

Haggai, Week 2
Obedience to God's Call
September 24, 2017

Have you ever met this person? Proverbs 19:3

Some people ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.

People whose lives aren't going so well and have concluded
God doesn't work! He didn't answer my prayers!
They're right that things are going wrong,
But very wrong about the reason why.

That describes the people in Jerusalem when we opened the book of Haggai last week.
They worked so hard but seem to have nothing to show for it.
It was like everything they accomplish is put in a bag with holes in it.
They were trapped in the rat race and life – not getting anywhere.

God's diagnosis?

You're running after your own interests and have neglected my interests.
You're doing lots of good things, but you haven't chosen what is best.

As Jesus would say in the NT,

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things

(the practical things in life that you need—(money, education, good job, career)

Will be added unto you.

“I'll get you where you need to go if you'll put me FIRST.

Satan doesn't have to tempt us to do bad things—

He accomplishes his purpose quite well by distracting with *good* things

Things we think are essential that God and his righteousness.

Do *you* have a bag with holes?

Luke 12:33-34

33 “Sell your possessions and give to those in need.

(Get outside of your own interests)

This will store up treasure for you in heaven!

And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes.

Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it.

Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Spirit of the Lord is calling to New Beginnings church, (me and you)
through the prophet Haggai,

Haggai 1:7-8

“This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says:

Look at what’s happening to you!

Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house.

And what’s his house?

Certainly, it has a tangible locus of operation for us right here at 80 Jefferson Blvd.

But the house or temple of God is SO much bigger.

In fact, it’s even possible that New Beginnings can become the distraction that keeps us from building God’s house or kingdom.

Let me illustrate by way of confession.

I can spend a lot of time doing church work.

Of course, it’s my job.

However, here’s the confession: I’m a classic overachiever.

Which is code for, “I feel I’m on the brink of failure at any minute.”

Because I’m the pastor, my identity is all wrapped up in New Beginnings.

If the church is doing well, and we have lots of people and lots of money,

I feel successful.

Cause like it or not, right or wrong that’s how I’m judged by my peers.

If I look around and see lots of empty chairs and the coffers are depleted --

Well, my natural instincts say,

I’ve gotta fix this! I’ve just gotta work harder!

But then Haggai comes along and says . . . WRONG!

Seek ME more earnestly. It’s . . .

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.

In fact, what the Spirit of God has done this summer is get us out of ourselves.

Seeking to invest in the kingdom of God in ways that don’t directly benefit New Beginnings.

Two concerts to support needy kids in our community, raising \$1000 each – that \$2,000 that didn’t go into OUR coffers.

Fully confident that as we build up others, God will take care of us.

My point is:

The house or temple of the Lord is much, much bigger than just New Beginnings.

As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3** . . .

¹⁶ Don't you realize that all of *you* together (all believers) are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? . . .

You're the temple, but who's the foundation?

No one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

Last week I gave you three very practical ways to know if that foundation is properly laid.

Can you say? This I have come to know

- Jesus is my Savior

Can you say? I lay down my life to be used by Jesus HOWEVER he sees fit

- Jesus is my Lord

Are you willing to

- follow the Lord in the waters of baptism.

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, there is always a next step toward Jesus.

And Haggai illustrates for us that dates are important. They're markers in time. (Today's reading, September 21st)

I asked Keith last Sunday for a date, a marker in time when he crossed the line into believing. He went back and check – that date is: February 3, 2013 That's an important marker in time.

October 1st, 2017 is going to another marker in time. I've called it Foundation Sunday. It's our opportunity to secure the foundation of our faith – Jesus Christ.

No matter what step toward Jesus you are taking, put down a marker in time?

“Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus
Everyone put them in the offering plate
Collect the ones used and the ones unused.

What's the one thing I forgot? (your name)

Sermon

As we prepare to hear the Word of the Lord for today, may this song be our prayer:

Word of God Speak -- Music

Haggai 1:12-15 – MP3

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people *obeyed* the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people *feared the Lord*.

13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: "*I am with you*," declares the Lord.

