

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Psalm 73 begins as a Psalm of repentance and frustration. The writer has been observing how the wicked prosper. And they wished for, desired that prosperity. It begins;

- 1 Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
2 But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
3 For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
- 21 Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.
22 I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
23 Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.
24 You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on earth.
26 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.
- 28 But as for me, how good it is to be near God!
I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

Indescribable, uncontainable
All powerful, untameable
Awestruck, we fall to our knees
As we humbly proclaim
God, You are amazing.

Incomparable, unchangeable
You see the depths of my heart
And You love me the same
You are amazing, God
You are amazing, God

Father thank you for this time to gather to worship. Holy Spirit, please speak to us, make this time real and worthwhile, we ask in Jesus mighty name, Amen.

Message - Therefore...

Haggai is a call to a daily determination to live in response to the grace of God.

Palmerston North has the flashiest buses of any centre in New Zealand. From what I've seen. They are new, they're the right size, and they're electric. And they look good. Soon we'll be seeing them in Feilding too. But, there is a problem. If you see them buzzing around the city, the only humans on board are the drivers.

Something is wrong. Why are people not motivated to get on board?

Motivation boils down to two things; can I do it, and is it worthwhile. I would argue that people just don't find the buses worthwhile. I'm sure they can ride. So how will Horizons Regional Council, while they exist, make it worthwhile for people? What will they have to change?

It's not too different to the Bible's book of Haggai. Today we look at the last verses of this two page, two chapter book. As we've read through, and looked at some of the history associated with this time, we know that the setting is Jerusalem. We know that 90 years earlier the Babylonians came to Judah and after an 18 month siege, ransacked the city and temple, took the best of the people, and completely destroyed the city. Then burnt the remains.

We know that the Babylonians sat back, and rested in the security of their riches. And while they were doing that, the Persian empire grew, and attacked, and took over the Babylonian empire. We know that the Persians had a very different philosophy to the Babylonians. They preferred to leave the people in their conquered lands, in their own lands. They knew that these people were happier, more motivated, and more productive in lands familiar to them. And this increased productivity was greatly to the advantage of the Persians. Why? They could reap more tax!

So after 70 or so years in Babylon, the people of Judah and Israel are sent home. And we read in Nehemiah how they built the walls of the city, and in Ezra how they began rebuilding the temple. But opposition arose with the rebuild of the temple. As happens with the rebuilds of Cathedrals in New Zealand, think Christchurch, but not France, Notre Dame. Almost one billion Euros were pledged by global donors for the rebuild of that temple/cathedral (€825 million). An aside.

In Jerusalem the people in the surrounding provinces strongly opposed the rebuilding of the temple. And used discouragement as a weapon. And it worked. And for nearly 20 years, the temple site sat, in ruins.

And then God spoke through the prophet Haggai, to the high priest, and the governor, asking why the people are saying it is not yet time to build. God noticed that the people were happily building their own homes. In fact, I believe it's fair to say, they had forgotten God. And here is the first interesting thing in Haggai; God hadn't forgotten them.

At the end of chapter one, the rebuild was underway again. And then last week we read of a time to come when the glory of a new temple will vastly outweigh the glory of what they are starting to work on. It points to a time when Jesus - the Messiah, will come.

So to verse ten of chapter two, that begins with an interesting date, the 24th day of the ninth month, three months after the start of the work. Hmmm, here is a hint, with the multiples of six, that something isn't quite right. Let's read.

Haggai 2:10-23 New International Version - UK
Blessings for a defiled people

10 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai: 11 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Ask the priests what the law says: 12 if someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?"'

The priests answered, 'No.'

13 Then Haggai said, 'If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?'

'Yes,' the priests replied, 'it becomes defiled.'

14 Then Haggai said, “So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,” declares the Lord. “Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

15 “Now give careful thought to this from this day on[a] - consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord’s temple. 16 When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. 17 I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,” declares the Lord. 18 “From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid. Give careful thought: 19 is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig-tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit.

“From this day on I will bless you.”

Zerubbabel the Lord’s signet ring

20 The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: 21 ‘Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. 22 I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.

23 “On that day,” declares the Lord Almighty, “I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,” declares the Lord, “and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,” declares the Lord Almighty.’

