

We can lean into the purpose of God because he is with us and building something better than we can imagine.

Haggai 1:1–8 “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: [2] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” [3] Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, [4] “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? [5] Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. [6] You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

[7] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. [8] Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD.” (ESV)

God is with us and he is building something better.

Have you ever had unmet expectations? Not getting what you expect and it leaves you discouraged or disheartened?

The haircut that didn't turn out like the celebrity model's dew. The large shirt you ordered that was actually extra small. The 100 piece cookware set that arrived and was just three spatulas and 97 sheets of rice paper?

What of the career you were sure of when you set out but didn't turn out as planned? The surgery that didn't produce the desired goal. The strategy that encountered unprecedented circumstances and was derailed.

This week I have been thinking about unmet expectations for the church. 2020 was kicking off under the banner of “Building Together.” I had presented to the elders a vision for an expanded leadership team to raise up many of you to take ownership of ministry and the life of the church, all with an expectation of the

continued momentum of 2019 and opportunities for flourishing as a church. Everyone on board, ready to go.

Then March 15 came. Public gatherings were suspended and 2020 was anything but what we had planned. We didn't emphasize "Building Together" because the focus became staying together. And even though our great plans didn't come to pass, the Lord was exceedingly kind to us, in maintaining unity, providing for the church, and forming us through the unpredictable.

Along the way there was a steady realization that even though our expectations were not met, there was no sense in stopping. And increasingly over the last few weeks I have been encouraged by the Spirit more than ever to press on. Continue steadily plodding toward the purposes of God for his church, knowing that he is building.

Haggai comes to us on the one year anniversary of radical change of circumstance, a message about taking up restoration. A call to get back to the work the people were called to and trusting the Lord in the midst of it.

As we dive in we have to shift our thinking about the Prophets just a bit. Because the timing and situation have taken a significant turn. Up to this point, the prophetic messages have been warnings or promises of coming judgment for sin before God. That God would use the unlikely instrument of foreign powers to discipline his own people because of their idolatry.

Along the way it was the promise of his care, provision, and keeping a faithful remnant that carried the people through. Now, as we hear the voice of God through Haggai, Judah had nearly a hundred years before been taken into Babylonian exile. And many have been sent back to Jerusalem to re-establish the city and rebuild the Temple so that they would be able to worship Yahweh again without the rampant idolatry of pre-exile Judah.

In Ezra's historical account we learn that the people returned, reclaimed the Law of the Lord with repentant humility, and began to rebuild what had been torn down. The Temple as a priority. But we also learn that they faced significant opposition and discouragement over progress, so much so that they stopped rebuilding the Temple.

By the time Haggai gave this word in 520 BC, work had been stopped for 16 years. Instead of that work, the people were going after their own gain, building their own homes and going about life all while the Temple sat unfinished and unoccupied.

And things are “off” because of it. **Haggai 1:9** “You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.” (ESV)

God speaks through Haggai - over just a three and a half month ministry - and stirs the remnant back to building. And in this stirring we see something of God that helps our own pursuit of him and his way.

God is with His people

He calls the people to contemplation, “Consider your ways,” is the refrain, to think of how they have been living. And to reject the influence of those that say it isn't time to rebuild the Temple.

False piety allowed them to pursue other priorities like their own homes, lives, and interests. "They were preoccupied with making a living, improving their standard of life, rationalizing their adversities, and accusing the Lord of being untrue to his promises." Willem VanGemenen

We get this. We have similar experiences and the same draw to these things. We keep going after things that we expect to fulfill us, but they demand more and kill joy, keeping us from what we are meant for.

Haggai 1:6 “You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.” (ESV)

"I do not know of any passage in the Bible that better describes the feverish yet ineffective activity of our own age." James Montgomery Boice

But the people do consider their ways... and they are compelled by this call back to the labor set before them. They respond with obedience.

Haggai 1:12 “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.” (ESV)

But that wasn't all, they were given strength to carry on, to do the work, because they would not do it alone.

Haggai 1:13 “Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” (ESV)

Their Father would be with them. His very presence empowering them to move forward.

I think of this in terms of being a child heading into the unknown. If we don't like the dark if our Dad is with us it makes all the difference. If we are nervous about a new place or experience, if Dad is holding our hand, encouraging us, we can face it, we can do it.

"God promised his people that they could be strong because he would be with them. He promised them that he would be with them through the adversities which would confront them as they built the Temple." Selvaggio

This is exactly what Judah needed, the presence of God with them. His presence is spirit motivation for them.

Haggai 1:14 “And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,” (ESV)

Our building also benefits from God's declaration that he is with us. Holiness, obedience, the purposes of God are not easy but you are not alone in your labor. God is with you... and in Christ this is supercharged, Immanuel, God with us, forever by his Spirit. Holding us, stirring us onward.

