

Introduction: Haggai 1:1 (pg. 791).

Direct to Haggai (prophets, history, _)
Priorities . . .

Historical Context

Who was Haggai?

- He is described in this book that bears his name as “a prophet” (1:1) and “the messenger of the Lord” (1:13).
- His job, like every messenger of God, is simple: speak God’s message (1:13). That’s why you will frequently see the phrase “declares the Lord” throughout this two-chapter book.
- Anytime a person communicates God’s Word (whether that’s a pastor on Sunday am or at lunch with a friend from work), there should be one goal: faithfully communicate what God has spoken in his word.

When did he serve God?

- Haggai served God in a difficult but exciting time in Israel’s history.
- We’ve seen throughout the OT, how God’s people were often unfaithful and idolatrous.
- This is what we saw in Hosea a couple of weeks ago. Hosea was a pre-exilic prophet, who called God’s people to return to him in faithful, covenant love. Their failure to do so resulted in God’s loving discipline that sent them into exile in Babylon for seventy years.
- As God told them, Babylon would not reign forever. They fell into the hands of a new power, King Cyrus of Persia. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and the prophet Haggai comes onto the scene after the Israelites returned from exile in 538 B.C.

What was going on?

- So what happened upon their return? We might expect that the people were so exceedingly grateful to be home, that they returned with nothing but praise and thanksgiving in the hearts. And to one degree, that is how they began.
- The Book of Ezra, which should be read together with Haggai, (like Acts & Paul’s letters in the NT) tells us the people started well upon returning and actually began building the temple, but they quickly experienced frustration and opposition.
- This in turned, exposed their weak resolve. Their growing apathy led them to stop showing up to rebuild the temple.
- We then fast forward roughly 18 years when God taps this dude named Haggai on the shoulder and says, “Hey you, you go share this strong message with my people.” They’ve lost their focus and misplaced their priorities.
- So it is in 520, that Haggai receives his commission to speak to God’s people.

What is his message?

- His job was to call people to attention. He did so four times with the simple and strong refrain: “Consider your ways.” (1:5, 7; 2:15, 18)

**“Consider Your Ways”
Haggai 1:1-15**

We will see Haggai declare a very straightforward message to God's people that we could summarize like this:

The Point: Consider your ways and prioritize living for God's glory.

I want to give you two encouragements from the lessons we learn in Haggai, chapter 1. #1

I. Honestly Assess your spiritual condition in light of the greatness of God (1:1-11).

In this book, we have four of his messages delivered across the span of four months. The first comes in the opening verses.

Read vv 1-2

- God sends Haggai to speak to the political leader Zerubbabel and the spiritual leader Joshua, who served as the high priest. Eventually his words would get to all the people.
- Here are the first words that come from God through Haggai: "These people say it's not time yet..." Oh man, how often do we hear this? how often do we say this?
 - "Yo man, I just don't have time for that.
 - I don't have time for God.
 - I'll get around to spiritual matters later . . .
 - I'll make God the real priority of my life after I achieve that next career goal, complete my five year family plan, get enough \$\$ saved up, or, you know, after I have a little more fun in my life."
- Essentially the people were winking at God, saying, "We love you. You're important. BUT, let me do me. Let me get back to what is most important to me, which in reality, is not YOU, it's my plans, my comforts."
- All of their apparent spiritual devotion was nothing more than LIP SERVICE.
- We see them revert to the situation described by the pre-exilic prophet Isaiah, who said, "this people . . . honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me." Here we go again!

God wanted to make his message relevant and irrefutable, so he hit them with an airtight argument.

- Check *Verses 3-4*: "Then the word . . ."
- Is it time? They are talking about time, so God answers with a one-to-one point of reference.
- "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in paneled houses, while this house [the temple] lies in ruins?"
 - Let me point out a couple of details about this statement: 1) "you yourselves" points to their "preoccupation with themselves." It is a call for them to not look around at others in hopes of justifying their actions, but a call for them to look in the mirror.
 - But it is the description of their houses that tells a deeper story...
 - Their houses were paneled. They not only had homes, but nice homes. This may suggest a measure of luxury...
 - Here's the bottom line: They sought their own comfort rather than prioritizing the worship of God.
 - As Fyall says, "It was not a lack of money, but a lack of will that prevented them from building [God's] house."

There was clear and indisputable evidence they had prioritized their own needs and desires over worshiping God.

- Verse 9 hammers this home: “my house lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.”

T: So what is the solution? That’s what we see in the next verse...

Verse 5 - Consider your ways . . . (5-11)

- NIV: “Give careful thought to your ways”
- Message: “Take a good, hard look at your life. Think it over.”
- The Hebrew phrase is actually an idiom “put your heart on your roads.”
- Reflect on how you have been living your life and what has resulted from how you’ve lived.
- The people lacked resolve. They had drifted into complacency and apathy. They had grown indifferent to what mattered most: living for God and his glory.
- TTV: Essentially, Haggai is sounding the Alarm Clock and saying “Wake up!”

YOUR WAYS

- “Your ways” is a way to call them to reflect on their whole life. God wanted them to measure their ways against his ways.
- This is what Jesus did with people: “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Luke 9:24)
- This is what I want to call you to today: Consider your ways. Reflect on your life. Give careful thought to the trajectory of your days.

- Reflect on how you have been living your life and what has resulted from how you’ve lived.
- Can I challenge you with this? My basic assumption based on what I see in God’s Word and what I have experienced in my own life is this: if you are seeking satisfaction in anything other than Christ, you will come up empty every time.
- This was true in their day

Look at verse 6. Now 9-11.

