

HOPE FOR THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Pastor Lucas Almeida—Central Baptist Church—September 25th, 2022

TEXT

Haggai 2

(ESV)

[1] In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: [2] “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, [3] ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? [4] Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, [5] according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. [6] 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. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.’”

[10] On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, [11] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: [12] ‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’” The priests answered and said, “No.” [13] Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.” [14] Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean. [15] Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, [16] how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. [17] I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD. [18] Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: [19] Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”

[20] The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day

of the month, [21] “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, [22] and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. [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.”

INTRODUCTION

When were your glory days? Season would you point us back to as the greatest time of your life? Perhaps a college graduation or a recognition for a major accomplishment. Do you remember fondly some old church experience—perhaps a camp or a program? Do you miss those days? Do you sometimes wish you could go back in time and relive those experiences?

Friends, as great and glorious your past may or may not have been, the glory of the Christian life is always ahead of us. Listen to how the Apostle John explains this to us:

John 3:2—*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

The Christian faith finds hope in the knowledge that we will prevail because of God’s past faithfulness, his present blessing, and his future promises—and this is our outline for today. But before we dig into today’s text, lets just recap what we talked about last week.

So, this is the second sermon on the book of the prophet Haggai. And with this sermon we are actually concluding the whole book. Last week I said that in order for us to understand the message of Haggai, first we need to understand where Haggai is coming from. So, I said that God gave Israel a set of laws that would ensure that they would live a peace in the promise land. Then I pointed out that at the end of the book of Deuteronomy—Deuteronomy 28—God promises blessings to Israel if they kept the law, but also promises to banish them from the land if they disobeyed the law.

As you may know, Israel broke the law significantly after that. They worshiped Gods other than the one true God and practiced terrible social injustices. After centuries of patience and longsuffering, after God gave them judges, and kings, and prophets that called them to faithfulness, God kept his promises. He judged Israel by sending them into exile. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed and so was the temple. So, we saw that, no temple, no presence of God...no blessing...no sacrifices...no worship...no glory...

After 70 years of exile, a remnant of Israel was able to return to Palestine, but they come back to a city and to a temple that needed to be rebuilt, and though initially they neglected rebuilding the temple because they were too busy rebuilding their own

paneled homes, after Haggai called them to repent, they did! So they began rebuilding the house of the Lord, where Israel could be in the presence of God.

The main characters in the book of Haggai are, Haggai, the prophet, Zerubbabel, the Governor (king?), Joshua, the priest (not Joshua from the book of Joshua), The People, The Remnant of Israel. The Remnant are folks that came back from exile to rebuild the city—around 50,000 people. Not a very glorious number to rebuild a land that once had millions of inhabitants. So, the moral was low. And here is where we find ourselves today. The people are discouraged because the glory of the temple they are building pales in comparison to the temple that Solomon had built 400 years earlier. So, we are going to see that the Prophet Haggai is going to speak three oracles to the people of Israel, pointing them to find: (1) Encouragement through God's Past Faithfulness, (2) Hope through God's Present Blessing, (3) Faith Because of God's Future Promises.

1) ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS (1-9)

In verse 1 we see the date, *"In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month..."* that is October 17th. Roughly three weeks after the people repented. What does the prophet say? In verse 3 he asks the people, *"Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?"* The people are discouraged because those who had seen the former temple built by King Solomon knew that this temple did not have the same glory as the former one.

But wait a second. Three weeks later? How much building could have taken place here? How can you tell this place is going to be so horrible from a few bricks put together? Israel was defeated before the match began.

I think Israel's discouragement goes far beyond the lackluster temple they are building. Did you notice how time is recorded in this book? *"...in the second year of King Darius..."* Once Israel measured time according to its own kings, now Israel doesn't even have a king. Israel has a High Priest, but it doesn't have a temple. What is a priest without a temple? Israel has a prophet, but this prophet doesn't speak to millions like Moses one day did. This prophet speaks to a few thousand of the remnant. Remnant? The people feel like they're just "leftovers." Israel is discouraged, and rightly so.

