

God is in the Little Things

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[0:00] Already full. Sweet, sweet morning, you guys. Let me quick open up in prayer. Father, I have been so blessed by your spirit and your presence today through our worship,! Your sharing of our lives and our hearts through drawing near to you in prayer.

Now, Father, I pray exactly as we just sang. May there be less of me and more of you. May your spirit continue the sweet work that you have already been working this morning. Give me words to say. And Lord, more than anything, take the bumbling, fumbling, and stumbling words of my mouth and apply them powerfully and encouragingly in a way that gives hope and lifts our eyes up towards you, Lord Jesus, one whom we love, that you would be magnified and glorified this morning.

And it is in your great and holy name we pray. Amen. A few weeks ago, when we started our series on Haggai, I gave a little bit of background as to why we chose to go through Haggai this summer. And I had mentioned that I met with Pastor Bill, talked about the possibility of me stepping in while he's out in the mountains. And he asked, what makes sense?

[1:26] What are you thinking about going through? And I said Haggai because Haggai had been speaking to Carolyn and I a lot at that time. And we were in and coming out of a season of a lot of discouragement.

There was in our church situation, some of you know, our church had had a very painful, slow decline, leading to eventually the church closing its doors.

And we found ourselves churchless. And at the exact same, literally the exact same week that all that stuff started, I had started a new job that was in every way a challenge.

And the kind of job that I woke up every morning and really, really dreaded the next nine hours of my life. I wanted anything in the world. I would do any job in the world but the one that I had.

And both of these factors were discouraging me. And then my response to those discouragements was to drift. And again, I mentioned that a few weeks ago, that my response to those discouragements was not lean into Christ and trust him through it.

[2:36] It was start to withdraw as much as I can, wherever I can, to preserve myself. And I had drifted from a life that was focused on God and his glory most fundamentally.

And I began to drift into a life of just self-preservation and seeking my own comfort. And it was in that season that the Lord sent Haggai to Carolyn and I in our nightly time in the Word.

And I was encouraged because the point of this whole book is that God seeks his drifting people, calls them back to faithfulness, and encourages them to remain faithful in spite of their discouragements.

So the first few messages have been more heavy on that front side, God pursuing his drifting people and calling them back. Now we get to see how does God encourage his discouraged people.

When the Israelites were discouraged, when they wanted to quit building the temple, quit being faithful, what did God say to them?

[3:35] And then therefore, what does he say to us? So that's what we're going to see from Haggai chapter 2. So I invite you to open up your Bible with me to Haggai chapter 2. Specifically, we'll be reading verses 1 through 9.

If you don't know where to find Haggai, I find it easiest if you can find Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and then flip backwards from there. Go past Malachi, past Zechariah, and then you should hit Haggai.

Or alternatively, it'll be here up on the screen. So I invite you to stand with me as you are able as I read from God's Word. Haggai chapter 2, 1 through 9.

In the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak, the high priest.

[4:51] Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts.

According to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt, my spirit remains in your midst, fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts, Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of the nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. And the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts.

And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts. Let me pray. Father, Lord, I thank you for your word.

I thank you that you are the kind of God who sees us in our discouragement and does not rebuke us, but encourages us with truth. And so, Father, I pray that as we talk through this text, may you do the work that only you can do, by your Holy Spirit, to teach us from your word, lift our eyes up towards you, Lord Jesus, and show us how we can continue in faithfulness, in spite of the many, many discouragements in our lives.

[6:26] And it is in your great and holy name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Just to give a little road map of how I want to walk through this text, a little log, we always try to walk through a text verse by verse.

And so here's how I want to walk through this text. We'll start with a little bit of a context refresher, especially for those who maybe haven't been here for some of the background in Haggai. We're jumping into a kind of, not obscure, maybe not the right word, but a book that's not as well known. And so it might be helpful to review some of that context. And then we'll jump into describing the people's discouragement that they were feeling, and then talk through the two ways that God encouraged them through their discouragement.

So starting with a context refresher. What is the book of Haggai about? Well, Haggai, the book in the Old Testament, and where it fits in the Old Testament is towards the end.

