

Introduction: Goodmorning everyone, let's pray. Growing up in Amarillo, every summer or school break, I would work for Dad at the small plumbing company that he owned. And after years of digging ditches, crawling into attics, and being out in the hot sun, I asked him what kept him coming back to this hard work for so many years? He said, "As a husband and father, I remember that God calls me to provide; basically I remember my calling." And in a similar way, the 2,500 year old book of Haggai is calling the people of God to remember their calling. And specifically that calling was to build God's house, the temple; that's the main theme. Now, if we are going to understand why this was such a big deal, we need to see the significance of the temple. You see, big idea of the temple was that it was the place where God would dwell with his people, they would see his glory and from there that glory would fill the earth. What many don't know is that King Solomon's temple, which Haggai wants rebuilt, was not the first temple; in fact, scholars believe that the temple was patterned after the garden of *Eden*. So, Eden functioned as this garden temple, but Adam and Eve fail to meet God's standard, and are kicked out of garden. But God promises that he will reverse the curse, and his plan to dwell with his people and his glory to fill the earth will happen!

And as we continue reading in the OT, we see that God chooses this guy named Abraham it is through his family-Israel that the temple is built in Jerusalem, and there God dwelt with his people and the nations heard about God's saving-glory! It was a like a movie trailer of the day that God would come to fully dwell with his people and fill the earth with his glory! But just like Adam and Eve, Israel turned away from God in sin, and through the Babylonian conquest in *586 B.C. they were exiled from the land and the temple was destroyed!* But remember, God promises that his plan will still happen, and 70 years later, Babylon is conquered by Persia and the king allows Israel to go back home! And part of their restoration process was their call from God to build up his house the temple! So they start off well, but 18 years later, they have abandoned construction of the temple and it lies in ruins.¹ And by abandoning the construction of the temple, the people have essentially abandoned God and his plan. So Haggai was not just calling the people back to a construction project, he was calling them back to God and his plan to dwell with his people and to fill the earth with his glory! And as God's people today, that call is for us too! In the midst of all the craziness, we need to be reminded that we are called to build God's house; that we are called to take part of his plan to dwell with his people and for his glory to fill the earth. And when we look at our text, we see that Haggai's exhortation to the people begins with time. So our big idea for this morning is this: "**Now is the time build God's house.**" And our text shows us 2 ways we embrace this truth, we consider:

- Our priorities
- Our response

¹ Special thanks to Matt Cohen and his sermon for helping me see the connection to Eden.
<https://citylightphilly.com/series/haggai-first-things-first/>

Body:

I. Consider our priorities (1:1-6)

- A. **We need to consider our priorities.** In this beginning part of Haggai's message to the leaders and members of returned exiles, we are given an in-depth look at what is going on in the minds of the people at this point in the reconstruction process. If you remember, God had brought the people back to their home from exile and called them to rebuild his temple/house. And they started out strong they built the city up and laid the foundation for the temple. But 18 years in, the text shows us that they stalled out. And in vs. 2 we see that the prevailing mindset or thought in the community was that it was not the right time to be rebuilding or build up God's house, the temple. And many scholars who studied what was going on during that time give 3 possible reasons why this a popular idea within the community.
- a. *International tension*: Other OT books state that the surrounding people groups, like the Samaritans, who had settled in the land were upset that the Jewish people had returned. So, in order to get them to leave, these people groups would do supply-raids on the community or even send complaints to the Persian king to slow down the sending of supplies!
 - b. *Economic issues*: Also, in other prophetic books, we learn that this restoration process took place during an economic recession. Because of the drought, the people couldn't produce crops to sell or eat. The residents struggled to provide food and the basic necessities for their families within the community.
 - c. *Political chaos*: During this time, there was the Persian-Egypt war, fight for political control in Persia, and the rise of King Darius. Many could have believed that there wasn't the right person in power for the rebuilding of the temple. Basically, it was like saying, "I mean, surely we can't rebuild the temple with this pagan king in power?"
- B. And listening to this tough situation, we would think that this is a valid argument. But Haggai doesn't see it that way. In a sarcastic manner, he tears apart this popular idea by pointing out that while they are saying the circumstances were not right for rebuilding God's house, they seemed to be good enough to be investing in their own houses. And you see, Haggai is not condemning the people for taking care of their families, he is condemning them prioritizing it at the expense of obedience to God. In sense, they had chosen to love themselves more than God. See, the issue the restoration process was not the circumstances, just delayed obedience. I love how theologian Micah Fries summarizes it, he says the main question that is being asked is, "whose interests were most important to them, their own or their God?"

- C. And when we think about it, how many of us are guilty of saying the same thing? "I'll get to God, Sunday morning worship, or mission when: finances are better, school is over, or when the kids are out of the house? But really, delayed obedience is a surface issue that stems from this dark lie we believe: "God is not good;" And this goes back all the way back to the garden of Eden. In Genesis 3, we see that this was the lie that the serpent told Adam and Eve; and they believed it. They turned to the idol of self and believed that their own wisdom and desires would truly lead to human flourishing. And for the last couple thousands of years, we constantly delay obedience to God's call to build his house, because we think he doesn't have our best interest in mind; and it hasn't worked out at all.
- D. But the good news is that prioritizing building of God's house, his plan, is never a mistake. Because God's plan to dwell with his people and fill the earth with his glory is really the blessing that comes from the Gospel. It's in the Gospel that we see that although our sin has broken world and separated us from God, God in his mercy sends his son to live the life we could never live, die the death we deserve and resurrect so we can be made right with him and look forward to the day when his glory fills the earth and restores all of creation. And history has shown us that it has been people who have prioritized the building of God's house, his plan, were catalysts for human flourishing. It was these people who created the first hospitals, who introduced caring for the poor and the orphan through establishing ministries like the salvation army and orphanages. It was these people who fought for education for all through introducing Sunday school and establishing the first universities. And it was these people who fought for Imago Dei in England to abolish slavery. See, prioritizing your call to build God's house, God's plan, is not just for God's glory but it's for you, your family, and the world's benefit.
- E. **Implication:** So let's just take a moment, and ask a personal question: **"Is God's call to build up his house a major priority in your life?"** Is God's plan to dwell with his people and fill the earth with his glory a priority? But this question is hard because of the "how?" How do we make building up God's house a major priority in our lives? Well, the first basic step would be to reorient your priorities to become subservient to God's call. Please hear me out, I am not saying that none of your other priorities matter (family, jobs, school, etc.), but what I am saying is that all of us in one way or another tend to put all of our time, money, and energy into other priorities at the expense of God. **So for example, for many of the professionals in this room, reorienting your career goals for the sake of God's call. For parents, this may mean having to do the hard work of reorienting your families schedules for the sake of God's call. And for students, this may mean doing the hard work of reorienting how you spend your money for the sake of God's call.** Redeemer,

