

October 20, 2002
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“A Call To Action”
Haggai 1 (NLT)

On August 29 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of She-al-ti-el, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 2 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house--the Temple.'"

3 So the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: 4 "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? 5 This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you! 6 You have planted much but harvested little. You have food to eat, but not enough to fill you up. You have wine to drink, but not enough to satisfy your thirst. You have clothing to wear, but not enough to keep you warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

7 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you! 8 Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD. 9 You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the LORD Almighty, while you are all busy building your own fine houses. 10 That is why the heavens have withheld the dew and the earth has withheld its crops. 11 I have called for a drought on your fields and hills--a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olives and all your other crops, a drought to starve both you and your cattle and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get."

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people obeyed the message from the LORD their God. It had been delivered by the prophet Haggai, whom the LORD their God had sent, and the people worshiped the LORD in earnest. 13 Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave the people this message from the LORD: "I am with you, says the LORD!" 14 So the LORD sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people. They came and began their work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God. 15 This was on September 21 of the second year of King Darius's reign.

In 586 BC the Babylonians captured Judah and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. In 538 BC Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylonians and allowed some of the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. Two years later (536 BC), led by Zerubbabel, they completed the foundation of the Temple with great rejoicing. However, the Samaritans and other neighbors were not so happy with the rebuilding. Fearing that

the rebuilding of the Temple would mean a thriving Jewish state, the project was vigorously opposed which helped put a halt to the work. That is, until 520 BC when Darius King of Persia was in the second year of his reign (became king in 522 BC). Darius was interested in the religions of his empire, and Haggai and Zechariah began to preach about the work on the Temple (in 520 BC). Haggai pointed out that the Jews were more to blame than their opponents for their inactivity and calls them to action. [516 BC – The temple was completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18)].

In this call to action we first see:

The People's Lame Excuse (vs. 1-4)

The Lord gave this message to Haggai to give to the governor and the priest (the two most important leaders of the Jews at that time): The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house--the Temple.'" So the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins (desolate / deserted / dry)?

The people said the time had not come to rebuild the Lord's house. This was a lame excuse. If the time had not come to build the Lord's house then the time had not come for them to rebuild their own homes, but they were finding time to do that. You have heard the cliché "Actions speak louder than words." Well, it's true. We can discover what our priorities are by what we choose to do or not do. We will spend our time doing the things that are important to us and we will neglect the things that are not as important to us. When someone say, "We didn't come to church because of this or that" – Are they saying this or that was more important than church? Does work, hobby or entertainment come before family? What about the Word of God, prayer and the ministries of the church? Where do you choose to spend your time? Uncomfortable questions. The same questions Haggai was asking. Now, I know this Scripture is talking about the building or rebuilding of the Temple as a physical structure, but what is the Temple of the Lord today? Our hearts! Are we finding time for many other activities while our spiritual lives are being deserted / neglected? Are we spiritually dry? Are we distracted? Does the Lord say to you, "Why are you busy doing other things while my house (your spiritual life) lies in ruins?"

Illustration: "Distraction"

The people said they did not have time for the Lord's house. That was a lame excuse because they had time for less important things. They said it wasn't time yet to rebuild the Lord's house. When will it be time to build or rebuild a place for God's Spirit in your life? Choose to spend more time on spiritual matters. If you don't it will result in poverty.

The People's Poverty (vs. 5-6)

This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you! You have planted much but harvested little. You have food to eat, but not enough to fill you up. You have wine to drink, but not enough to satisfy your thirst. You have clothing to

wear, but not enough to keep you warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

The people put their physical needs, their work and their finances before giving to the Lord. And what was the result? They were unfruitful and unfulfilled. No matter how much they had and how much money they made it was never enough. (Ever feel that way? No matter how much you make it is never enough? Then let me ask another uncomfortable question: Are you Giving financially / tithe to the Lord's work? God can be trusted ... but not with our finances. Yet, that is a good indication of your faith. Can you trust God to meet your needs?). In every way put the Lord, His work and His will first. If you never have enough materially – try this spiritual truth: give to the Lord first and watch God meet all your needs. If your life needs meaning, purpose and peace – Put God first for only Jesus satisfies. If your life is not fruitful... abide more deeply in Christ. Consider how things are going for you! Why live in poverty? Live more deeply in Christ. This is your calling and purpose: to know God.

The People's Calling (vs. 7-11)

Again "This is what the LORD Almighty says (through Haggai): Consider how things are going for you! (Vs. 9) You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. (Vs. 10 -11) That is why the heavens have withheld the dew and the earth has withheld its crops. I have called for a drought on your fields and hills--a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olives and all your other crops, a drought to starve both you and your cattle and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get."

The Lord allowed them to have a poor harvest; He allowed them to have a drought and to lose everything they had worked so hard to get. Again this can be applied spiritually as well as physically. Our spiritual lives can also be unfruitful and dry. And ...

Why? (The Lord gives the answer) "Because my house lies in ruins, says the LORD Almighty, while you are all busy building your own fine houses." We are neglecting our relationship with the Lord. We are not a proper place for His Holy Spirit to dwell. This is why physically, emotionally and spiritually hurting. So what should we do? (Vs. 8) "Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD." The way to the Lord is always through repentance and faith. Return to the Lord immediately and rebuild so that your heart and life will please and honor Him.

The People's Obedience (vs. 12)

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people obeyed the message from the LORD their God. It had been delivered by the prophet Haggai, whom the LORD their God had sent, and the people worshiped the LORD in earnest (fervently, passionately and enthusiastically).

They obeyed the message and they gave themselves to the will and work of the Lord. This is the true worship of God. "The people worshiped the Lord in earnest" (by obeying His Word).

The People's Strength (vs. 13- 15)

(Vs. 13) Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave the people this message from the LORD (when they obeyed the message to rebuild a place for the Lord - As soon as the work of rebuilding began the prophet issued this promise from God:): "I am with you, says the LORD!"

(Vs. 14) So the LORD sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people. They came and began their work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God.

The indifference was broken and discouragement was turned to courage as the people began their work building the house of the Lord Almighty, their God. What does the Lord want you to do (or stop doing)? Be broken by the fact that you are making other things more important than having Jesus in your heart. Repent and show fruit of that repentance. Take immediate steps to obey Him. He will change your Heart and you will know that He is with you. About three weeks after Haggai's prophecy (see vs. 1 & 15), the actual rebuilding started. They probably spent the time in between clearing away the rubbish that had accumulated on the Temple site. It is time to clear away the rubbish and make a priority of rebuilding a place for God.

Illustration: "Hindrances"