Have any of you ever read Habbakuk? Well its great, and you should, and if you like Job and all the questioning back and forth of who Job is and who God is well that's what the book is. A series of questions between God and prophet about Divine Justice and what it means for God to love us.

For context according to the USCCB “Two important events frame Habakkuk’s prophecy: the great Babylonian (Chaldean) victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish (605 B.C.) and the second Babylonian invasion of Judah (587 B.C.), which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. The desperate conditions in Judah during these years, arising from internal and external threats, provoked Habakkuk’s struggle with difficult and important theological questions about divine justice.”

And in the 3rd chapter we hear all about how God is going to and does come into the world to take on the “waters” his word for Chaos that threatens to overtake us as human beings and laying low those who choose to serve darkness rather than light.

God brings that light by powerfully elucidating the differences between love and rational order on the one hand and the chaos of obsessive control and wildly reckless and pointless actions and events on the other hand.

Afterall that is what evil is. A word which we tend to use far too loosely. People who we disagree with on differing rational points of view aren't evil, even people who do heinous things are not themselves evil but choosing in a deeply twisted way something they choose to be good. No, evil.... evil is much worse. Evil is the unexpected horror of watching loved ones die in truly unexpected ways that no one could have expected or the horror of actions that have lost any semblance of reason and have become barbaric and cruel and so destructive of goodness. Think for example of the people who experienced the bombings of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. To experience in one moment preparing your day as a doctor who will take care of a patient coming into your office and the next moment to find yourself awoken from unconsciousness and pinned under rubble after a bright light covered you in a painful sunburn while everyone outside your concrete building and every other building has been wiped out or burned beyond recognition. Evil is senseless. Evil is meaningless and it is dark. Evil masquerades as the light as Lucifer did, hiding its false promises with the appearance of worldly lights: power, honor, pleasure...

The opposite of love is not hate thought that is on its way to being the opposite of love. The opposite of love is evil which desires only to tear down and make incomplete (sometimes that is called hate sometimes despair etc.)

Love on the other hand....love is nothing like that. Love brings eternal meaning and ultimate purpose and wholeness and loving-compassion and selflessness and self-control and integrity and dignity.

And, we have all been given love if we are willing to really accept it and let go of fear of darkness and hate. As Paul tells his brother Bishop Timothy: For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.
So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,
nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.
Our purpose in this life is to enter in and accept and live out of God’s love. To respond to that love and embrace it through how it gives us peace and a path, order and a way.

Look at the stained glass windows around you for a moment: Do you think that these saints were any different than you or I? Do you think that they were less susceptible to hating or being selfish or despairing than you or I? Do you think they were more or less broken than you or I? I know I am broken by sin and let’s be honest we all are broken by sin! All of us are caught up in patterns of sin that aren’t just are own but that are passed down from our families and ancestors back to Adam and Eve. These are patterns sometimes that we do not even understand but that we know we live out of. And you know what else I know? God loves broken shards, he loves those broken pieces scattered by fear, scattered by our own fear and the fear of our own sins or the effects of other people’s sins on us. God loves our brokenness so much that he came down into the world and broke HIMSELF and made of HIMSELF a stained glass window, called the Church, out of his very body. Christ’s stained glass window is HIMSELF: the pieces are Jesus broken by sin, the lead lining flowing through and holding each piece is the Holy Spirit and the light is the Father shining through all the beauty contained within. Each saint up here is someone who just like you or I or like Habbakuk, had questions and doubted, made mistakes and even did wrong knowingly thinking it was justified. And all of those saints are standing because they are upheld by the love of God who powerfully and beautifully brought their broken and hidden edges up to the light and showed them their own beauty and goodness, and perfected and ordered them giving them the gifts of self-control by showing them the way to shine brightly by casting out there darkness and standing piece by piece, step by step in the light.

Dear brother and sisters, the way out of the evil in the world is not to hate everything, but to hate the evil by doing the exact opposite of it, to love and to love powerfully and shine brightly in the light of Christ. It is paradoxically in the Fear of the Lord, the respect for the fact that God’s light is so immensely rich and deep that He breaks our misconception that we are ok lying on the ground as broken pieces. And that can feel scary or intimidating, but while that might seem scary or painful at first, once we step into the light, we begin to see that when we follow the Lord he does marvelous things in us.

Do you think that the Saints up there in Stained Glass are proud of themselves, self-assured of their greatness as they shine on us? Or do they say exactly what the servant says to the master in that arresting passage today in the Gospel. I am an unprofitable servant. I have done only what I was commanded to do. The key here is that this servant knows that he is loving according to the pattern of someone else, that His light is not coming from him but is coming from outside of Him, that there is only one profitable servant. The pattern of God’s word can break us free from patterns of old! And thanks be to God for Jesus, because Jesus does not respond to love as a command from on high, but as obedience to His Father and Himself as God: no one forced Him or even asked him to give his life away. Jesus, God, chose to lovingly be shattered for us, so that he could build us all back up into beautiful images. What a powerful invitation to stand in the light of Christ rather than the incomplete light of the world! Dear brothers and sisters, we have whatever time we have on this earth to shine with God’s powerful light as good servants of the light, let us take every opportunity we can to stand in the light of Christ who calls us to be like a stained-glass window.