Friends, we are not too different from Israel, aren't we? We are often discouraged, aren't we? We are discouraged because we have too much; we are discouraged because we have too little. We are discouraged because we are too busy; we are discouraged because we have nothing to do. We are discouraged because we are hungry; we are discouraged because we are too full. We are discouraged because we don't even know what we are discouraged about.

Why are we so often discouraged? Why does discouragement seem to always be at our door? For the same reason Israel was discouraged. **Discouragement comes as**

we focus on our circumstances rather than on God's faithfulness. He does not change. His will accomplish all his purposes. He never loses control of the situation. Israel! Do not look at your present circumstances for encouragement! Look to the Lord!

But how does God encourage his people? Look at **verse 2**; he says, "*Speak...*" Speak, Haggai. Prophecy! Let my words be the nourishment for my people! Friends, are you discouraged today? Listen to God's prophetic word in this very book! As we preach God's word God speaks!

But what does the prophet tell the people? Look at verse 4. He says, "*...be strong...*" He repeats it three times, just like God spoke to the old Joshua. Be strong. Be courageous. Then he calls them to, "*Work, for I am with you.*" Verse 5, "*...according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of the Egypt. My spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.*"

You know what God is doing here? He is encouraging Israel to trust in him by pointing them to old covenant language. "I promised Israel I'd be with them when I brought them out of Egypt. And I was with them, was I not?" "I promised Joshua I'd be with him as he conquered the Promised Land. And I was with him, was I not?" If they could trust me, so can you! Friends, God's track record is still impeccable. He does not promise us an easy life, but he promises us that he will be with us.

Let's continue in the text. In verses 6-7 God promises that he will shake heaven, earth, sea, and land. He will shake the nations, and they are going to bring their greatest treasures to *this* very temple. Then in **verse 8** he says, "*The silver is mine, and the gold is mine...*" The nations are simply going to bring what already belongs to the Lord of Hosts, to the Lord of the Armies. God is declaring his sovereignty.

Then he makes an astonishing statement in **verse 9**: "*The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.*" What could God mean by that?

Centuries later this temple would be refurbished by a Roman king, Herod the Great. He would invest so much in the temple that it would eclipse the glory of the former temple. The nations would bring forth their silver and their gold to the temple of YAHWEH.

But, most importantly, who walked in this second temple? Did not Jesus himself walk into the temple? This second temple saw God in the flesh! This second temple saw him in whom all the fullness of God dwelt. This second temple saw the fulfillment of the purpose of the temple, Jesus. That is surpassing glory!

Philippians 3:8—*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*

Friend, I wonder if you know Jesus today. If you know that he has died that you may live. Nothing that this world can offer you—no amazing career, no amazing relationships, no huge bank account, not family, no fame—can compare to knowing Jesus. To know Jesus is to know life. Friend, if you don't know Jesus I'd submit to you that you have not lived! If you don't know Christ, you have the illusion of life, but you don't have life at all. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that if you don't know Christ, you are dead in your trespasses and you sins. You just think you are alive. But Jesus died so that you may live. If you will renounce your sins, trust the he died to pay the price that you deserved, you will live through him. If you want to know what glory is, JESUS IS GLORY. Everything else pales in comparison.

2) HOPE THROUGH GOD'S PRESENT BLESSING (10-19)

Now we arrive at a really interesting section of the book. There is a shift here. Chapter 2 started with a word of encouragement. Now in verses 10-19 God admonishes his people. In verse 12 God tells Haggai to ask the priests, *"If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?"* Well, that's a pretty obvious question for a priest. Of course not. Things don't become consecrated by coming in contact with other things that are holy.

Now, look at verse 13: *"Then Haggai said, 'If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?'"* This is an obvious question for a priest as well. And the answer here is, "Yes." Haggai is here challenging the priests with ceremonial laws from the book of Leviticus. In ceremonial law, holiness is not transferable, but uncleanness is. He is getting them to answer really obvious questions to then "turn the mirror on them."

Haggai answers in verse 14, *"So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean."* You see, Israel wanted a temple, but Israel did not want holiness. Israel wanted to be blessed, but Israel did not want to be obedient.

Hebrews 12:14—*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

Friends, though the truth may hurt, the truth is always better than living a lie. Let this warning speak to you! Without holiness you will not see the Lord! Without holiness, heaven will not be your final address. You could be sitting here today, deceiving everyone, and amidst smiles and Christian jargons you could be walking step by step your way into hell. May that not be true of you today. Listen to Jesus' words, *"Repent and believe for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Let's continue half way through verse 15: *"Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, [16] how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty*

measures, there were but twenty.” In other words, you are trying to build this temple, but it’s not working well for you.

Look at verse 17: *“I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.”* Did you see that? The problem was not that they were inefficient! The problem is that the Lord is not blessing their work.

At this point you may be saying, “Pastor Lucas, why did you call this point, ‘God’s Present Blessing?’” This doesn’t sound like a blessing at all, does it? But look at the very last sentence of verse 19: *“But from this day on I will bless you.”* Wait, what? What do you mean? You just indicted the whole people, and we haven’t even heard a word of repentance—although I believe repentance is implied. What an abrupt shift! Shouldn’t God say, I “judge you,” instead of “I bless you?”

Friends, **God’s last word for his people is always grace.** If you are trusting in Christ God’s last word for you will always be, “I will bless you.” Doesn’t that change how we walk through hardship in life? If you are a Christian, you are always walking towards God’s blessing.

Friends, we serve a God who delights in forgiveness. The Bible says that he *“abundantly pardons.”* When the prodigal son comes back home, his father is not too busy to even notice he’s back. He is there! Waiting all along! He runs towards the son! He can’t wait to forgive his son. Friend, are you holding on to sin? Are you hiding your unclean hands from the God who sees everything? Don’t cling to sin. Cling to Christ instead. Replace the false pleasures of sin with the deep joy of belonging to Jesus Christ.

3) FAITH BECAUSE OF GOD’S FUTURE PROMISES (20-23)

The word of the Lord came to Haggai one more time. Now he is to speak to Zerubbabel, the Governor of Judah. Israel has suffered with the oppression of the nations around it, but God promises to judge the nations for oppressing his people. Look at verse 22. He says, *“I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.”* The nations will collapse because brother will turn against brother.

This is a good reminder for us, Christians. We don’t need to defend our cause. The Lord is our Justice. Perhaps we are not surrounded by wicked nations today, but we sure are certainly surrounded by a wicked society. To us, Jesus says,

John 16:33—*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Friends, we live resting in the sovereign promises of our God. And one of the greatest promises from God in this book we find in the very last verse: *“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.”*

But who is Zerubbabel? Who is this governor of Judah? This title seems too unimportant. There are kings all around, but Israel only has a governor. And what is the relevance of this *signet ring*?

You see...Israel had a phenomenal king called David. In 2 Samuel 7 God made a covenant with David, promising that the throne of David would always be occupied by one of his sons. This promise had become unclear to Israel as they went into exile in Babylon. But here, God reaffirms that one from the line of Zerubbabel—who is from the line of David—would once again rule as king. You see, the signet ring is the symbol of royalty! This ring is a reminder that God is a promise-keeping God.

This promise made to Zerubbabel was fulfilled in Jesus, the true Son of David. God said this so that Israel would remember; “I have not forgotten my covenant with you.”

Friends, God is not a forgetful God. The only thing that God forgets are the sins of the repentant sinner. He remembers his people. He knows you by name.

Are you struggling to believe this promise today? Are you tempted to despair? Let Haggai’s words encourage you not to look at your circumstances but look to the promises of God. Friend, walk by faith and not by sight.

So, when were your glory days again? Whatever glory you’ve had in this life pales in comparison to the glory you will experience if you run with endurance the race set before you today. If Jesus is your savior, friends, your glory days are still ahead of you.