

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

Haggai 2:1-9
THE GLORY OF HIS HOUSE !

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the Word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying: Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying—

Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work; for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you: Do not fear!

For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come [to] the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, says the Lord of hosts.

Imagine that this afternoon, the furnaces in the church leaked gas into the building for several hours and then suddenly the gas ignited from the timer for the lighted cross in the balcony window. Imagine the explosion was so great that not one brick was left upon another. Total destruction--our very precious and attractive church gone. Now what? I don't know what the insurance coverage is, but let's say that the payout was only half the cost to re-build the church as it was. Even with special donations, still not enough to build an identical church. We would make some changes, wouldn't we, to reduce the cost. Likely a smaller building, a lower roof, eliminate the balcony, eliminate the exterior brick, etc. We would indeed be thankful for a new church building, but we would easily see that it did not equal the glory of the former building. Bittersweet.

That's the situation in our text for today from the Old Testament prophet Haggai. The Lord had sent King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem the capital city, to destroy the great and glorious Temple that King Solomon had built using huge stones quarried from Lebanon and giant fir trees hewn from Lebanon, much of the interior overlaid and furnished with gold, silver, and bronze. Nebuchadnezzar took the inhabitants into exile as captives in Babylon. It happened because of their faithlessness to the Lord and the Lord's promise of the Savior from sin. They continually loved to follow other gods.

This captivity in Babylon lasted 70 years. When King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon, he allowed the Jews who so wished to return home to the land of Judah, to rebuild Jerusalem, their houses, and the Temple of the Lord. New temple foundations were laid in short order, but interest soon waned. The people were interfered with by other neighboring groups, the people were busy with their own houses relegating the House of the Lord to the back burner, the people didn't think the time and funds they had were right, the people didn't give the Lord number One priority. Sound at all familiar? Feel at all familiar to your service to the Lord at times? More than 15 years passed. The Lord sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to get the people going and the project underway again.

The Lord's Spirit worked through the message of Haggai. Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the religious leader and high priest, were stirred to action. The people began rebuilding. But God knew their hearts. How easy it would be for them to get discouraged and slack off again, especially when it would be so obvious that the new Temple would not at all compare with the old. *Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?* It lacked the glory. ---
----- But now for you, whether it would be rebuilding St. Luke's church or some other matter in life, do you ever feel that way? "If it's not the best, I don't want it—clothes, furniture, vehicle." Hopefully speaking, maybe you are not **that** high-society that it has to be the best. But maybe it's simply, "If it doesn't meet my standards, I don't want it." Sometimes God teaches us, forces us, to put our standards aside, and be content with what He knows is right for us, whether **we** think so or not. *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Haggai said, *Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work; for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you: Do not fear! Don't be so easily defeated, be strong in the Lord, He is with you! Go forward. Do your work as you live for Him. God had brought the Jews out of Egypt 900 years earlier when they were but slaves. He brought them out then and now by His mighty power. He says, I am with you. Do not fear!*

Those same words apply to you. Whether it's rebuilding St. Luke's after an explosion, whether it's laboring in service to this church right now, or whether it's living day-to-day life. The Lord is Number One priority, He is with you! He sees you inside and out and knows how quickly you become discouraged with health, with life, with family, with sinners, with sinners inside and outside of St. Luke's, just because it doesn't suit you and your standards. Yet He is with you, the One to whom you can turn with hearts of repentance, humbly asking His merciful pardon for another day of sin. He is the one who sweeps away your stains, giving you purity and acceptableness in Jesus His Son, your Savior-- white as snow! Don't be discouraged, do not fear.

For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, says the Lord of hosts.

The Lord says, don't worry about the physical glory and external beauty of the House. Be aware, the Lord isn't saying, Sure, **slop** along with church. As if, that's good enough for the church. Church is not just a charity, that needs some kind of hand out. It is our God's visible place for us to gather for worship and to receive mutual encouragement in Jesus. These verses are not saying that it's OK to be slipshod about God's House. But the point is, it's not the outward adornment that makes St. Luke's beautiful and acceptable to God. You could fill it with silver and gold, but do you know what? *The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts.* It's all His to begin with, so don't assume you will do Him a favor. They are expressions of your **love** for Him, not favor-winners.

I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations. Haggai said, Even though this temple is smaller and less glorious, the Lord will see to it that from every corner of the earth, nations will be shaken and jolted into reality, that this Temple is the Temple of Salvation and Redemption of all people in Christ. What a joyous sight it would be if next Sunday, people of every level of society in our 50 mile radius, every nationality, every age—young, middle-aged, old and babies—would gather here, not because this building is so great, but because they realize Christ, the one Savior, is freely proclaimed here, and in His name forgiveness showered upon them and heaven's doors opened. The true House of God is really not any earthly building, but the gathering of the **invisible** entity of the Holy Christian Church, a spiritual gathering of all believers of all time. Not a mere physical building fancy or not, not a congregation, not a single denomination, not people of one nation.

The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, says the Lord of hosts. The proclamation of Salvation in Jesus is what makes "The House of God" glorious, regardless of what the physical architecture may be. In His house God gives Peace. *The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).* That's peace; that's glory. Salvation in Jesus. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).*

Outward glory of a building? *God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (I Corinthians 1:27-31).*

A house of worship is glorious to the Lord when it proclaims Jesus the Savior!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---