

Introduction: Goodmorning everyone, lets pray. About 2 months ago, my wife and I got to celebrate our 1 year marriage anniversary. Truthfully, it was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life, I'm glad she said yes. And as we were on our way out to dinner, I was thinking, even though this was one of the best decision's I've made, this first year has been hard. Between adjusting to life in a pandemic/lockdowns, replanning our wedding, moving across the country, and adjusting to major job transitions, we poured a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, into this first year. But as we got to the restaurant, and even showed each our Facebook memories notification, we realized that although this year was hard, God had blessed us. He blessed us by keeping us safe, giving us amazing community in philly, providing an amazing new family at Redeemer, and was even sovereignly opening doors so we can replant this church in East Amarillo. So, that dinner became more than just a celebration of an event, it was a celebration of how God had blessed us this year. And as we finish the book of Haggai this morning, we see God the last message God gives his people is centered around the idea of blessing; **or basically the idea of God showing favor and love towards his people.**

For past several weeks, we looked at the book of Haggai and 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. The temple was so important because 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, this redeemed group of sinners called local church becomes 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 participate in his plan by serving and building our local church; our call is to build his house. But as we finish out the book this morning, we see that its been about 2 months since the people have gotten back to work, and life has begun to set in and the people begin to struggle with living God-centered lives; basically, they begin to struggle keeping God's call to build his house a priority. And as God's people today, we can powerfully relate to this. We can relate to struggle of being stirred by God's word, being excited to get back to building up the local church, God's house, and then life set's in and we struggle with keeping it a priority! And we see God's response to this real-life at the end of vs. 19, **"But from this day on I will bless."** God's response to his struggling people is that he will bless them! And if there is any last bits of encouragement I hope you take from this series, is that as we struggle to build up the church, to keep God and his call at the center of our lives, he promises to bless his builders as build his house! And that is going to be last big idea: **"God blesses his builders."**¹ And see how God blesses his builders as they build up the local church by reflecting on 3 things:

- Past

¹ Special thanks to Pastor Matt Cohen for helping me see the "present" aspect of Haggai's prophecy. https://citylightphilly.com/?powerpress_pinw=5777-podcast

- Present
- Future

Body:

I. Past (2:10-17)

- A. God blesses his builders in the past. In these opening verses, we see God move Haggai to have conversation with the priests or the religious leaders of the temple over the topic of OT cleanliness laws. You see, in the OT, there things that were put into the category of Holy; which meant they were set aside for use in the temple and could be near God. And then there things were categorized as unclean; which meant that they needed to be cast out because they could not be near God. And so in this conversation, Haggai asks if something categorized as “holy” touched something unclean, would it become clean? The answer was no. But then he goes on to ask if something that is unclean touches something that is holy, does it become unclean? And the answer was: yes. **Think of it this way, if you put a drop of water into a bottle of motor oil, does it cleanse it and make it drinkable? No. But if you put a drop of oil into a bottle of water, does that drop make it undrinkable? Yes.**² Basically, the conversation was meant to highlight that it is way easier to become unclean and unfit to be in God’s presence than it is to become holy.
- B. And the whole reason why God brings this topic up is because he wanted to show the people that this was their state before the rebuilding of the temple. The rest of the verses show us that although the people were following the religious practices, it was all empty because the temple lied in ruins. In a sense, Haggai wanted the people to see that their worship was useless because they offered it in the midst of dead corpse; the ruins of the temple. Basically, their disobedience had corrupted their worship. And the text tells us that all the hardship that the people experienced, was actually God’s loving discipline in trying to call them out their sins and to the building of the temple; back to him! He was showing them the pointlessness of idolizing their houses; pointless of seeking blessing while ignoring the Blesser. Because no matter how much effort they put toward their houses, it wouldn’t fix the fact that they were unclean and under God’s judgment.
- C. And maybe, as we read these verses, some of you are realizing that its is an exact description of your past. As we read this, maybe some of you can remember your life before Jesus had saved you and reconciled you to God. You can remember the pointlessness and brokenness of trying to build your own kingdom and earn your own righteousness. Or maybe for some of you, we read these verses and you think about how you recently spent so much time building up your vocation, physical house, accomplishments at expense

² Thanks again to Matt Cohen for highlighting a helpful illustration.

of God's house. And you see how God used things like the pandemic to show you how those things can be taken away and how utterly pointless it was to put these endeavors at the center of your life. I want to encourage you that what you are feeling is not a bad thing but God's blessing. And we see how this is the case by focusing on the phrase "consider from this day"; which basically means to reflect on or think about. God wanted his people to be remembering the pointlessness and emptiness of their lives when they neglected the temple. He wanted them to do this so that they would never go back to it! And as we build the temple, God blesses us challenging us to reflect on the emptiness and hopelessness of the past he saved us from so that we don't go back to it!

- D. **Implication:** So let me ask you a personal question: "What would it look like for you to avoid past fruitlessness and embrace the blessing of building up the church?" What would it look like for you to not just seek blessing, but God the Blesser?" Well, I think the best way we can do this is by following the passage, and practicing remembering what God has done in our lives and the hopelessness he has brought us out of! This type of biblical reflection allows us to avoid wanting to return to our fruitless pasts at the expense of our call to build God's house. So for example, when we are tempted put our call to build up the church on the backburner for our jobs, remember and thank God for pulling us out the pointlessness and slavery of living for vocations that can be taken like that. When we are tempted to "get to God" when it is more convenient for you, remember and thank God for how he saved you from living for the emptiness of comfort. Or even, when you are tempted to neglect your call to build up the church so that you can gain the approval of a particular person or group of people, remember and thank God for how he saved you from the brokenness of living for affirmation from people. Redeemer, building up the church is hard, but God has saved us from the brokenness of our sin so we can have this blessing; remember that!

II. Present (2:18-19)

- A. And as we move on in the passage, we see the second way God bless his builders is by reflecting on the present. In these verses, we see God use that important phrase again "consider from this day"; basically reflect on or think about. He is challenging them to reflect on their present situation. Presently, although they had gotten back to building the temple; they had repented to returned to God, their circumstances had not changed. They still building up God' house during a drought and economic recession. But God even in the midst of middle of their hardship, God promises to respond to their repentance and faithfulness with blessing. And what we have to understand is that this promise of blessing goes beyond God promising them that their crops would grow and that the economy would get better. Since blessing is

God showing favor and love to his people, it was a promise that they would no longer be separated from him, but would be reconciled to him.

- B. And as God's people today who are called to build up the church, these verses encourage us in 2 ways. First, for those who have put their faith in Christ, despite of our circumstances, we are blessed to know that God is still working for his glory and for our benefit. Although our sin has separated us from God and broke the world; and put us under judgment. God in his love, sent Christ 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 he makes all things new. And this hope assures us that if God can work for his glory and our benefit in the worse of circumstances, he can work now! That means although you may not feel like it, God is shaping you into the image of his son. Even though you may not have seen it, God was using the local church for his glory during the pandemic. And even though you may feel like a horrible Christian, God still invites you build up his church; to build up his house where his glory is seen and sent out in the world!
- C. Secondly, another encouragement we see is that although God's church is not perfect and we are called to build it in a broken world, God uses the church to bless his struggling builders. And what is so unique about this idea is that these amazing blessings God gives us are things we naturally tend to overlook. God uses the local church to provide us with GC's where we are able to study God's word, encourage each other with the Gospel, and bear each other's burdens. God uses the local church to provide a Sunday Morning Gathering where we immerse ourselves into the good news of the Gospel through preaching, singing, and sacraments. And God uses the local church to raise up leaders, pastors, elders who are called to shower us, our youth, and our kids in the Word and point us to God himself! Redeemer, I know that building God's house is hard, but he has truly blessed us more than we can imagine!
- D. **Implication:** So here's another question: "What blessing has God given you through the church that you need to thank him for?" Now, what makes this question difficult is the "how?" Many of us might say, "I can think of million ways God has used his house to bless me, but how do I thank him?" Well, the simplest way we can thank him is by implementing a practice called thanksgiving within our prayer lives. Thanksgiving is simply the practice of setting aside time to thank God for what he has blessed us with in Christ Jesus. So for example, after a great night of fellowship and study at GC, take a moment to thank God using the church to bless you with an awesome GC. When you are with your families, take time to pray and thank God that he has provided Gospel-centered generational ministries that are immersing your entire family in the Gospel. Even, in your own personal prayer rhythms, take time to thank God for bringing you to a place that constantly points you to his

grace and glory. Haggai is ending his book by showing us that our call is to build God's church; to take part of his plan to dwell with his people and for his glory to be sent out; and its not a burden but one of our biggest blessings!