- The shelves at Market Basket are empty (not because Artie T got a raw deal), but as a wake-up call to God’s people to find their satisfaction in him.
- Go read Ecclesiastes.

They missed God’s blessing because they were not seeking his glory.

- *Check v 8.* Build the house. WHY? “That I may take pleasure in it.” You were made for the pleasure of God, and you were made for the glory of God. “That I may be glorified.”

T: Let me ask you this morning: **Does God have first place in your life?**

How do we grow numb at times to God? How do we grow complacent? Yes, we get distracted. Yes, we prioritize other loves. Yes, we move away from God’s plan for us one small step at a time.

Examine your time, examine your treasure (how you spend your \$\$\$), examine how you talk. Look at what gets you excited, what your heart beats for!

APP

- What is the antidote to spiritual apathy? A Grand Vision of God!
 - This verse we've been meditating on all year begs revisiting. **Psalm 145:3 "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable."**
 - Why is God greatly to be praised? Because he is great!
 - His greatness, let me clarify, his unsearchable greatness, is what moves us to praise him greatly.
 - So if your spiritual life is lackluster, if your pursuit of God is characterized by a going through the motions, I am willing to bet that it has something to do with your vision of God.
 - There is nothing monotonous about Glory.
- One of the great questions every Christian should ask of themselves regularly is this: **Has my passion for God cooled in any way?**
- This question should also confront us as a church: Has our passion for God cooled in any way?
- The people lacked vision . . . Haggai was there to correct that on God's behalf.

Augustine: "He loves thee too little, who loves anything together with thee, that he loves not for thy sake."

II. Be moved to joyful obedience in light of God's provision for you (1:12-15).

Read 12-15

The second part of Haggai's message is found in verse 13. Look at these four powerful words: "I am with you."

Once again, covenant is the backdrop to this story. God had committed his covenant love to his people, and The temple was a sign of God's covenant commitment to his people.

So when they were delivered from Egypt and journeyed on the Exodus, God commanded them to erect a tabernacle (Exodus 25:8): "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them." Covenant Refrain: I will be your God and you will be my people. I will be with you and will dwell among you."

Because the temple served as a sign of God's covenant commitment to them, the flip side of that is true. The temple also served as a way for the people to say, "We want God to dwell among us!"

Haggai basically says, "*Turn your lip service into life service.*" How will people know you really are devoted to God? What is the proof? When we live according to his ways! In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

I want to give you four truths about obedience! Two have more to do with us & two have more to do with God.

True obedience is ultimately a step of devotion (12).

- They obeyed the voice of God and the message of the prophet Haggai.
 - Hearing is worship...
 - We hear that we might live. We live that we might glorify God.
- Not only do they obey, but the second verb used to describe their response, is what? Look at the end of v. 12. The people *feared the Lord*. Fearing God refers to possessing reverence and awe before him that leads to joyful devotion.
- Fear means their heart is in it! Not simply behavior modification. They were not saying: I'm going to do this (smh), but I don't really want to do this. No, I am going to do this because there's nothing I'd rather do."
- There's nothing greater than knowing God. Fear says, "There is no one or nothing to whom I owe greater affection and commitment."

True obedience is ultimately a step of faith . . . (12)

- In their reconstructing the temple, they were saying we believe God is faithful to keep his promise to dwell with us, to be our God even in spite of our rebellion against him!
- This was not an empty exercise of religious obligation. It was an act of faith meant to display a longing to be near God.
- And please understand: God's presence was not confined to the temple. As Solomon said when the temple was constructed the first time: "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!"
- The temple was not constructed because God was homeless. He owns it all!
- It was rebuilt as an act of faith because they loved God.
- We no longer, as the people of God today, need to rebuild temples because Jesus is the true temple who dwelt among us (John 1:14) and amazingly, after his resurrection, he sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in everyone who believes in him forever.

T: We should obey as an act of devotion and act of faith, but does God just leave us to ourselves? Hey, love me while I sit back and enjoy watching you obey me. NO!

True obedience is fueled with the presence of God (13)

- *Here's the second message. "I am with you."*
- Don't you love this? Though God had just rebuked, he now encourages them with a great promise. These words had to bring great assurance to the people. Remember, they were under threat and opposition.
- Without God we are doomed. We can do nothing. BUT with God, all things are possible.
- With God the rubble and ruins could be turned into something beautiful again. With God the land struck by drought could be rich with vegetation again. With God they could overcome the opposition they faced. With God their dry hearts could be renewed and refueled to give everything back to him.

True obedience is fueled with the power of God (14-15).

- Check v. 14: "And the Lord stirred up the spirit . . ."
- So they are working, but it is God who is moving them to work. The Lord is faithful to stir us up to love and good deeds. He wants us to experience the joy of being a part of his kingdom movement.

- We are responsible to serve and work, but God is the One who sparks the desire in us to be about the work, and not only that . . . He also empowers the work he sets before us.
- **Augustine: “Lord, command what you will, but grant what you command.”** In other words, ask of me whatever you want, but equip me for whatever you ask.
- And this he does. He is with us. For the Christian, God has given us his empowering Spirit to accomplish his mission in the world.
- John 5
- Phil 2
- Col 1
- What you afraid of? Lehhgo!

Conclusion:

- **What is God calling you to do?**

Prayer: