

Sermon of Haggai 2:10-23

Week 4

Series: God First

Theme: Consider God's Purposes

**Introduction:** Today will be the last sermon in my series out of Haggai – God First: Consider Your Ways. This series has been challenging to me and I trust to you as well. We've learned some things along the way:

- 1) God has challenged us to consider our priorities. He commands us to put as priority our spiritual lives, to build his temple, to put him and his mission at the center of our lives and the church.
- 2) God has also challenged us to consider our obedience to him. He commands us not only to hear his Word, but to respond to it. Not only to agree with it, but to allow ourselves to be changed by it.
- 3) Last week God challenged us to consider his glory. We were challenged with the truth that when God is with his people we can have great expectations. God moves on toward the future, and we can celebrate the work he's done in the past but we can't get stuck there because he is still working and he is still glorious. And he wants to fill his house, the church, us with his glory.

This week's theme: Consider God's Purposes

Here's this week's main idea, write this down. If you don't get anything else, get this and put it on your mirror and let it be a reminder to you every morning. Ok? Here it is: **God purposes to restore that which is ruined.**

Illustration – Born Again Beach

Here's the point: Like the restoration of this beach that was ruined, God desires to bring his restoration to our lives. It's a work that in many ways he surprises us with. And today Haggai will paint a picture of what it looks like for God to bring his restoration to a ruined people: God moving his people from a place of defilement and uncleanness to a place of blessing.

So this morning I have for you a reality of this restoration process and then four questions the text asks of us. Questions we need to have an answer to if we are going to experience the restoration God intends for his people.

Reality: The work of renewal is a long-term process in the life of the believer.

- Now I'm not talking about being made new, new birth, that happens instantaneously at the moment of salvation – what I am talking about is Rom. 12, it's the practical, day by day work the Lord desires to do in our lives.
- *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*

- This process, this renewal process is a long-term process. It's a day-by-day, choices matter, reorienting process. You will not be renewed if Jesus is important today but not tomorrow, if God is at the center on Sunday but then every other day is yours to command, yours to own. The temple would never be built. Can you imagine if that's how they built the temple in Haggai? The work of renewal is a long-term process.

*2:10 – “On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet”*

- Dec 18<sup>th</sup> – 3 months after the work on the temple began. They have been faithfully working on this process of renewal. Is the temple finished yet? No. In fact in many ways the work has just begun. The Temple would not be completed until 516 BC – roughly four years later. So the people had to be committed long-term to the work of renewal, the building of the temple. Sure enough there would be trials along the way but they would be faithful to the process.

That's the reality, God is telling us to be faithful to the process, now here come the questions. The first is found starting in v. 11:

*2:11 - “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: <sup>12</sup> ‘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.” <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.” <sup>14</sup> 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.*

### **Question #1: Have you been made clean?**

- What's going on here? Haggai's first question makes reference to the Sin offering – God's law in the OT was based on a sacrificial system in which animals were sacrificed as an offering for the people. This reference to the sin offering comes from Lev 6:27 – anyone who touches the meat of the sin offering is made holy. Holiness transferred from the consecrated object to the person.
  - o The question he is then asking is, “can that person then go make something else clean?” The answer is no. Because cleanliness is not contagious, it doesn't just rub off on someone else.
  - o If I'm dirty and in need of a bath I can't just walk by someone who just took one and touch them and poof I'm clean. Cleanliness is not contagious.
- So then he asks about defilement. This is a reference to Lev. 22:1-9 which states that a person is defiled when they come into contact with a dead body. They become unclean. – Haggai's question to them is, “can that person then go make something else unclean?” The answer is of course, “Yes.”

**Illustration: Anna and the sprinkles**

- God's point is this: We are all unclean. Sin has tainted us. If it is only the offering or the sacrifice of something originally clean, the unblemished lamb, that makes something or someone else acceptable in the sight of God, then there is no work that we can do or offering that we can bring to the Lord that will bring renewal to our lives, something else has to do it.

Application: And we can see by the way that the people of Haggai lived and by the way that we too live, the people had allowed sinful patterns to take up residence in their lives. Because of that their offerings to God, their works, all that they tried to do came to nothing and were meaningless when it came to accomplishing God's work or realizing God's blessings.

And this is where the process of renewal needs to start. Sin needs to be dealt with. This is the first question this morning that God's Word asks of us.

### **Have you been made clean?**

- Building the temple was Israel's act of obedience, they repented and reoriented themselves. Because of that God began to restore his people to a place of blessing and life once again.
- So it is with us. Only our temple is our body and the way our temple gets restored is by allowing God to remove that which is dead from it and give us new life in its place. The Bible calls this being born again or being saved. And the Bible teaches that this can only be accomplished through our faith in Christ. Why?

Because, like in the sin offering, the blood of the perfect, unblemished lamb was shed and that unblemished state was then transferred to the person who was made holy by it. So too, the shedding of blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, God's perfect and unblemished Lamb, became the sacrifice for us in which he takes our sin and washes us clean before God. It was only because he was clean, holy, sinless that he is able to remove the sin from our lives.

- But we can't do it without the sacrifice. We are either clean or not. But we can't simply make ourselves clean. We need God to make us clean, and we do that through faith by allowing Christ to contact our lives and make us clean.

That's the first question God asks of his people, here's the second one:

### **Question #2: What is the state of your life?**

*2:15 – "Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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."*

- God says "Consider" – lit. "set your hearts" – Set your hearts on something this day. Take a look at your life. How are you faring?

- I want to be careful here, because I know that there are some people among us who are dealing with some very heavy or complex issues (cancer, wayward children/parents, loss of job, sickness, or mental health, etc.) and I don't want to misspeak or for you to think me insensitive to these life shaking issues.

So let me tell you what I'm not saying, and what God's Word is not saying in this context. What it is NOT saying is that if your life is hard, or if you are experiencing any trouble, or trial, or hardship – what is it NOT saying is that you are doing something wrong, that you are in some way living in sin, or not a Christian – God forbid you hear that this morning.

- Just as Job was blameless before God and God still allowed him to experience extreme trial, so too I believe that we can be right before God and still experience suffering. In many cases these people have a faith in God that would put many of us, myself included, to shame.

- So if that is not what God is asking by this question, what is he saying?

God is addressing the issue of heart orientation in our lives. He's asking us to consider what our hearts have been set on in the past. And he is asking us to set our hearts on him from this day forward.

- There's a word play in the Hebrew here, which we can see a bit of in English, which points out that people are coming to a lot of things but God says, "They do not come to me." In search of prosperity and fullness we constantly gather and save and go after heaps of things – who here would like a heap of money? – it won't bring you fulfillment. It won't satisfy the deepest desires of your life.

All this effort spent gathering, striving after things just leaves us wanting, never having enough, always lacking in some way. God says, "There's no lack found in me, and I'm trying to teach you that." Set your hearts on me this day and that which you come to will be satisfying to you.

- God would say, "I'm not going to promise you that you will always have a job, but I can promise that you will always be provided for. I won't promise to keep you from trial, sickness, cancer, but I will fill you in the midst of it."
- What do we set our hearts on church? Heaps? Wine? Or Yahweh – our life giving, covenant keeping, ever-present God?

Have you been made clean?

What is the state of your life? Are you filled? Are you at peace?

**Question #3: Where is God calling you to trust him?**

*2:18 – "Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: <sup>19</sup>Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you."*

- The 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month - this would have been the time of the year to begin sowing seed for next year's harvest. There would have been no seed in the barn – they had been lacking for a long time, barely getting by – and what little they had would have been scattered. So the barns would have been empty. So the visual was a call to them to trust that God would provide for them.

The question was “Is the seed yet in the barn?” The answer is, “No!” And God says, “The reality is I’m the one who puts it there, not you. Will you trust me to do that?”

- See our mindset when it comes to spiritual pursuit is that we have all of our own issues that need our attention and yet God is calling on us to do something that doesn't solve our problems, that isn't practically helpful to us, in fact in many ways we simply view it as a waste of time and a waste of what little resources we have.

How is reading my Bible going to help me pay my bills? How is going to church going to put food on my table? How is living according to someone else's will going to satisfy my desires?

- Church listen: God says, “Because I rule and reign over all those things, and your satisfaction, and provision, and blessing are all found in me. I am king, I am gatekeeper, I give and take away, I am the source of life.” And strive as we may, fulfillment of our hearts cannot fully be found outside of the mighty hand of God.

God's purposes are to restore that which lies in ruins.

Have you been made clean?

How are you faring? What's the state of your life?

Is the seed yet in the barn? Where do we need to place trust in him?

#### **Question #4: Do you know your purpose?**

*2:20 – “The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, <sup>21</sup> “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, <sup>22</sup> and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. <sup>23</sup> On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”*

- Do you know your purpose? In this final part of the book God addresses Zerubbabel specifically. In every other address in the book it was him with the high priest and the people. But not now – this one's for him. Why?
- Because of God's purposes. In Jer. 22 King Jehoiachin is symbolized as God's signet ring which he tore off his right hand and flung into exile. Broken relationship. Here God restores that relationship. Zerubbabel was

in the line of David, in the line of kings. God is reaffirming to him that he has been chosen, hand-picked, to carry out God purposes.

- We see here that God's purpose is to usher in a new kingdom and bring restoration once again to that which has been ruined. This would be a kingdom not made by human hands but by the very hand of God. One in which he rules and reigns in the hearts of people once again and has restored the broken relationship between us and him.

Who would bring that kingdom? God's messiah, Jesus Christ, born from the line of David. And John says in his gospel concerning Jesus, "To all who receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor by the will of the flesh, but of God.

- God made Zerubbabel like his signet ring. This is a powerful reminder that God deeply loved Zerubbabel and Israel, and that God was entrusting him with His authority, which is symbolized by the ring. This offer of authority is a step beyond forgiveness of Israel; it is a declaration of the restoration of the close relationship between God and his people which they had lost in the exile. God not only forgives, he not only redeems, he not only blesses, but he also restores.
- And as God entrusted Zerubbabel once again with his authority, Jesus has entrusted us with the same authority. He says in the great commission, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Paul tells us in Romans that we have been made heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. In Corinthians it states that we are Christ's ambassadors. And our purpose is to take the good news of God's kingdom to the world so that all might find their restoration by being reconciled to God.

When the Lord returns to complete his kingdom, may he find us working to build up his church. Amen.