So God had taken Israel. Israel was God's people, his covenant people. God had said to Israel, you're going to be my people. I'm going to be your God. And they had the Mosaic covenant, which had all these different things, the commandments, how they were to live.

[7:35] As part of that were the blessings and curses. And most pertinent to Haggai, one of the curses was that if Israel continued in disobedience, they would be sent into captivity.

They would be sent to be slaves in a foreign country. And so after literally centuries of Israelites continuing to disobey and disobey and disobey, and God sending prophet after prophet, trying to call them back, eventually he does what he said he would do, and he gives them in, and he sends them into captivity.

The nation of Babylon comes in, they destroy the city, they take Israelites captive, and most tragic of all, they destroy the temple of God in Jerusalem, which was where God's presence was, was the ultimate sign that God was displeased.

And after a time of being slaves in this foreign country, God then brings them back into the land. He raises up a new country, Persia. They let the Israelites go, and they say, yeah, go back to Jerusalem. You build your temple.

We want you to do that. And so the Israelites go back, and they say, okay, let's do that. And they start building the temple for a little bit. And then they immediately come face to face with some internal discouragement and external opposition, which leads to them stopping the work of building the house of the Lord.

[9:00] They stop working on the temple, and that's why God sends Haggai. So that's the background. Why, where does Haggai fit? God sends Haggai to this discouraged and oppressed people to encourage them to continue faithfully building the temple.

And we saw in chapter one in the last few weeks that the Lord first addressed their sin and their excuse. The people had an excuse for not obeying God. Their excuse was now's not a good time. And the Lord, and we already walked through all of the convicting stuff dealing with that. Now we're going to see the Lord dealing with the other side, which is the people's discouragement. We're going to see how He encourages them, lifts them up, what promises He gives them, which then fuel them to continue in faithfulness. So starting in verses one and two, and we see that in the seventh month of the 21st day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet. So this is happening about 30 days after the people start obeying. The people started obeying. We talked about that last week. They repent. They start doing what God had called them to do. [10:13] And then a month later, the discouragement must have been growing. And that's often how it goes, right? We feel an initial like boost of like, yeah, I want to obey.

This is great. This is good. And then a certain amount of time goes by and then discouragement, other things can kind of get in the way and we can lose that initial juice that we had in our pursuit of pleasing God.

And so this is about a month later and the word of the Lord comes to address the people's discouragement. In verse three, it says, Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? This may sound a little bit familiar for those who were there or first week because this is the exact same discouragement that led to them stopping building the temple the first time.

When they first started working on the temple, one of the reasons why they stopped was because of this exact same thing. There was the leaders of Israel, the heads of households, the ones who were the older folk among them, they had actually remembered seeing the first temple.

[11:27] They had remembered seeing Solomon's temple, one of the great wonders of the ancient world with all of the gold, with all of the silver, all of the dimensions, and they had seen it. They had lived it.

They had been there. And then when they were in exile, presumably they probably would have been hearing about it. They would have been reading the scriptures and reading 1 and 2 Kings. They would have heard and remembered the descriptions.

And that would have kept the memory afresh in their mind of this great and glorious temple. And now they come back and they start working on it and it feels worthless.

This is, they lay the foundation. They see the work that's starting to happen. And it's so much smaller. It's no longer a temple of gold and silver as Solomon's temple was.

This is a temple made with, God had told them, go up to the hills, cut down some wood. This is a log, a log building. It's not too far off from where we're at. Imagine going from the most grand glory, a building coated with gold, with stories high, massive different courts and all this stuff and all these different symbols going to a tiny little log cabin.

[12:38] That was unintentional. The little log. And they were discouraged. They had this idea of what their work would be like.

They had this idea in their mind, this memory of what faithfulness would look like, what the temple should look like. And then they looked at the actual reality of their life and thought, this is so much smaller than I thought it would be.

This is so much less impressive than I thought it would be. And they get discouraged. And that's a universal feeling, isn't it?

I think we can all feel that way to some degree or another. We can look at whatever the reality is of our lives. We can look at what God has called us to, whatever our lot in life is, and think, this is pretty small.

