

Introduction: Good morning everyone, lets pray. One of the experiences that I will never forget is going to my first “Badger Boot camp” at Amarillo College. And I’ll never forget it because that day, I looked happy but, on the inside, I was freaking out! I think I was so anxious because as I was walking into upstairs part of the bookstore, the reality had dawned on me how hard college was going to be; how was I going to finish college when I didn’t know about filling out financial aid, who to talk to, or even if I was in the right major. But as did the walk through, the people showed us how to talk to our advisor, use the library, and even how to look for textbooks in the bookstore, I felt that tension relieve. And I believe it was because I realized that although college was going to be hard, these people were giving us everything we needed so we can succeed at college; they were empowering us to do what we needed to do! And in our passage this morning, we see God loving his people in a similar way.

Last week, we began the book of Haggai and we learned that the book was meant to remind God’s people, these returned exiles, of their call to build up the temple, God’s house. It was the place where God would dwell with this people and his glory would be sent out to fill the earth; which was his plan since the Garden of Eden. And although the people started off well, 18 years later they abandon construction, and the temple lies in ruins. So really, this was a call for the people to come back to God and to participate in his plan! And as God’s people today, we see that it is because of the greater-temple Jesus and his work, that the local church become the means by which God’s glory is seen and is sent out to fill the earth! And our call as God’s people is to build his house, the local church; we are to participate in his plan by serving in our local church! And as we read our passage today, we not only see the people respond to Haggai’s exhortation, but we also see how the people were going to succeed despite international, political, and economic chaos that they lived in. The truth that our passage tells us was that the people were going to succeed because God was going to give them everything they needed; he would empower them to build up his house! And that truth is for us too, as we embrace our call to build up the local church God’s house! So with that in mind, the big idea for this morning is this: “**God empowers his builders!**” And our passage is going to show us 3 ways God empowers his builders, us, to build his house. He empowers us through his:

- Word
- Presence
- Leaders

Body:

I. Through his Word (1:12)

- A. **The first way God empowers his builders is through his Word.** In this opening verse, we see that the community’s movement to reengage in the building of the temple began with listening to Haggai’s message. The text goes out of its way to point out that all of the community, political leadership, religious leadership, and all the residents saw Haggai’s message as God’s voice;

basically they listened to God's word. Now for us today, we see that God has chosen to reveal his Word to us no longer through prophets but in the pages of the Bible. What many people don't realize is that the Bible is not a book of fables, historical accounts, or even self-help. The Bible is God's divine, perfect, and relevant speech to his people. And it has the ability to profoundly speak into our lives and supernaturally empower us to fulfill our calling to build God's house.

- B. But if we are going to see how God's word empowers us, we need to focus in on two important words in the verse: obey and fear. The word "obey" can literally be translated as "listen," but typically referred to a listening that led to compliance to what had been said. Now, this compliance or obedience stems from this realistic depiction of reality. Basically, the Bible has the ability to answer the important life-questions that we have. The first is: "Who am I?" God's word shows us that we were created by God in his image, to have a relationship with him and to display his glory to the world. But because of our failure to meet his standard, our sin, the world has been broken and we are eternally separated from God and live in opposition to him. Think of it like a mirror, that shows us how we are living in opposition to the God of the universe. But the next word "fear," answers the question: "Who is God?" Fear doesn't refer to being in terror of God, but instead of being in awe or to worship him. God reveals to us in the word who he is. He reveals his power, perfection and justice against sin, but also his love and mercy. God's word revealed that he was making a way to reconcile sinners and creation, for Haggai's time, it was through the construction of the temple, but for us the fuller picture is through Christ's church that he established through his life, death, and resurrection!
- C. And this is so important for us. Because of the craziness and brokenness of life, we tend to become unbalanced and turn away from our calling to build God's house. We tend to lose sight of who we are or who God is. We tend to think that we are the autonomous rulers of our own destiny, completely neglecting our own limitedness or brokenness. We tend to think that God is this weak genie or that he is tyrant that doesn't care about us. But that is why the Bible is so amazing. God uses it to recalibrate our hearts to a correct understanding of our brokenness and God's power and grace. I love how 2 Timothy 3:16-17 describes this idea: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work". Think about that last part, *equipped for every good work*; basically, God's people empowered to build his house because their entire life is formed by and filtered through God's word!
- D. **Implication:** So let's apply this to our lives, here's a question: "What would it look for your life to be formed and filtered through God's Word?" What

