

"HAGGAI, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

November 9, 2025, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: Haggai 1:1-8; 2:6-9

Introduction.

To apply a baseball analogy to the Minor Prophets, we are rounding third and headed for home. Literally. The final three books of the Minor Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, all deal with the Israelites return to home. This is an entirely new chapter in Israel's history. The seventy year exile in Babylon is over and the people have returned to Jerusalem and Judah under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel and Joshua.

God had stirred the heart and will of the king of Babylon to attack and destroy Judah. That had been prophesied by Habakkuk and Zephaniah and in 586BC the people of God were exiled.

Before they left, they looted and ransacked everything, what they couldn't take they destroyed or burned. Nothing was left standing in Jerusalem, the king's palace, the temple of God, the walls and all the homes.

God then stirred the heart and will of another pagan king to attack and destroy Babylon. Cyrus king of Persia did so in 539BC. God also moved his heart to completely reverse international policy toward conquered nations and allow God's people to return to their homeland. A small minority of about 50,000 men seized the opportunity and returned.

But they were a small remnant, they were a lot of priests and Levites, they were poor. They found Jerusalem in shambles, completely destroyed. They would have to start completely over from nothing. There was no economy and all the national wealth was plundered. They had no king. (In fact Israel would not be self-governing again until 1948, 2500 years later).

They came home with the goal of rebuilding the temple, the symbol of God and His presence. Their excitement gave way to discouragement through the unrelenting harassment and torment from the surrounding neighbors, especially Samaritans, who didn't like the presence of the Jews back in the land. We read about that in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The temple rebuilding ground to a halt after two years of work on the foundation, they ceased their labor for the next 16 years, from 536 to 520BC.

Haggai and Zechariah, men of God's Word, to call the people to faith and faithfulness, to reorient their priorities. They are the first prophetic voices since come out of exile.

God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah to call the people to faithfulness and motivate them to resume the task. Haggai's message is a message of challenge and encouragement, of rebuke and reassurance. His entire prophecy covers a period of just four months. As a result, the temple was finished in four years and dedicated in 516BC.

Haggai 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet ...

Outline of Haggai, Four Short Sermons, each beginning with "The word of the Lord came to Haggai:

Haggai 1:1-11: First sermon, How is it that the Lord's house remains in ruins? Rebuke. September 1, 520BC.

Haggai begins this prophecy with a call to consider your ways, examine your lives, look at your priorities. How is it going for you? How is neglecting God and God's work going for you?

Haggai 1:9-11 You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of

hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. 11 And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

They had been back about twenty years, they rebuilt their homes, reestablished their businesses, replanted farmland and vineyards, yet despite all their efforts things had not gone well for them. They lived in constant frustration and discontentment. The problem is not the economy, it's God.

They came back with the goal to rebuild the temple but got discouraged and distracted and soon became focused on themselves, and the temple of God remained unfinished. The love of things can so consume us that we become distracted and disinterested in eternal things.

If you live for yourself, you will live in a constant state of discontent, insecurity, stress, anxiety and fear. Life doesn't go well when lived for the glory of man or the glory of self.

When it comes to doing God's work we will always have opposition. Satan will make it as difficult as he can. He will throw up roadblocks, he will bring along more attractive options, he will try to discourage or defeat us, to weaken our trust in God's provision.

We so easily get focused on the present and the temporal and what leads nowhere, and forget the future and the eternal and what leads to blessing.

Where is our identity? Where is our contentment? Our peace and rest? In us, in our will and ways, or in the Lord?

God sent Haggai to wake them up from their indifference and put God's work first. Make God's kingdom your highest priority. The first

commandment is to love God, to seek God and His righteousness. Without love for God we will grow selfish and self-centered.

Their sin and ours is complacency toward God and self-centeredness. If you spend your time and energy seeking comfort and security from the world, and do not spend yourself for the glory of God, every pleasure will lead to depression and guilt and frustration. Verse 8 is Haggai's remedy for frustration.

Haggai 1:8 Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and *that I may be glorified*, says the Lord.

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

We must make a practice of putting God first in all our lives, at whatever cost. Put your spiritual needs ahead of your physical and material needs and desires.

Both then and now the real problem is indifference to the glory of God. The temple of the Old Testament existed for the glory of God. And the Church today exists for the glory of God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). Indifference to the growth and spiritual prosperity of the Church and its mission is a sign of failure to love the glory of God (John Piper).

Haggai 1:12-15: The response to the first sermon, repentance and obedience. Three weeks later, September 21, 520BC

Haggai 1:12-15 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, *obeyed the voice of the Lord their God*, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. ... And *they came and worked on the house of the Lord* of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

After 18 years of neglect and frustration, and God's silence, now God speaks and it is effective, God stirs the hearts of the people to respond and within three weeks they are back on task.

This is a remarkable display of obedience, of submission to authority, of surrendering to the will of God. How often do we see this kind of response to a rebuke of sin? How often do people take a message from God to heart and respond? How quickly do we repent and change?

Haggai 2:1-9: Second sermon, How will this temple compare with the first? Courage. Four weeks later, October 21, 520BC

Just a short four weeks later the people were once again discouraged, but for a different reason.