This is pretty unspectacular. This is pretty imperfect. What's the point? I mentioned that part of the reason why we're going through Haggai is I was feeling a lot of discouragement at work.

[13:47] And I still feel a lot of discouragement at work, to be honest. It even hit me this last week. I had just spent an hour and a half going through all this code to find that I had one character wrong, and it was breaking everything.

And I spent an hour and a half just combing through, trying to find this one character that's causing it to go poorly. And I finally found it, and I just went, backspace, semicolon. And it was completely fixed.

And I sat back in my chair, and I thought, that was so pointless. That was such a worthless use of my time. An hour and a half to do backspace, semicolon.

And then that led to me reflecting a little bit more, and just thinking about where I'm at in my life in my mid-twenties. Because I'm not, my life doesn't look like what I thought it would in some ways. I had thought by my mid-twenties, I would have been a martyr on the mission field by now. I thought that it would have been, you know, living some sort of crazy life where I'm like dodging bullets while baptizing people left, right, and center.

[14:53] Some sort of crazy lifestyle radically living for God, and instead, I'm looking for semicolons in code. Great metaphor.

That was your bullet. That's right. That was semicolons. That's right. But truly, and so what do I say in that moment when I look at my life and it feels so much smaller than I thought it would be.

It feels so much less spectacular than I thought my life would be. Well, let's see what the Lord said to his people who felt similarly.

He gives two different encouragements, and the first one comes in verses 4 and 5. He is with them. It says, Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts.

[16:00] According to the covenant that I made with you when I came out of Egypt, my spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. Fear not. And so pretty clearly, the first encouragement that the Lord gives at the heart of it is this idea that God is with them, and that is what makes it worthwhile.

The Lord encourages them by telling them that they see it, they look at it, and say, That looks like nothing. That's nothing in my eyes. But the Lord is saying, It's not nothing because I'm with you in it. I'm there. And so therefore, it's not nothing. Let me say this. The value of our lives is not measured by the size or the apparent glory as we see it.

The value and worthwhileness of the things that we do in our lives comes simply from God's presence with us.

It's not as important. We can so often get this backwards. We can feel like, I want to do in my life important things, which isn't necessarily a bad desire, but we use the wrong definition of what important is.

[17:19] We think important means big, lots of people. We think important means, I don't know, spiritual, extreme, radical, whatever it is that we can use it and we can totally overlook how the Lord defines.

What makes something important? What makes something important is that God is in it. And that's what makes it valuable. That's what makes it worthwhile to spend your time doing. If the Lord is in it with you, if God is with you in it, then the work is valuable no matter how small or unspectacular it feels to us.

But I want to be clear when I say that this God is with us, we live in kind of a weird time where I think people want to kind of like universalize Christian truths to kind of apply universally.

And so we actually water this down to mean that we think God being with me is either some sort of just mystical sense of benevolence that's sort of there for all humanity or that it's some subjective feeling in my heart or something like that.

But I want to point out because it's here in the text, this is, when God says, I am with you, that's a very specific promise rooted in two objective realities.

[18:39] That is a covenant promise, a promise of saying, I am your God and you are my people rooted in two things here in the text. And the first one is God's being with us is a covenant relationship.

It's rooted in something outside of myself. It's rooted in the covenant that he has made with us. For the Israelites, that was the covenant in Egypt.

That was the covenant with Moses. So when you read in your Bible from Exodus to Deuteronomy, that's how God related to Israel was within that covenant. But we have a better covenant.

Don't we? That's what the book of Hebrews says. It says that we have a better covenant because it is enacted on better promises. So as much as this is true for them, it's even more true for us.

That God is with us. And so what is the covenant relationship that we have with God now? My simplest definition, our covenant relationship with God now is the gospel.

[19:48] It's the good news of who Jesus is. It is the reality and the good news that though we are sinners, though we live selfishly, though we live ignoring God, and therefore we are separate from God and experience none of His mercy and grace by nature.