the God of the universe has invited us into his plan to dwell with his people and fill the earth with his glory, it is worth prioritizing!

II. Consider your response (1:7-11)

- A. **The final way we embrace the truth that now is the time to build Gods' house, is to consider our response.** When we look at this last section, "consider your ways." In the previous verses, Haggai uses this phrase to address the people's priorities, but now employs it show the people what their response should be to God's call. And he creatively does this by presenting the consequences of the right and wrong responses. In vs. 7-8 he tells them to go and collect supplies, basically to get back to building up the temple. And the outcome of this action will be that God is pleased and glorified. Remember, the temple was the place where God would dwell with his people, they would see his glory, and that glory would be mediated out to the world. So, the collecting supplies and building weren't just mundane tasks, they had cosmic importance to them. Because they were participating in the means by which the world would know the God of the universe who is reconciling broken sinners and restoring this broken creation.
- B. But in the rest of the verses, Haggai moves on to presenting the consequences of the wrong response; basically the consequences of what they have already been doing. He says that they have been busy with building up their own homes, but it has amounted to little. They have seen little return because all of their investments have been "blown away" because of the drought that had effected their land. Haggai is showing the people that it has been their sinful idolatry of their own "houses" that have led them to place all their hope in things that can be blown away by drought! But God calling down this drought is not only discipline for their sins, but its his loving call for them to turn from these purposeless projects and to turn to his glorious call! I know that this year has been hard, but I think one of the evidences of God's grace is that he has reminded us how all the things we spend our time building up can be "blown away."
- C. But the deeper issue that Haggai is addressing is glory. In vs. 8 we see that the building up of the temple leads to God being made known; being glorified! And I really believe that we pour ourselves out building up our vocations, physical houses, achievements, etc. because we want our glory to be seen and spread out to the world; in a sense, we naturally are "glory thieves." I think the best example of this is seen in Genesis 3, what does the serpent say to Eve? You can be like God; you can have the glory. And no matter how much life shows us that we are undeserving of glory, this issue is so deep that behavioral modification won't work. Just implementing good advice doesn't change the reality that we are glory thieves. If we want lasting change, there must be a heart change.

- D. But look at the good news in our passage. Haggai's emphasis on the temple points us to something greater: Jesus. When we look at Jesus, we see God putting on flesh to dwell with us and proclaim his saving-glory to the world. And it is through his life, death, and resurrection, and action that Jesus redeems a broken people for himself, called the church, and pours out his spirit on us! It's through Christ's work, that we are transformed from glory thieves into ambassadors for his glory. So now we as the church are the means by which God's glory is seen and sent out to the world. Think about it, our local church shows and sends out God's glory through worship, proclamation of the gospel, and missions; we are a taste of what is to come! What this means, is that we build God's house by building up our local church! This means when you build up your church by serving in kids ministry, greeting, giving, or even being part of a church plant, you are doing cosmically important things. Because you are building up the means by which God's glory is seen and sent out! We are called to consider our response because what we are called to do is of eternal significance!
- E. **Implication:** Here's my last question for you: **"What would it look like for you to build up God's house?"** What would it look like for you to build up your local church? And I think that the first way we answer this question is repentance. Repentance simply is turning away from sin and turning to God. So, for those of you who would not consider yourself religious, maybe you are here because the pandemic has you thinking about what is beyond this life, the answer for you would be to confess your sin and trust in Jesus. It would be to confess how you have lived your life for yourself and submit to the Lordship of Jesus and the call to spread his glory! But for Christians, the answer for you confess the ways you live like a glory thief, and intentionally look for ways to serve your local church. **I know for me, this applied to church planting. From about 2017-2020, I was debating on what the Lord had called me to do. I knew that planting a church in Amarillo was something that he kept laying on our hearts, but I wrestled with the idea. I think the tension came from the idea I could explore other possibilities that offered more comfort, financial security, or even more certainty. But his texts like these that reminded me that although it is going to be hard, we are building up God's house, the church! We are taking part of building up the means by which God's glorious gospel will be proclaimed and will be mediated throughout the earth! Redeemer, I know that it has been a rough season, but don't wait, now is the time to build God's house!**

Conclusion:

To finish, I just want to share my hope for these next couple of weeks. My prayer is that we will see that God has given us a glorious calling. I hope that we see that Haggai is pointing us to the beautiful truth that Christ's body was broken so that we can build God's house. I hope

that we see that the Gospel is the good news that those who come with the empty hands of faith and trust in Christ, are transformed from purposeless glory-thieves into ambassadors for his glory! Redeemer, lets be a people who do cosmically important things. Lets be a people who show the world, now is the time to build God's house!