would it look like for your life to be submerged in the truth of the Bible? I think the best way this happens is through embracing the means by which we are submerged into Scripture. For the returned exiles, it was through listening to Haggai's message. But for us, it is through preaching of the word, GC's where we dive into Scripture together, family worship, or even just committed Bible reading plan! These are all means by which our lives are saturated by God's word. I personally felt the blessing of this about three months ago. It was right when Amarillo went to level red, and I was just feeling down; thinking if the church will ever come back from this and is it even worth trying to plant a church. But I was challenged by Pastor David to get into the Bible. So I was committed to reading through a book of the Bible, and was able to read through 2 Corinthians. And it was powerful because it reminded that we are living in a world broken by sin but that God comforts with the fact that conquered death through Christ's Cross; so that everything was going to be okay. Redeemer, please be encouraged to know that you have everything you need not only to build God's house, but to live your life in the Bible!

II. Through his Presence (1:13)

- A. The next way God empowers his builders is through his presence. In this next verse, we see that the people were empowered to get back to building God's house not only through his word, but also through a promise. The promise that God gives the people is this: "I will be with you." Now, what we have to understand is that this promise has history; in a sense, we God make this promise when he calls his people to something. We see God make this promise to Moses, when he is called to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt. God makes this promise to Moses successor Joshua, when he is called to lead the people into the promise land. God makes this promise to David, as he forges God's kingdom on earth. And through the prophet Jeremiah, he makes this promise to the people as they are sent into exile. Basically, God was promising his personal guiding presence would be with the people in any situation!
- B. But when God issues this promise of his presence, it isn't just him saying that he was going to be their site manager and could answer questions if they needed it; it was more profound. The promise of God's presence was a promise of:
 - a. *Comfort*: You know, the experience of living in a foreign land as captives was probably still fresh in the minds of many of the people. And even though they were back in the land, between captivity and harshness of reconstruction, it might of felt like God had forgotten about them. But this promise was a promise of comfort; that God was near! That he sympathized with his people and that he would never abandon them!

- b. *Certainty*: In the previous verses, we saw that the people had been working so hard at earning, farming, and building up their homes and it amounted to so little. But the promise of his presence was a promise that they would succeed and make it. Not because they were so great, but just like the Lord worked on the behalf of their ancestors, he would work his glory and their ultimate good.
 - c. *Forgiveness*: The fact that God promises his presence as response to the people's repentance, is a powerful depiction of God's unfailing love for deserving sinners. This was a promise that highlighted God's consistent faithfulness and love to a consistently unfaithful and disobedient people!
- C. And truthfully, this is the good news we need to hear right now. In the midst of our brokenness, heartbreak, and idolatry, and neglect to build up the church; we need to hear that God cares about and that he doesn't push away unfaithful people. And we see this fully and most beautifully in Jesus. Jesus, who is called "Immanuel, God with us." He is God who put on flesh to dwell among us, to live the life we could never live, die the death we deserve, and resurrect so that we can be brought near to the God of comfort and that all the wrath we deserved would be poured out on him so that all God pours out on his repentant people is love and forgiveness! I love how Richard Taylor summarizes this promise, "While we stand as perpetually unfaithful, unforgiving, unloving, and ungrateful, God stands, with affection and grace, ready to usher us into His family through the redemption that is offered in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and all because of His radically sufficient grace. This statement from God that He is with them is not just a statement of presence or just a declaration of victory. It is, maybe most breathtakingly, a declaration of love. It is a message that points us forward to the message of Jesus."
- D. **Implication**: Here's another question for you: "**What would it look like for you rest in God's promise: "I am with you?"**" I think the simplest way we rest in this promise is to turn to God when we feel the tension of trying to building up the church in a broken world. When we feel the brokenness of the world or the guilt of our sin, instead of collapsing into despair or turning to the idolatry of our own houses, run to passages like these and cry out to God in prayer. **For example, when you feel heavy from what is going on in the world, you could take time to pray through Haggai 1:13, and thank God that he cares about what we are going through. When you feel guilty that you have idolized your grades, take time to pray through Haggai 1:13, and embrace the forgiveness that comes from our faithful God in Christ. Even when you sacrifice that comes from serving in the church, pray through Haggai 1:13 and ask God to help you rest in the fact that he is building his**

church! Redeemer, building up the church is hard, but please hear the promise that God gives: "I am with you."