This is still how he works; calling, presence, empowerment. Who needs this today?

Isaiah 41:10 “fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (ESV)

In Christ we know it to be true. We can take on his commission to make disciples because he says he is “with us always, until the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20) He is the One that tells us “I will never leave you or forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

What’s more, united with Jesus by faith, he is more than someone by our side, he dwells in us and we can say with Paul, **Galatians 2:20** “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (ESV)

Our ability to be strong is linked with God's presence with us. It is permanent and powerful in Christ.

Like the remnant in Jerusalem we are led forward, knowing God is with us, with great hope for what is to come. And it is likely not what we would expect, it wasn't for them...

God builds better

"With people's hearts now fully attentive to God, Haggai shifted the direction of their work from selfish ambition to selfless abandon, from focusing on their temporal needs to focusing on their eternal needs." EP

Some of the people remember the former glory of Temple and they have been discouraged that this rebuilt Temple doesn't seem to hold a candle to what came before. They so long for a return to “normal” before the exile that they were missing what was before them.

And the word to them is, “keep going,” **Haggai 2:4** “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high

priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts,” (ESV)

Be strong, I am with you, fear not... all things we need to hear. But there is more, because what is coming is greater.

Haggai 2:6–9 “For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. [7] And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. [8] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. [9] The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.” (ESV)

It will be the place of peace, or perseverance. He says that even with defiled people, God has the resources and will bring greater glory. When the labor drags on, when the walls don't make our imagination, we can keep going because he is building better.

Haggai 2:19 “Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.” (ESV)

This is about a building - it is about the Temple, the physical space in Jerusalem. But it is also not about a building. You see the ultimate fulfillment of this promise in Haggai is Jesus - Immanuel - the Temple. The Word that became flesh and Tabernacled among us.

Zeal for God's house consumed him. People asked for signs, and he was the sign!

John 2:19–22 “Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” [20] The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” [21] But he was speaking about the temple of his body. [22] When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” (ESV)

Claiming status as the Lord of the Sabbath he says he is greater... **Matthew 12:6–7** “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. [7] And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” (ESV)

"It is through Jesus that this prophecy of Haggai is fulfilled! A temple of greater glory has come!" Selvaggio

By his life, death, and resurrection he claims the remnant for himself. Forgiven and free, given new life, purpose, and the church made into the temple!

Ephesians 2:19–22 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (ESV)

The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of angel armies. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD.

He still invites us into the work. Building on the foundation of Christ let each one take care how he builds upon it. Making disciples, preaching the good news of the kingdom, ambassadors of reconciliation, the transition team for the eternal King.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (ESV)

Like the remnant in Jerusalem, but with a clear view of the glory. Empowered, not alone. Built into something better.

And God gives the people a sign that the better is coming. He reinstates what had been broken.

Haggai 2:21–23 “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, [22] and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every

one by the sword of his brother. [23] On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.” (ESV)

The line of David will be restored and a new Kingdom is coming.

Jesus is the Greater Son of Zerubbabel. He is the sign. The chosen One who calls us to life and his purposes.

Hebrews 12:25–29 “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. [26] At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” [27] This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. [28] Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, [29] for our God is a consuming fire. (ESV)

The Kingdom now upon us, when Jesus returns the entire created order will be shaken just as Haggai promised, but we will not be shaken because we are subjects of the kingdom of Christ! Because he is with us, because he builds better.

Things may seem shaky now, but we still take up the mission the sovereign King of the universe has given us.

This carries us through now, it sets expectations differently, it trains us to long for something better, to labor for the Kingdom, because it is our good.

We can lean into the purpose of God because he is with us and building something better than we can imagine.

Prioritize - Consider your ways. What have you been investing in that has led to neglect of what God has called you to. For some this might even be salvation - been trusting in your own ability to be pure and holy - realizing it can only be found in Jesus. For some of us considering our ways brings the realization that

we have been giving attention to the wrong things. So hear the call of Haggai, prioritize the greater glory of God's way. "God will establish his kingdom in this world in and through us; we, in turn, are called to seek his kingdom first (Matt. 6:33)."

As you go, **know his Presence** - He is with you. You can lean into his purposes, for discipleship, the church, and the glory of Christ. Finally take the risk you know you were meant for, share the story of his grace that has given you life. In order to make it through the discouragement and trials of this age, we must remember that Jesus promises to be with us and that he will be the source of our strength! And tap into that strength!

God knows what he is building among us. Whether we have eyes to see it or not. And we can trust him as we go, because Christ's glory is greater than we knew we needed.

May we find our spirits stirred up, that we would lean into the purposes of the sovereign Lord, that he would build the house among us.