

Be Amazed – At God’s Work . . . Hab 1:5

If not apparent already, our theme for this ministry year is – Be Amazed

From Hab 1:5 – *Look among* . . .

Chose this verse and theme for two reasons –

(1) because God is doing an amazing work right here in our own church

(2) he’s doing an amazing work around the world

So much so, that even if he told us what he’s doing, we wouldn’t believe it

I don’t want to miss *any* of it

So we’re going to spend the next several weeks looking at the various aspects of what God is doing, and has done

In fact, that’s where we’re going to start this morning – the past

Looking among the nations in the *past*, and being amazed at God’s work . . .

In History

God has been doing an amazing work since the beginning of time . . .

But some of you aren’t the least bit amazed any more because it’s become so familiar

Others of you aren’t amazed at God’s work because you don’t know about it

But the fact remains – God has done an amazing work in history

Think about God’s work in creation

God spoke, and this universe came into being – pretty amazing

It’s not just a hodge-podge of galactic goulash

It’s a finely tuned, intricately woven tapestry of beauty and wonder from the largest galaxies to the smallest atoms

That’s something to be amazed about

Or what about the flood . . .

When was the last time you were amazed at God’s work in the flood?

His power to cover the earth w/ water; Design to save a few; Promise to never do again

Or what about God’s deliverance of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt?

Plague after plague; Miracle after miracle – parting the Red Sea; cloud during the day, fire by night; providing food/water for 2 million people for 40 years in the desert

And then there’s the conquest of Canaan, the land promised to them

Taken by marching around Jericho 7 times of all the ridiculous things

You may have considered those things in the course of your Christian life

But I’m going to guess that none of you have been amazed recently at how God used a *pagan* nation to punish his *own* people, and then another pagan nation to restore them

That’s the context of Hab – **Turn to Hab 1**

The year was about 608 BC, and Hab was in despair because the people were in sin, and

God didn’t seem to care (*read 1:2-4*)

God says, no-no; It’s not how it seems . . . (read v5-6)

Describes how bad the Chaldeans are in vs 7-11

Though Hab gets it (12b), he can’t quite believe that God, with all the means available to him, would use the wicked nation of Babylon to judge/punish his own people

Sure enough, within a few years (c. 605 BC), the Babylonians attack and start taking the Israelites into captivity, eventually finishing the work and conquering the whole nation by 586 BC

You’re like, why should I be amazed at that?

Because it was part of God’s plan that he *foretold*

He foretold that he would use one sinful nation (Bab’s) to punish/judge another (Israel)

Then in Hab 2 he foretold that he would punish the Babylonians for their own sin

And foretold through the likes of Isaiah that he would restore his people to their land

Sure enough, about 160 years later in 539 BC, the Persians overthrew Bab’s, and a year after that the king began releasing the Israelites to go back to their homeland!

Resulting in the re-building of the temple and walls of Jerusalem, as we saw a few weeks back

God’s work in history is something to be amazed about

Those are just the peaks of the peaks

If it that’s all we had, we’d have enough to be amazed about for our entire lives

But it didn’t stop there

450 years later, Jesus was born, trumping every amazing work God had done up to that point; Which is why we should be amazed at God’s work . . .

In Christ

Think about it – he became one of *us*

Remember the old claymation figures (**photo**)? Crude animation before computers?

God becoming man would be like you creating a bunch of clay figures, and then

becoming one of them because they went bad

It sounds silly, but that’s how far God stooped to become one of us

That’s kind of amazing, don’t you think?

Not only that, but Jesus (God in the flesh) was conceived by the *HS* in the womb of a unmarried *virgin* . . .

Born in *Palestine* of all places – the backyard trouble spot of the entire world

Then went on to live a sinless life, die on a cross, rise again after 3 days, ascend to heaven after 40 more, waiting to one day come again and receive us unto himself

Be amazed at God’s work in Christ, will you?

Quote – one writer (Jaroslav Pelikan – Jesus Through the Centuries) put it this way

Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of western culture for almost twenty centuries.

So dominant and so influential that his birth is the focal point of history, and his life the focal point of Scripture, the Bible

Jesus himself said in John 5:39 – *it is the* [Scriptures] *that bear witness about me*

Which is why ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (Jerome, 5th century church father)

That’s why we open up to the Scriptures every single week here at Harvest

This year, we’re going to focus on the book of *Luker* – one of the 4 gospels (accounts) in the Bible, that is dedicated exclusively to the life and teachings of Jesus

In other words, we’re going to spend the entire year being amazed at God’s work in Christ

We won’t cover every single verse, but we’re going to focus on at least one passage from each chapter of Luke, each week . . .