They became discouraged again that their efforts would be too little, too small, nothing compared to the past.

When the people got done building the foundation they wept (Ezra 3:12-13) because it was so much inferior to the previous.

The older people must have discouraged the younger people. The older saints remembered Solomon's Temple, the gold, the marble, the most magnificent structure in the ancient world. How things used to be? "We came here to worship and we were inspired and filled with awe. There is no way we will ever get close to that. Where is the glory?"

God gives Haggai a vision of what is to come and what it will be like, the long view.

Haggai 2:6-9 For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. 7 And *I will shake all nations*, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. 9 *The*

latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.”

Haggai 2:9 The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.

How could there possibly be a temple of greater glory and splendor than Solomon’s Temple? The book of Hebrews was put in the NT to help us interpret and understand the OT. In Hebrews Jesus is the greater Moses, Jesus is the greater sacrifice, Jesus is the greater temple, Jesus is the greater glory. In Jesus dwells the fullness of God’s glory.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. He is the new Temple, the final Temple, the ultimate Temple. He is the foundation and the cornerstone that cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 12:26-29 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, *“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”* 27 This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

What is our long-term goal, what legacy are we building, what will survive being shaken?

Haggai says, be strong and take courage, the future is in God’s hands. The promises of God are true and trustworthy. He is with us always and will never leave us or forsake us. Take courage, be strong, trust in the Lord.

Haggai 2:10-19: Third sermon, How can blessing come to a defiled people? Two months later, December 21, 520BC

They think that their work on the temple will make them holy, that the holy place will rub off on them, but the truth is just the opposite. Their own sin is defiling the holy place.

What they are doing is unclean because they are unclean, they are living and acting in sin.

Consider how you lived before and how that didn't go well. Seek now to rebuild spiritually, for the glory of the Lord. Seek me, seek holiness, and I will be with you and I will bless you.

Haggai 2:20-23: Fourth sermon, closing words of Haggai to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah. Same day

Here is further assurance to work by faith trusting God with the big picture.

Haggai 2:23 On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel *my servant*, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a *signet ring*, for I have *chosen* you, declares the Lord of hosts.

Three terms are used by Haggai to describe Zerubbabel and they all have Messianic implications and expectations.

My servant.

This is a term or title used of Jesus in the OT, such as the Suffering Servant chapter in Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;

My Chosen One.

Zerubbabel is the chosen one of God to continue the line of David. This is another Messianic title.

He is a sign of God's faithfulness to His promise that there would always be a Son of David on the throne and from David would come a Son of David, the Messiah.

Matthew 1:12 After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of *Zerubbabel*.

A signet ring.

A signet ring was used to make a seal, an impression in wax. That seal was a sign of royal authority and power, belonging to the king.

Jesus is like a signet ring, a sign and symbol of God's presence, power and royal authority.

What He seals is final, it's secure. It cannot be revoked. No one is more secure than a person redeemed by the blood of Jesus and sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Application and conclusion.

In our day of global uncertainty, God is sovereign, His promises will be fulfilled, nothing can stop His purposes. Our hope is unshakable. As God personally chose Zerubbabel, so He chooses each of us. We are God's signet ring, His ambassador with His authority.

When God wants to do a work on earth, He does it through people, through His chosen servants, through leaders of His people, through humble saints.

He wants us to focus our priorities on Him and His kingdom, and He will take care of the cares and concerns of life. If we keep the first things first, He will see to all the rest.

The central most important thing is our relationship with God. We must earnestly strive to seek God and love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Our chief end and purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Life becomes futile if we make it all about us and getting what we want and trying to secure our future.

Haggai 1:6 sums up our generation, our culture, our Western, American consumer mentality. Yet all our feverish activity is vain, ineffective.

Haggai 1:5c-6 *Consider your ways.* 6 You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

What are you anxious about? What are you fearful or nervous or worried about? What are you preoccupied with? What do you ask for more than anything else in your prayers?

Consider your ways, give careful thought to your ways (1:5, 1:7, 2:15, 2:18). What mindless activities occupy your time and attention?

What do we love, fear, value and care about, think most about? What are our priorities, our main concerns in life? There are times that call for reexamination of priorities. “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”

Matthew 6:31-32 Do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Your Heavenly Father knows all that you need, He is perfectly able to provide and bless. Cast all your cares, all your anxieties on Him, rest in Him and in His perfect peace and provision. Trust Him and watch and wait and see what He will do.

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Make your relationship with Jesus Christ the central priority of your life. Heed the warning of Haggai and give careful thought to your ways. Make God and His glory your chief end. Make God's house and God's work foremost in your prayers, your service and your giving. Take courage, your efforts are doing much more than you can see or know.

God will take the fruit of your little labor and make it glorious, no matter how trivial or unimportant it may seem to you now.

“There is a principle here that applies to you and me: God takes small, imperfect things and builds them his glory. Take courage in our little spheres of influence! Nothing you do is a trifle if you do it in the name of God. Take courage, you build more than you see” (John Piper).

And look forward with great anticipation to the coming glory when we shall dwell in the temple of the Lord forever. The best is yet to come.