Footnotes

Haggai 2:15 Or to the days past

There’s another thing about motivation that comes into play here, that’s intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is what comes from within. It’s our own personal drive. Intrinsic motivation gets us out of bed, and out into the rain on our bikes, or into our running shoes, and out into the rain. Extrinsic motivation is mum, or dad, or wife, telling us to get out of bed and off to school, or work.

This is the issue that verse 11 is pointing at. What is clean and unclean, consecrated and defiled. The meat in the fold of clothing seems strange to us. We understand it better with virus’. If we’re healthy, do we make the sick healthy? No. If we’re crook, do we make the healthy crook? Yes we do. Then, like now, unclean or defiled people were to be isolated from the community. Sometimes they even had to walk down the street calling out “Unclean, unclean.” Imagine people running!

Here, in these verses it wasn’t the meat that was the problem, the people were, they were unclean, and everything they were touching was becoming contaminated. And God did not want the temple contaminated. So the people were being told to clean up their acts! God is saying, don’t chuck your muck in my backyard. Sort your backyards out!

And whose responsibility was it to make sure the people were clean? The priests. While they knew the answers to the v12 questions, they had failed in their role. They had lost sight of God’s guidelines. But before we point the finger at the priests, consider the responsibility of the people. The priests could only motivate, like me, extrinsically. The people needed to be motivated from within, to take on board God’s ways.

And we know that these people hadn’t taken on board God’s ways, for the temple had sat in ruins for all those years while the people concerned themselves about themselves. The state of their hearts was related to the state of the temple! It was in ruins and needed rebuilding.

So we get to v15, and what does it say, ‘Now give careful thought...’ Here we are reminded of chapter one, verses 5 and 8, ‘Give careful thought to your ways.’ Or ‘Consider your ways’ in other translations.

Word study (of the Hebrew for consider) shows that this is saying - become intelligent! May your heart become intelligent - from this day on. Consider your future! Oh, that motivates me to consider!

God then reminds the people in v17, of the poor returns they were experiencing from their crops. It is fair staggering to me that these people were suffering from wind and mildew and hail, their returns were down, but they never thought to return to God. Usually in the hard and desperate times, God is where people turn. But not here, they've completely forgotten. And they need some extrinsic motivation, need to be told what to do. It's ridiculous. They should have known.

Yet, what does this rejected God do? Yes, sends scorching wind, mildew and hail to get their attention. But that's not the end of the story. See v19. Before the people had done anything, before the temple was completed, before the code of compliance could be signed off, before the people got their hearts right with God, God says what? From this day on, I will bless you!

What is this? This is so wrong! It's all back to front! Surely we are only blessed after we've done something to deserve it. No, here, before the people deserved it, God says, from this day on, I will bless you. What is this grace? I thought this was the Old Testament! But here is exactly the setting that Jesus came into. Before we were ready, before we had done anything to deserve favour, Jesus came, to die for us, to give us life. Because by dying and rising again, Jesus broke the powers of evil. Here is v22, after shaking the heavens and the earth, God will overthrow thrones, and destroy the power of kingdoms. Significantly for us, the power of the kingdom of darkness that held the power of death.

Look at what God has done for us! How will we be motivated? Will we be motivated by Sunday's preaching? Yes, hopefully. But how much more is it important to be motivated from within, by personal conviction because of what Jesus has done, and will do.

Finally, look at the last verse. Who is honoured here? Not Haggai. Surprising. Who would you expect? Surely Joshua the high priest. But no, it's Zerubbabel the governor. He has been found faithful. He has been found to be intrinsically motivated. He is the one that appears in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1. Matthew 1:12-13 (NLT)

12 After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.

Zerubbabel is honoured. Ezra 6:15 tells us that four years later the temple was completed, in the sixth year of Darius. The people stuck with it. They overcame.

So is that it? That's Haggai done. What will motivate us to ever look at Haggai again? Can we do it? Is it worthwhile? Haggai is a call to a daily determination to live in response to the grace of God. That's a good reason to turn back here again, and ponder this hard to find book.

Let's take some time to pause, and consider our faith, and our direction, from this day forward.

[Benediction](#)

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable to you our God.

And may we be motivated from within, to faithfully follow Jesus this week.

We go to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Jesus, Amen.