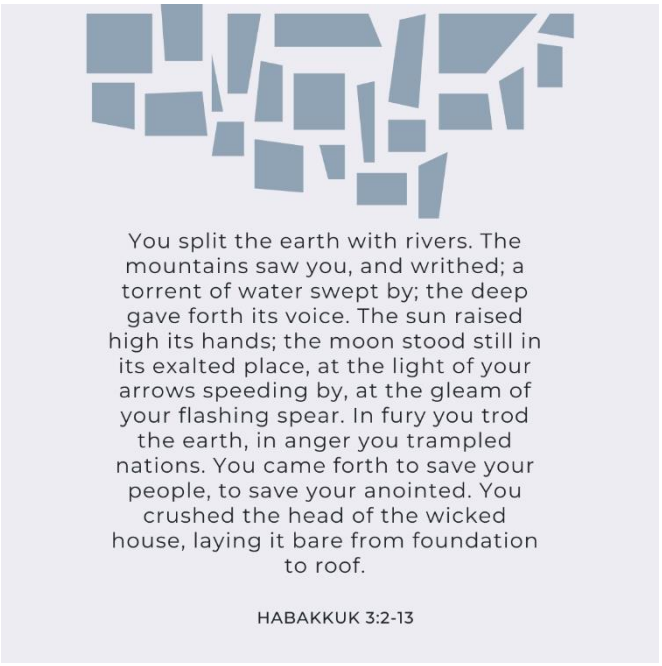
March 19, 2021 Lenten Devotional
Habakkuk 3:2-13 – “The Lord's Renown”
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O LORD, I have heard of your renown,
and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it known;
in wrath may you remember mercy.
God came from Teman,
the Holy One from Mount Paran.
Selah
His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.
The brightness was like the sun;
rays came forth from his hand,
where his power lay hidden.
Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed close behind.
He stopped and shook the earth;
he looked and made the nations tremble.
The eternal mountains were shattered;
along his ancient pathways
the everlasting hills sank low.
I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction;
the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled.
Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD?
Or your anger against the rivers,
or your rage against the sea,
when you drove your horses,
your chariots to victory?
You brandished your naked bow,
sated were the arrows at your command.
Selah
You split the earth with rivers.
The mountains saw you, and writhed;
a torrent of water swept by;
the deep gave forth its voice.
The sun raised high its hands;
the moon stood still in its exalted place,
at the light of your arrows speeding by,
at the gleam of your flashing spear.
In fury you trod the earth,
in anger you trampled nations.
You came forth to save your people,
to save your anointed.
You crushed the head of the wicked house,
laying it bare from foundation to roof.
Selah

-Hebrews 4:14-16

Reflection
So I had to do some research on Habakkuk to understand where his prayer was coming from. To catch everyone up, the entire book is a conversation between the prophet Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk is frustrated as he sees his people, the Judeans, suffering. While God does not intervene in the suffering, He responds with the assurance that it is all according to His plan. While he still may not understand, Habakkuk offers a prayer (this passage), praising and rejoicing in the Lord.

Our trials come in all shapes and sizes, personal and collective. While we may not relate to the suffering of the Judeans, a global pandemic sure has been testing us in all kinds of ways. This time last year, many of us anticipated what the "end" of this pandemic would look like, expecting an exact day or week when everything would be normal again. Habakkuk's prayer creates the image of a God at war, majestically riding chariots to victory. Likewise, we hoped for a warrior God suddenly healing the world of our tribulation. Now, we know this process has been slow, uncertain, and often disappointing.

The beautiful thing, and what Habakkuk recognizes in his prayer, is that God has already done wonderful and awesome things. My favorite piece of this passage is verse 4, "His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden." He goes on to discuss mountains and rivers, sun and moon. God's creation is a powerful reminder of His constant presence and the victory He has already won for us. I found myself outside so much more this past year, exploring trails and parks where I could keep a safe distance from others while appreciating God's work all around me.

I took a class on Outdoor Leadership in college, and our textbooks focused on this idea of "returning to nature." I learned all about the science of how being in nature lowers cortisol, the stress hormone, and balances melatonin, the sleep hormone. Nature--God's creation-- is fulfilling; it makes us happy and returns our bodies to their natural settings. I don't think it's a coincidence that in a time that often felt disappointing and frustrating, I was led outside to remember the splendor of His work. And if you struggle to remember that too, here's your sign to go get some fresh air therapy and bask in the Lord's creation. Because as Habakkuk noted, even as we face trials, God's glory covers the heavens, and his praise fills the earth.