III. Future (2:20-23)

- A. And as we finish out our passage, we see God bless his builders by reflecting on the future. In these last verses, we see God tell Haggai to specifically speak to Zerubbabel, the governor. But if we are going to understand what is being said, we need to focus in on that word we saw last week, "shake." Last week, we learned that the word shake is used to highlight God's sovereign power over the entire universe! And it seems that God is promising to move within the cosmos to dethrone all the nations of the world, and make Zerubbabel like a signet ring; which was a sign of divine authority. Basically God is telling Zerubbabel that he is going to keep his promise to his ancestor King David, to have a king from David's family rule over God's people and he will powerfully move in the cosmos to do it. And in other prophetic books of the OT, we read this it will be through the Davidic messiah-king that God's people will be made right with God! See, what we are reading here is that not only will Zerubbabel lead God's people in rebuilding the temple, he will in fact be divinely enthroned as king and reconcile God's people back to God!
- B. And while this is an awesome promise, after these verses, Zerubbabel fades into obscurity; he dies as a puppet-governor for the Persians and we never see him as king. The only other time we hear about him is in Matthew 1:12-16, it says "And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ." What I hope you see is that all the promises mentioned earlier are fulfilled in the true and better Zerubbabel Jesus! It is through his life, death, and resurrection that not only he makes us right with God but is enthroned as king. We read that when he was crucified the world was shaken, that was because on that day Jesus conquered the kingdom Satan, sin, and death and was enthroned as the king who rules over all and who is coming back!
- C. And even though Jesus is coming back, this future blesses us now! What is so encouraging is that this king, Jesus, is the foundation of the church; he is what the Bible calls the chief cornerstone of the church. The reason why our work in building up the church is not for nothing is because we are building up the place that introduces people to the one who makes the unclean acceptable before God, who heals people of their greatest disease sin, and who the peace and justice that this world is looking for. Like the sign says outside, "its all

about Jesus.” You might be tired, frustrated, or weighed with shame as you think about building up the church, but please know not even our circumstances, our imperfection, or even the gates of hell themselves can cause what we are called to do cannot fail. Nothing will stop the building of the church because it is founded on the one who conquered death!

- D. **Implication:** So, just looking back on our time in Haggai, I have some final encouragements I want give you. First, if you are not a Christian, my encouragement to you is to repent and put your faith in Christ Jesus. It is to confess the ways you have rejected Christ has king, and believe that it is only through his work that you can be made right with God. Lastly, for those of you who would consider themselves Christian, the way you would answer this is by not just be to build God’s house, but to joyfully build God’s house. Hear me out, I am not saying that you don’t have to be honest and act happy when things are not great. It would be to rest steadfast joy that comes from the fact that the church is built upon Jesus, and to joyfully continue serving and building up the local church! **One of the best examples that I have seen of this is the church that we are going to be replanting on the eastside called Emmanuel. The church is small but it is filled with people who faithfully serve and build God’s house; even to the point where they have said “we know that replanting is hard work, but we want to show God’s glory and for it be seen in Amarillo.” And that is what makes me excited, not that they are perfect, but that they know that building God’s house is worth it because it is founded on king Jesus! Redeemer, we are called to something that cannot fail, let’s embrace the blessing of building up the church!**

Conclusion:

To finish, I just want to remind us of the core truth of what have been studying for the past few weeks. Haggai’s call to build God’s house was a call to participate in his plan to dwell with his people and to send his glory out into the world. As God’s people today, that is our call too! And it is so glorious because it is all founded upon Jesus. That is the beauty of the Gospel; although our sin broke the world and separated us from God, through Christ’s life, death, resurrection, we are made right with God and we are assured that although the temple was destroyed the church will never be destroyed because it is founded on the one who conquered sin and death! So, as you build up the local church by placing your faith in Christ, discipling your families, and serving, please know you are doing something of cosmic importance! Redeemer, lets be a people who do cosmically important things. Let’s be a people, who build God’s house!