14 So the Lord *stirred up the spirit* of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the *spirit* of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the *spirit* of the whole remnant of the people. They came and *began to work* on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

There's so much for us to learn here.

Take a look at verses 12

There are two phrases that jump out at us:

the people obeyed

Why?

Because *the people feared the Lord*.

Proverbs tells us that *fear is the beginnings of wisdom*.

Maybe you started reaping some consequences we don't like.

We're wake up and say, "*I'm on the wrong side of truth*."

That's an alarming realization.

What if we've already gone too far and there's no way back?

What if we've messed things up so bad, that there's no new beginning?

Like it or not, they are at a point of decision.

Is that *you* this morning?

You've just been going about your business and

Then here you are and the Word of the Lord has come to you through Haggai,

And you find yourself at a point of decision that's gonna have eternal consequences.

For you individually, and for us collectively.

Listen to these words of Jesus that he impressed upon my heart

to share with you this morning from Luke 13.

Then Jesus told this story:

“A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed.

Finally, he said to his gardener,

‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down.

It’s just taking up space in the garden.’

“The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance.

Leave it another year, and I’ll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer.

If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.’”

Wow! That’s sobering

Are we bearing fruit or are we just taking up space?

Are we taking up space on this corner of Edison

that Jesus could give to someone else

who could bear more fruit for the Kingdom of God?

Are *you* bearing no fruit or are you just taking up space at New Beginnings?

In this culture, we see God and the things God loves as so optional.

After all, he’s the kindly gray-haired grandpa in the sky

who always smiles and never demands anything.

This passage suggests that he’s patient,

but that there is a point at which enough is enough.

You bear figs or get cut down.

The people in Haggai’s time are at such a point.

Thankfully, the people began to obey because they feared the Lord.

That’s when the Lord rushes in to assure them:

13 Then Haggai, the Lord’s messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people:

“I am with you,” declares the Lord.

You haven’t passed the point of no return – there is a new beginning. 😊

There is a future and a hope!

So maybe fear has brought us to this point.

But if fear is our only motivation, it won’t take us very far.

We soon forget to be afraid.

I love what comes next:

14 So the Lord *stirred up the spirit* of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,
and the *spirit* of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest,
and the *spirit* of the whole remnant of the people.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the whole remnant.

Everybody! The leaders and *all* the people.

A motivated leader with a lethargic people goes nowhere

A motivated people with lethargic leaders goes nowhere.

We all go together or we don't go at all.

But we must move beyond fear.

If you stay in a fear based religion – and some of you have been there.

The bi-product is duty and obligation.

But if by the Spirit of God you have discovered a spirit-infused faith,

The bi-product is JOY.

It's fun to serve God.

It's not draining, it's energizing.

This is how Jesus describes it in John 7.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying,

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said,

'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

This He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive;

There is nothing better than being in the flow of the River of God.

What we need today is not a rah-rah- pep rally – Get everyone all fired up.

Let's go New Beginnings!

NO! We need an out-pouring of the Spirit of God

that starts inside and then bubble's up and overflows.

When the Spirit of God stirs up our souls, it's compelling.

1 Corinthians 9

When I preach the gospel, I can't boast, since I am compelled to preach.

(I'm not doing it out of duty or obligation

I'm not doing what I *have* to do; I'm doing what I'm *compelled* to do)

Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

We need that kind of Holy Ghost unction!

May the Lord stir up your spirit and my spirit.

Ask and keep on asking.
Seek and keep on seeking.
Knock and keep on knocking.

Because when it happens . . .

They came and *began to work* on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God,
on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

There is no future for New Beginnings without this.
If you know how to pray it in – do it!
If you know how to preach it in – do it!

I feel a tremendous sense of urgency – but then so did Jesus.
In **John 9:4** he says

As long as it is day,
we must do the works
of him who sent me.

Night is coming,
when no one can work.
While I am in the world,
I am the light of the world.

Edison brought the light bulb to the world
May Edison now bring forth the LIGHT of the world

BENEDICTION

May the Lord stir up the people of New Beginnings
That we may bring *THE LIGHT* – Jesus the Christ
to the world