. When all seemed lost, when all people could see was the injustice, it was then that the boomerang started to return toward them in the face of Jesus Christ.

On this first Sunday of Advent, where we prepare for His birth, we recall those most miraculous words in John 1: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it! Jesus is the supreme living example of the boomerang. Yet the boomerang went way out before it came back. Yes Jesus was betrayed by Judas, died in the crucifixion, and came back to life in the resurrection to return to His Heavenly Father - mission accomplished! He brought salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And He will one day come again! Jesus the supreme boomerang.

My dear friends, in His boomerang justice, trust that God is in control of all things. Trust Him even when he seems like He's flying away from you. God is for you and not against you. Do you need to hear that today? Are you discouraged? Defeated? Anxious? God fulfills His promises, in this Advent season...let him! Matthew 11: Come to me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and *boomerang* I will refresh you.

Finally, this morning, I have to add one more dimension to this understanding of the boomerang love of God. I need you to know that you are part of His rescue plan for others, even when it might make no sense. And this requires a mind-set change for us. It requires us to see Sunday differently. Many of us look to Sunday as that time to do our personal business with God: repent, forgive, and get fed. That's true and excellent, and critical for our Christian life. But that's only half of it. Sunday is also TRAINING DAY. To train us up to be deployed for the mission on Monday into God's continued boomerang rescue plan for others! God, deploying YOU into THE boomerang rescue plan He has for your co-worker, neighbor, suffering family member, or stranger across the world!

Case in point, India a final time. Our last festival was in a place called Purulia, a city of 127 thousand people, and a 6 hour drive northwest of Calcutta. Before the festival, we gathered the church leaders into a pre-festival talk. Yet before that talk, the Lord laid on my heart to add another section to my talk that I felt some needed to hear. Jean Corbett followed my teaching and, unbeknownst to me, also heard the voice of God adding that same section to her talk! After the teachings, one of the Priests from Calcutta nearly in tears, came to Jean and said, I needed to hear what you had to say. I remember joy filling my heart, thinking, "Jesus deploying a group of St. Michaelites halfway around the world, deployed for his boomerang purpose to bring hope this man!" And that's when the words of a woman came to mind, a woman from Yugoslavia who God called to work in Calcutta. Her name was Mother Theresa, who said those unforgettable words, "God didn't call us to be successful, only faithful." Yes my friends, we live for an audience of one - God. Jesus, like the boomerang, always comes full circle to fulfill his promises in ways that transcend human expectations and time. Be encouraged today. Jesus keeps His promises! And know that he wants to deploy you as part of his divine rescue plan.