



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes –19th September 2021

Coming back to the heart: Get your priorities right! Haggai 1:1-15

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

Haggai 1 - A Call to Build the House of the Lord

¹ In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jozadak,[a] the high priest: ² This is what the Lord Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house.’” ³ Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” ⁵ Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” ⁷ This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord. ⁹ “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the Lord Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.” 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, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

Note this is the NIV2011 version of the text. It would be helpful to compare it with other translations.

Comment:

Ezra describes how the Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem and laid the foundation stone of the temple with great celebration only to quickly run out of enthusiasm for the project. It needed the prophet Haggai to come along 14 years later to reprioritise the Lord and stir the hearts of the people into action. They had made what sounded like a spiritual excuse of it ‘not being the right time’, but the truth was they had focussed on making their own lives more comfortable first. We are all good at making excuses and sometimes putting off the hard work that is necessary for spiritual progress. Whether it is busyness, family commitments or lack of resources, the problem is that we forget that as we ‘seek first the kingdom of God, then everything else will be added to us’!

The Lord spoke to the people through the prophet Haggai and challenged them to ‘give thought to their ways’ and then ‘go up into the mountains to bring down timber’. This is about reflecting on our priorities and then taking action to seek the Lord – perhaps pursuing a ‘mountaintop’ experience or encounter with him to galvanise us into action.

So how do we prioritise the Lord in the ordinary everyday? Perhaps consider these questions:

1) Do I prioritise God with... **The FIRST minutes of my day?** - What was the very first thing you did this morning? Reach for the alarm on your phone.. and immediately get distracted by a notification... Facebook, Tweet... or worried by a news headline? Or do you thank God for the new day, speak with Him perhaps through prayer or scripture? BBF: Bible before fone !

2) Do I prioritise God with... **The FIRST day of the week?** - Do you practice Sabbath, not necessarily on Sunday but an intentional time each week, away from the normal routines and activities... a time to “go up the mountain”, to enjoy God’s company and his blessings - a time to worship and witness, a time to enjoy family and friendship - to be refilled for the week ahead?

3) Do I prioritise God with... **The FIRST consideration in every decision?** - Do you turn to God in prayer and seek his guidance first... or only after you have tried everything else? We’ve been given the gift of reasoning but God’s wisdom and understanding far exceeds anything we can fathom and God always answers prayers... just not necessarily in the way we’d expect.

4) Do I prioritise God with... **The FIRST portion of my time, talents and finances?** - This may well change with the seasons of life - the demands of raising a new family, a time between jobs, the time to care for an elderly parent... but do you seek to honour God with the blessings you have received .. or is everything about your own comfort and ease?

5) Do I prioritise God with... **The FIRST place in my heart?** - It’s easy to think we put God first but believing in our head is not always followed by our heart or our actions. Do you nurture your relationship with God - spend time with Him in prayer, with a thankful heart yet ever-hungry to know him more deeply. **“Even now, ’declares the Lord, ’return to me with all your heart”** (Joel 2:12)

They’re challenging questions... rebuilding the temple took years - building us into a living temple will take a lifetime - it takes commitment and sustained effort. It’s about getting our priorities right, putting God first and ‘persevering, even through adversity.’

But...

We mustn’t forget that wonderful promise echoed at the end of the reading in v13 **“I am with you,” declares the Lord.**’! We aren’t left to struggle by ourselves. With Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we find both peace and fulfilment in all we do. There’s work to be done but Jesus promises **“surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20)

What more do we need?!

Questions:

- 1) What piece of advice do you wish you could have given yourself when you were 15?
- 2) How do you keep going when things get tough?
- 3) What things in life are priorities for you at this moment in time?
- 4) Which of the 5 ‘First’ questions do you find the most challenging?
- 5) What one change could you make today, to increase the priority of your relationship with God?