

WELCOME 7th July 2019 – 4 Pentecost '19 C

Haggai 1:1-15

(Series Slide) Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors/guests! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship. (image I sent)

Today I have exactly what you've been waiting for...right there...the round 2-it. You know those jobs around the house, those life goals, few kilos, exercise program, that special thing, those conversations & decisions you've been putting off until you "get around to it." Well now you have one...get cracking! Nothing stopping you now! Or is there?

Is today not quite the right time? Is next week better for your schedule? Is it too cold? Wet? Your sciatica playing up again? Kids got you flat out over the holidays... Well...when then? (next 2 same slide)

It's easy to get complacent & put off important things because so much else seems so urgent...and that important thing seems so hard. How often have you offered God the round tuit? Put off serving until...Put off spending time with him because...Put off giving generously so that...It's rarely deliberate or planned. But God's call is to today... "This is the day the Lord has made...Today is the day of salvation...Today when you hear his voice...Today you will be with me in paradise..." 100x
Bible...today means *right now*

Or as God says 2X to the people through Haggai, "Look at what's happening to you!" "Consider your ways" "Give careful thought to what you're doing." – Hag 1:5 & 7

God's call is to today...to the opportunities to bless & do good & encourage & share the good news the hope within us & give generously & deepen our trust...to respond in obedience to Christ who calls us to put aside everything else for the sake of the Kingdom of love & the King of glory...because it is *FOR* His glory & *INTO* His love that we have been redeemed...

(weekly slide) Why am I here? What's my life about? We have not been entrusted with a doctrine, a life-tip, a secret code to the universe, or a new political system to force the world into behaving itself. We're drawn to a person: Jesus crucified - risen - ruling - forgiving Savior & Lord, & from that living life-changing encounter/relationship with Jesus we have today to make that reality visible in every moment...to build a life that reflects our status as a temple of the Holy Spirit...

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, there is no time like the present & we have no moment but this one. So open our hearts to you. Move in by your Spirit & grow the fruit of your Word in us. Capture each moment each thought & make it captive to Christ for whom we live & to whom you are conforming our lives...In His Name we pray...Amen!

4 PENTECOST '19 C – MAJOR QUESTIONS FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS: WHY AM I HERE?

FAITH CHAT

1. What's your favourite method of procrastination?
2. What are the things that squeeze God to the edges of your life?

In 1967, Charles Hummel first published, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. Less than 50 pages long it became an instant & perpetual business classic...I read it in B-school in 1981... Hummel described the lifelong tension between things that are urgent & things that are important & how *FAR TOO OFTEN* in our lives the urgent wins our attention effort & interest while the important is left on the back burner...neglected. You know it's true. Let's try it out: Which is more important: buzzing mobilephone or person w/ whom you are having a coffee...Sure...but do you stop to look/pick it up? Read a book w/ your child or watch that movie you've got dialled up on Netflix? Answer that email that's been in your inbox since this morning or some quiet time with your spouse? Play with your kids or...I don't even know what that is...

Now these all seem self-evident...& not all urgent things are bad things, but that phone call email or some time where the kids keep themselves occupied so you can attend something else...are choices we all make so that we can put out some "fire" that demands our urgent attention We've all done it...give in to the urgent when the important is left to sit. Even good things can crowd out the important things. We just listed some of those... Welcome to Haggai's world. That is precisely where Haggai stands among God's people who have tended to the urgent & ignored the important – the very reason for their existence as a people...Some quick history

Remember...After King Solomon died the nation of Israel split in 2. Israel to the north & Judah to the south. After a long period of rule by unfaithful kings Israel (nth kingdom) was obliterated by the Assyrians in 722 BC Many were taken into captivity most were slaughtered & as a people these 10 northern tribes were never heard from again...except for the few who were left behind & intermarried with other captive transplants brought in by the Assyrians...we see in the NT as Samaritans. Most of the prophets spoke into this timeframe...warning God's people about the coming destruction that would occur as punishment for their idolatry & lack of faith in God. Habakkuk, whom we looked at for 2 weeks spoke in this in-between time...b/t the fall of the 2 kingdoms warning the south their day was coming....& it did 100-ish yrs later

The world's superpowers never rest & soon Assyria was overthrown by Babylon & b/t 605 & 587 BC after a period of their own unfaith Judah was conquered. Again, many were carted off to Babylon as slaves & Jerusalem was sacked & the Temple destroyed. But after about 70 years, Babylon was conquered by the Persians & the Persian king Cyrus began sending the Jews back home again...So by the 530's the Israelites were coming home to rebuild their homes & lives AND the Temple. That was specifically part of Cyrus' decree...rebuild your faith & worship in your country

In fact the foundation of the new Temple was laid...but beyond that nothing. Well...that's not completely true. The folks hadn't completely gone to sleep...They were busy. They were busy building houses...Developing their communal life... Sowing & reaping & making money...raising their kids & defending themselves from their Samaritan neighbours to the north who hated the idea that the Sth Kingdom was being rebuilt when their land was still pretty much a disaster. They were busy expanding their financial interests...doing everything they could to be a nation & a prosperous city. They knew they were never going to Make Israel Great Again...they had been crushed too far down for that...but they were determined to make their lives better for their children & grandchildren & erase the stain & shame of defeat & destruction & captivity to the best of their ability.

