

Haggai 2:1-9
Feilding Baptist
11.1.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Welcome to Kelvyn, from Whanganui East.

With us looking at Haggai, the building of the temple, these verses sound like what might be read at a rededication;

Psalm 24:7-10 (NIV - UK)

7 Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is he, this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty -
he is the King of glory.

Father God, thank you for this time to gather. Thank you for a positive start to the year. Thank you for this time to reset, and think ahead. Thank you for these verses, the image of building, of inviting Jesus in. As we share in singing, in praying, in listening, may we open our hearts and minds to Jesus. Holy Spirit, please speak to us this morning. Please bless this time and this space, in Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Message - Countering Despondency/Even Greater

Here is the counter to sitting back in despondency and doing nothing, God calls us to 'get on with it' - in our case, that's to be like Jesus.

As we read today's verses, that we believe was October 20 520BC, seven weeks after the first prophecy, as we read, try to imagine being one of the people back then, 2500 years ago, and recognise how they would have been feeling. Look for a sense of despondency. Let's read;

Haggai 2:1-9 (NIV - UK)

In the second year of King Darius, 1 on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: 2 'Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 3 "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? 4 But now be strong, Zerubbabel," declares the Lord. "Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land," declares the Lord, "and work. For I am with you," declares the Lord Almighty. 5 "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear."

6 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come,

and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord Almighty. 8 “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the Lord Almighty. 9 “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,” says the Lord Almighty. “And in this place I will grant peace,” declares the Lord Almighty.’

Footnotes

Haggai 2:2 Hebrew Jehozadak, a variant of Jozadak; also in verse 4

v1-6 Not Good Enough

Immediately we’re back in to these dates, [In the second year of King Darius, 1 on the twenty-first day of the seventh month](#). The children’s version, and some English translations have calculated the dates, so we know when it was. But that misses an important point. Go back to verse one of chapter one, and we see that the word of the Lord came through Haggai on the first day of the sixth month. Now for those who like to notice when the perfect number seven pops up, to see six, one short, not quite good enough, should grab our attention. What was imperfect at the start of chapter 1?

Indeed here, the people were off track, ignoring God, going about their own business, in their own busyness, without involving God in their lives. As could be seen in the rebuilding of the temple. They had stopped. Ignored it. Forgot. So God withheld the rain to grab their attention.

And we know that things are on the improve, because when we get to v15 in chapter one, the work began on the temple on the 24th day of the sixth month - do you get it? It’s three and a half weeks, half of seven, but still in the sixth month. There’s some progress, but they are not there yet. And they shouldn’t be, they’re just starting the building.

So we get to chapter two, and what do we have here, not October 17, great month that it is, October 17 misses the point, it the 21st day of the seventh month! All is well, God is happy with how things are. There is a distinct change here in the flavour of the message, the word from the Lord. We are to read these verses with hope, the correction from God was last chapter. We can expect these verses to be good news!

But how are the people feeling? They’re despondent, depressed. They feel like nothing they are doing is good enough. Gosh, we can relate to that!

God, through Haggai, verse 2, addresses not just the high priest and the governor, but this time also the people. This is a good sign! And look at the three questions God asks of the people - firstly, who saw the former house in all its glory?

What about here? Who saw our old building that went up to Waiata in 1990?

Well, just like in Haggai’s time, the only people who could remember were very old! For it was 586/7BC when the temple was destroyed, and now it is 520BC - did anyone live that long? Possibly, but probably not. So the question God is really asking, who has heard of how the temple was? Oh, they would have. Because it had been impressive. This was Solomon’s temple, where no expense had been spared. In fact, it was so lavish, it was pillaged several times and was still impressive, still had things for the Babylonians to pinch. This temple had been a source of great pride.

How does it look to you now, asks God, the second question. You can imagine heads dropping in embarrassment. Most likely the charred remains of the foundations had been used again. Fresh timber had been brought in, but it wasn’t the gorgeous imported timber that Solomon had arranged. This building was nowhere near the standard or the glory of Solomons. It wasn’t hard to admit, that

this really wasn't good enough, close to embarrassing. And a good job my grandparents weren't here to see this.