III. Through his leaders (1:14-15)

A. **Lastly, the final way that God empowers his builders is through his leaders.**

When we look at these last verses, we see the spirit of Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and the residents of the community reengaged in construction of the temple; they reengaged in building God's house. But what we need to pay attention to the two names that are listed, because they are repeated multiple times through the book. The first name they listed was Zerubbabel, he was a descendent of King David who was basically this kingly figure; he was a representation of God's loving rule over his people. It also mentions Joshua, he was the high priest that would lead the people in worship; he would minister God's word to them and remind them of their call as God's people. You see this list highlights to us that while the residents were the main hands and feet when it came to the construction, these leaders were key pillars to the reconstruction process. God used Zerubbabel to be a means of God's loving presence through his godly leadership. He used Joshua to be means of God's word, as he led the people in worship! Basically, God used these leaders to empower the community to build.

B. You see, these men were so important not because they were helping reconstruct a country or religious symbol, but because they were shadows that pointed to a greater kingdom and person. These men pointed to Jesus! The Bible shows us that Christ is the better descendent of David who loving rules over God's people. It shows us that he is the ultimate priest that showers his people with God's word and lays himself down as the ultimate sin-offering for them! You see, Jesus is the main cornerstone or pillar of the God's house the church, and its through his work that he commissions imperfect people like us to build up on top of him as the foundation. But knowing that building up the church in a broken world is hard, Christ raises up leaders in his church to be means by which he empowers his builders with his word and presence!

C. And this is so important for us to hear because secular culture has a extremely perspective when it comes to the idea of leadership. The narrative we see today is that true freedom is the ability to have no one tell you what to do or how to live your life; that the goal of life is unlimited autonomy. But that is what makes Christianity so unique! When we submit to leadership in the church; when we follow their strategic church-plan, their requests to serve in serving teams, what they believe God has to say through the word, and even their discipline, are we are embracing leaders who's call is to shower you in God's word and to be a representation of God's loving presence through godly leadership.

D. **Implication:** So as see God empowering his power in the text, it all leads to action. So here is one last question: **“What specific area is God calling you to serve in to build up the church?”** Now, I know that this question is hard because a million other questions pop up when we think about it: “what matches with my skills?” “Where would I enjoy it best?” “Which one makes the lest amount of impact on my schedule?” But remember, God empowers through his sufficient word, his loving presence, and godly leadership. So really, you are freed to focus on “Where is the need?” **You know for me, my favorite serving team that I have ever gotten a chance to be a part of was the set-up and teardown team at my church in Philly. The church didn’t own its own building, so we had services in a Jewish synagogue. And it was so amazing to set up and teardown chairs with these people. They didn’t wait around for the “perfect” serving opportunity, they saw the need because of our building situation and they served! And because of the way they built up the church, we had a welcoming atmosphere for people to hear the glorious Gospel of Jesus, we had worship nights were sung about God’s glory, and we commissioned a church plant that took God’s glory to another part of the city! Redeemer, where is God calling you to serve; to build up his house?**

Conclusion:

To finish up, I want to encourage you. The beauty of the Gospel is that although we are separated from God, he sent his son to live the life we could never live, die the death we deserve, and resurrect so we can be brought near to God. The Gospel is not only the good news that we have been commissioned to build up the God’s house the church, but that he has provided us with everything we need. If you do not consider yourself a Christian, I encourage you to repent and trust in Christ; and know the blessing of God’s call and empowerment. If you are a believer, please be encouraged to know that the church will be built up, because God is empowering the building. Redeemer, lets be a people who respond to God’s word. Let’s be an empowered people.