So for about a generation: 15-20 years they invested in themselves. Think about it... Their whole identity was as God's people...chosen by God to bear his image his will his purpose his glory to the world. They were called to be a light to the nations... to manifest the power & glory & goodness & unfailing love of God to their pagan neighbours such that one day all nations would be drawn to the God they knew in worship & obedience. Sound like anyone else you know?

And they became...invisible...indistinguishable from their neighbours...looked just like every other nation...acted just like everyone else around them. Invested their lives in all the good urgent things...sowing & reaping, expanding their land holdings, putting things aside for a rainy day, saving for retirement, making sure the kids had a start when they got older...And they did it well. They prospered. Their flocks flourished. The land blossomed. Their kids grew up free from want. They even put panelling in their houses...panelling! They were living **LARGE...**

You've heard me say it 1000X...you'll probably hear it 1000 more...Show me your calendar & show me your bank account & I'll show you your god...Show me how you spend your time & how you spend your \$\$\$ & I'll tell you what you worship. Haggai's career lasted a grand total of 4-6 months...not quite as short as Jonah who fired off 1 sermon sat under a bush & got cranky with God because people listened...but pretty short...He had 1 message...You're going about life backwards. You're doing this wrong. You're building your houses w/ panelling no less while God's house sits untouched unfinished unbeautiful...You're living in opulence & affluence while God's Temple (the heart & soul of your nation) is a mess...it's a foundation & a pile of rubble. You're securing your fortune but you've forgotten your future rests with God.

You're building a legacy that will never last & ignoring your destiny which is found only in your devotion to the Father & will last forever. *This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.'* Then the Lord sent this message through the prophet Haggai: *"Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?"*

How many times have we handed God the round tuit? Put off serving until we have fulfilled a career goal or got kids out of the house? Put off spending time with him because we are too busy? Put off giving because we just want to get our mortgage, our debt, our super in order? It's rarely deliberate or planned. But that kind of self-centered backwards living can easily lead to squeezing God & his blessings out of our lives. What are the things that squeeze God to the edges of your life?

That's exactly what happened to the people of Israel as they returned from exile. They were too busy with building their own homes & lives rather than re-building the temple. They shifted the center of their existence from living in relationship with God to living successfully & profitably in the world – with terrible result. God will not be pushed to the edges of our life. He has saved, rescued & called us for a purpose. When we live for any other purpose...*Look at what's happening to you! You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!*

This generation of God's people had more wealth, more security, more opportunity than 3-4 generations of their ancestors & they were still not finding life satisfying or fulfilled...Why? *Look at what's happening to you! Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, & rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it & be honoured, says the Lord.* Jesus said, *What does it profit a person to gain the whole world but forfeit their soul?* That truth has never changed. When the axis of my life is me...my comfort my security my satisfaction my kids & their sport their entertainments their stuff...when I invest more heavily in keeping my family happy than in seeking the delight of the Father... When I invest more heavily in taking care of the daily business of my life than in actually listening for the Father's voice...When every opportunity is addressed on the basis of CONVENIENCE rather than OBEDEnce...*Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!* WOW

What did CS Lewis say: "Pain is often the megaphone for God." That gnawing frustration & dissatisfaction & lack of success in some area & the always wanting more but not getting it...rat on a wheel sort of experience...might be a megaphone. Haggai even hears what sounds unthinkable: *"You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. When you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses. It's because of you that the heavens withhold the dew & the earth produces no crops. I have called for a drought on your fields & hills—a drought to wither the grain & grapes & olive trees & all your other crops, a drought to starve you & your livestock & to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get."*

Ultimately complacency & self-centred living puts us at odds with/working at contrary purposes to God...When we abandon our call as his people to live for our own ends...When we take centre stage 1st chair primary place...build our kingdom God has no choice but to withdraw his blessing...Now not every tragedy not every disaster not every crisis is a rebuke for disobedience...but when the crisis comes back...when the same mishaps occur again & again when the you can mark your calendar by the same things transpiring over & over & over again...when you live the same patterns for years...cry the same poor me song with dozens of verses... Perhaps the next verse should be: *Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, & Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, & the whole remnant of God's people began to **obey** the message from the Lord their God. When they heard the words of the prophet Haggai, whom the Lord their God had sent, the people **feared** the Lord. Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave the people this message from the Lord: "I am with you, says the Lord!"*

God's call is to today...to the opportunities to bless & do good & encourage & share the good news the hope within us & give generously & deepen our trust...to respond in obedience to Christ who calls us to put aside everything else for the sake of the Kingdom of love & the King of glory...because it is **FOR** His glory & **INTO** His love that we have been redeemed...We have not been entrusted with a doctrine, a life-tip, a secret code to the universe, or a new political system to force the world to behave. We're drawn to a person: Jesus crucified - risen – ruling - forgiving Savior & Lord, & from that living life-changing encounter/relationship with Jesus we have today to make that reality visible in every moment...to build a life that reflects our status as a temple of the Holy Spirit...child of God Why am I here? Hear it like this *"I passed on to you what was most important & what had also been passed on to me..."* This is what you need to know *"Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, & he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said."* *And just as each person is destined to die once & after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him. Eagerly living that reality today Eagerly handing on that good news – Eagerly making this life His life through you.*

Let's pray with that in mind...**Gracious Father, forgive us when we live as if you didn't matter. Forgive us when we live as if we are all that matters. Take every moment, every day and in us reveal your presence, your power, and your saving love. Take from us whatever stands as a distraction to our obedience and be radiant in joy among us. Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.**