Which is the point of God's third question, a question of compassion - does it not seem to you like nothing? And the answer is yes! Because we read in Ezra 3:12 - when they older people saw the start of the building, they wept, for it was going to be nothing in comparison to Solomon's.

God's loving response to the people, who have done their best, who have done what they have done without the backing of Solomon and his wealth, is, v4, to be strong, to be courageous in other translations, to remember, that I am with you! And to keep going.

Remember the covenant God says v5, I promised to be with you. You have been faithful, and I am pleased with you, my Spirit is with you. You have no reason to fear. God lifts them from their despondency, encouraging them, and reminding them of the favour of God.

The hearts of the people have turned, they've turned to God, and God's mercy and grace and love embraces them with compassion and respect and honour. God is pleased with these people. It is our hearts that God wants turned to Him, not a lavish building.

We must be careful to keep looking to grow in our likeness to Jesus. It's not all about our building. We have the opposite situation, in that what we have now is way better than it was before. Let's not rest in pride. Let's keep desiring God's promises, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and keep pondering what matters most. And let's be bold, not fearful.

In the context of Haggai, and when we're despondent, verse 5 is a great verse to hold onto, reminding us of God's promises;

5 "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear."

v6-9 Beyond imagination

We've reached a high point in this short book. These next four verses tell of a future that will be beyond imagination. To start with, v6 and 7, there is to be a shaking that will be beyond imagination. The heavens, earth, sea, dry land and nations will be shaken. This is no earthquake. This is some event of cosmic proportions. It's as big as creation when God said, "let there be..."

This is a time when God will act dramatically and directly to reorder the world. And the result will see a greater glory that even Solomon's temple ever had. This future work is the centre of a new world order (Pettersen, 69). A dramatic transformation was on the way.

What cosmic event could this be? What would be an event that is even greater than a worldwide earthquake? What event could shake the earth, and the sea, the bastion of evil, the heavens, and the nations? What event could bring water to the dry ground? Something as powerful as light coming into the world. What could this be?

Whatever this is, it will fill God's house with glory. What could possibly fill God's house with glory? All the silver and the gold of the world? No, glory here is a term for God's presence. It's a good thing.

Glory, the presence of God is certainly a theme here. The presence of God is going to be where, v7 will fill this house. And v9, the glory of this new house will be greater than the former. Now, the NIV

suggests this will be the present house, Zerubbabel's temple, where others suggests something still to come, whichever it is, the glory, the presence of God will be greater than Solomon's temple that the people were missing.

Hang about! Greater than Solomon's temple?!!! This is going to be quite some house! This is never going to be Zerubbabel's temple. It's not even going to be Herod's temple. This is something far more magnificent!

The presence of God, the glory of God was coming all right, five hundred years later in the person of Jesus. Jesus was more magnificent than all the silver and gold in the world. The coming of Jesus shook the world like nothing ever had before, and never will again. And yes, see v9, in this cataclysmic event, there will not be tragedy, not crisis, not crying mourning or pain, but, see v9, peace. Who is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7)? Jesus.

Indeed; John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Surely, surely, the people who were disheartened by their efforts, who could see that this temple wasn't a patch on the old one, would have been encouraged, excited, and relieved that God wasn't condemning their efforts, that actually, what they were doing, was okay, and part of the plan.

So what about us? What are these nine magnificent verses to us?

I hope it draws us back to think about that image from last week, the Jacobs River church, the church without walls. I hope it causes us to ponder, what matters most? For faith isn't in our church buildings, it is no longer about the presence of God in a sanctuary. Our faith is to be about Jesus, modelling Jesus, responding to each other, and to the world, in the way Jesus would. Because God's presence, through the Holy Spirit, is in us.

So, how will we be to those who are struggling? How will we be to those whose lives have been turned upside down? How will we be God's glory to the world this week?

Benediction~ adapted from a prayer by Christine Sine

Come and see!

The light of God has come into our world
to proclaim God's justice and love;
Jesus has overcome the darkness and brought new life.

Come and follow!

Jesus our companion has redeemed our world
He draws us into a loving family
From every tribe and family and culture.

Go and tell!

The Spirit has equipped us for service
To love our neighbours as we do ourselves
To bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Come and see, come and follow, go and tell!

In God is our life, and hope.

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord, Amen.