

Selections from the OT Book of Haggai ESV

The LORD Wants to Bless YOU!

Sunday, Sept. 25 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, Sept. 26 at 7 PM

19th Sunday after Pentecost / 18th Sunday after Trinity – 2016

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: For this life: **Is there a connection between *our obedience to God* and *our blessings from God*?** We find God's answer in the OT book of Haggai.

1. **The Setting:**

- a. In **587 BC** the LORD permitted the Babylonians to destroy the temple in Jerusalem.
- b. In **538 BC**, Cyrus, *the king of Persia*, released about 50,000 Jews from Babylon to return to Judah to rebuild the temple. *They quickly rebuilt the altar (Ezra 3:3); then, the next year, they laid the foundation for the temple, but, due to opposition from those living nearby, the work on the temple stopped and the people became busy with their own houses for 17 years* 😊.
- c. In **520 BC** (6th month, 1st day), the LORD sent Haggai to call the people to consider their ways – *how they had set aside doing His work to busy themselves with their work* – and to repent! So the book of “Haggai illustrates for us the problem of focusing on self-serving priorities to the neglect of God's priorities” (TLSB, 1519).

2. **Disobedience and Discipline:** 1:1 ...the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to [the leaders:] Zerubbabel..., [the] governor of Judah, and to Joshua..., 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 [to all of the people], 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. // The people were

consumed with their earthly things – their **work**, **clothes**, and **food**, *so the LORD disciplined them!* What about us; are we going our way or His way in our lives?

3. **A Call to Repent:** ⁷ "Thus says the LORD of hosts... 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... // How is he calling each of us to change?

4. **Another Reminder of the LORD's Discipline:** ⁹ "You **looked for much**, and behold, it came to little. And **when you brought it home**, I blew it away. **Why?** ...Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors." // The LORD wants us to repent; **He wants to bless us now** – *in all of our ways*, and **forever** – *through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

5. **The LORD Moved Them to Repent:** ¹² Then [the leaders], with all the remnant of the people, obeyed

the voice of the LORD their God... And the people feared the LORD... ¹⁴ And the LORD stirred up the spirit of *[the leaders and the remnant]*. And they came [23 days later; 6th month, 24th day] and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts... // The LORD wants to have **His way** with each of us; He wants us to allow Him to get a hold of us and move us to go His way – *which is always best!*

6. **The LORD Encouraged Them to Continue His Work:** **2:1** In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month [27 days later], the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ² “Speak now to *[the leaders and the remnant]*, and say... ⁴ ...Be strong... declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you... // As ones who are saved *through our Lord Jesus Christ*, **He is with us**, so let us ☺*be encouraged and* ☺*honor Him!*
7. **The Source of Holiness:** ¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month [63 days later], ...the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, ¹¹ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: ¹² ‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, **does it become holy?**’” The priests answered and said, “**No.**” [*Garments were made holy by contact with holy meat (Lev. 6:27) [thus by the LORD] but could not communicate holiness to other items (TLSB, 1521).*] ¹³ Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these [*bread...*], **does it become unclean?**” The priests answered and said, “**It does become unclean.**” ¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.”

// The Lutheran Study Bible has this comment: “People were unclean or defiled because the temple had not yet been completed... Their previous failure to act according to God’s will in one area of life contaminated all other activities in which they engaged” (1522). So we have also sinned, *thus contaminated ourselves and our activities*, so we all need the LORD, ***the blood of Jesus***, His Son, ***to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!***

8. **Remember the Past; Go Forward in the LORD:**

¹⁵ ...Before stone was placed upon stone [to build] the temple of the LORD, ¹⁶ how did you fare? When one came to a heap of ***twenty measures***, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw ***fifty measures***, there were but twenty. ¹⁷ I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD ☹️. ¹⁸ ...Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid [17 years ago], consider: ¹⁹ Is the seed yet in the barn? [“No!”] Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. **But from this day on I will bless you.**”

// “Despite all their hard efforts, the people had **not** enjoyed good harvests. But **now**, because of their determination to rebuild the temple [to repent], they can look forward with hope. The Lord will make this day as the beginning of showers of blessings” (1522).

Conclusion: Let us pray: Dear LORD, You know our ways – *how we make **us first and You second***; please ✦ forgive us, ✦ change us, and ✦ bless us! In Jesus’ name, we pray...

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Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230