Learning about who Jesus is, what he taught, and how it applies to our lives

As we do, I hope you’re blown out of the water; amazed – some of you all over again; others of you for the very first time – at God’s work in Christ

That's all well and good, but is God's work still going on today? Can we still be amazed at God's work . . .

In the World

The answer is an emphatic yes

A month or two ago, I gave you some statistics about God's work in the world

About the thousands of believers coming to Christ every *day* around the world

About the huge numbers of churches being established every *week*

Instead of repeating statistics, I want to give you some concrete examples of God's amazing work around the world these days

(See "Hab1.5 Be Amazed at God's Work – **Examples**")

Be amazed at God's work in history, in Christ, in the world, and . . .

In Us

In our church; I'm amazed at what God is doing among us, and hope you are too

Like how quickly we're growing

With summer behind us, we're running well over 800 and increasing fast

200 kids in CM; 50 students in each youth group; YA's are coming out the woodwork

Look at the bulletin to be amazed at the # of ministries, different kinds of ministries,

and the amazing *staff* that God has put in place

I'm amazed at the growth in our church

I'm amazed at the opp we have to get into a building (**photo**) – no small thing

The opp to get into *that* building is nothing short of miraculous

We will literally be a light on the hill – proclaiming the love of Christ to the hurting, and the lordship of Christ to the rebellious

Looking *back* 6 months, I'm amazed that we were able to *buy* it with only 625 people coming to our church

And looking *ahead* 6 months with the cost continuing to creep up, I'm not sure how we're going to *complete* it with only 825 people

But of this I *am* sure – God knows, and having provided thus far, I trust that he will bring it to completion; I rest in that; If we don't, the weight of this will crush us

And there's little doubt that when it happens, we'll be amazed

Which brings up the question – When is that?

Don't know exactly, but it looks like mid-Feb, assuming no major roadblocks

There's a lot that's starting to happen over there – heating/cooling units, ductwork, electrical wiring, plumbing, sprinklers, walls starting to go up

As we get a clearer picture on the cost, I'll let you know where we're at, what's needed, and what we need to do to make it happen

In the meantime, the most important part of all this continues to be ministry

On Sunday mornings, we're going to have to get creative with squeezing more and more people in here; and we will

So don't stop inviting your friends – we'll figure it out (use the **postcard**)

That's our growth and the opp with our building

But even more amazing is the changed lives in our church

"Pastor Rob, you always talk about this" – Ya! And I'm going to keep talking about it, because it's nothing short of miraculous (read **note**)

The number of people, and the extent to which God is changing them seems to be happening at an increasing pace; Are you seeing that?

In some situations it's so dramatic, the only applicable phrase is – Who are you and what have you done with my (spouse, student, child, brother)?

I'm thinking of . . .

Marriages that have been brought back from the brink of divorce

Students who came back from camp this summer, with a new outlook on life

Kids being led to Christ – by teachers, parents, sometimes by other kids

Adults confessing sin, seeking God's forgiveness, and turning their lives over to Christ

People being baptized – 21 just this past summer at PitP

I'm thinking of . . .

The sister to sister relationship, recently restored after 10 years of division

The man who thought he was a believer, but realized his faith was based on empty emotionalism

After being shown the truth of God's Word, repented of his sin and turned his life over to the Christ for the first time – he's a changed person

The woman in our church who just had the privilege of leading her two sisters to Christ

So many of you who have an increased passion for God, an increased sensitivity to the HS, and a growing discernment for what's best in your life

Be amazed that God is changing lives, and that he's changing so many, so much

Be amazed that this is only the beginning

Be amazed at God's work in us – a work you wouldn't believe until you see it

In You

You're never too old for God to do an amazing work in your life, and you're never too young for him to start

Never too mature or immature; Never too strong or weak

You're never too *good*; And you're never too *bad*

Whether you've been walking with the Lord for 3 years or 30, you should have much to be amazed at; If you don't, there's a problem

You either haven't grown, or you haven't been looking

If you think God would never do an amazing work in your life because of your checkered past, think again, because you're in good company

1 minute video (illustrates this truth as good as any – that your past is never too *bad* for God to do an amazing work in you)

God has been using unlikely people, in unlikely ways for centuries

People just like you and I; And he continues to do so today

Give the HS a chance to do an amazing work in your life

Plug into a DG (short-term class) and learn

Plug into a Service Team or Compassion Opp and work for Christ

Plug into a SG and grow

Before long, you'll be *amazed* at God's work in you, a work you wouldn't believe if told