In spite of that, God in His love sent Christ to do as we talked about on the wondrous cross. He went to the wondrous cross taking the penalty that I deserve from my selfishness, my self-orientation, my God-ignoringness, my worship of all the wrong things, all the things. Christ took all of that on Himself. And now, through Him, I'm forgiven of my sin. And even more than that, united to Jesus Christ.

That is the new covenant promise that we have. It is the gospel for our forgiveness of our sins and our union with Christ. And that is the objective reality that we can plant our flag into from this text. And so the reason why I want to emphasize this is because when I say I can take encouragement in my work or whatever because God is with me, that has nothing to do with how obedient I've been.

[21:09] That doesn't have to do with how I feel in any given moment. That reality that God is with me in my work is rooted in the covenant He's made with me, on the death of Jesus and His resurrection and my union with Him.

And that's the objective reality that I carry with me wherever I go and in whatever I do that gives life and purpose to everything that I do even if I don't feel it and even if I just spent the last two hours in sin.

That covenant is the objective basis for this promise. And very similar to that is the second reality that God roots this promise in in our text, which is the covenant that He makes with us and His Spirit that is with us.

Very similar, closely tied to what I just said but as just simply how is God with me in my unspectacular work?

Because God the Holy Spirit is in me as I do the unspectacular work. See for the Israelites the Holy Spirit dwelt among them collectively. But now in the new covenant the Holy Spirit He dwells with us collectively and individually.

[22:23] He indwells each and every one of us. So in whatever you do wherever you go the Holy Spirit is if you are in Christ if you have trusted in Christ He is with you wherever you go.

And so those are the two objective realities. I want to go back to the to the promise. The encouragement. This is the heart of the encouragement that God is giving. Work for I am with you. And so what does this look like? What does this look like for this to actually encourage me in my day to day life? You can fill in the blanks with whatever it looks like for you.

Here's what it looks like for me. So when I wake up dreading going to work dreading that I'm having to spend an hour and a half looking for that evil little semicolon.

And I sit back in my chair and I think Lord why am I not dodging bullets in the Middle East helping people come to know you or whatever.

[23:23] What do I say to myself in that moment? I say to myself your perspective is totally wrong Josiah. You're viewing this as if this code or whatever is objectively unimportant.

But he says to me no this is a way of worshipping me. So I will literally as I even did that this week as I'm in that moment feeling discouraged I will pull up my little note card with Colossians 3 which says again whatever you do work heartily as for the Lord and not for men knowing and by the way this verse in Colossians who is this written to?

This was written to slaves who worked seven days a week 18 hours a day to build a Colosseum which will be used for people to die in.

But the Lord says you're serving me. That's what makes this valuable. You will receive the inheritance as your reward even if it feels insignificant to you even if it's crushing to you serve me be with me in this and so my self conversation in that moment what I preach to myself what I pray and talk to the Lord about in that moment is this is not well if I can let this be worthless or I can acknowledge God is with me in this and this is an opportunity this is a way for me to worship him in my work because of yeah and because God is with me in it therefore it's valuable.

Searching for the semicolon maybe for some days or whatever might not be valuable but as I invite the Lord in as I acknowledge his presence as I say Lord I'm doing this for you I'm serving him and therefore it is valuable.

[25:16] It doesn't matter how small it is it doesn't matter another example that comes to my mind is folding laundry. it's strong I kind of hate folding laundry because because it's so pointless.

I'm folding it just for it to be there again I'm going to wear it again it's going to get washed again and I'm going to be here seven days later folding the exact same thing spending half an hour of my life doing this thing that I'm going to do again in seven days.

Why even do it? Why not just have a pile whatever? But even that even my folding of the laundry do it to the glory of God right?

The apostle Paul has a similar saying I didn't put this in there but what does he say? Whatever you do whether you eat or drink do all to the glory of God so why not search for the missing semicolon in my code to the glory of God?

Why not fold my laundry to the glory of God? And that is what will make the work valuable. Never think that you have to do these big things in order to be faithful.

[26:21] Instead simply whatever you do do it with God and it will be valuable. I'd even challenge you this week in whatever tasks are on your plate do it with God.

See how your week is a little different. Do it with God. He's with you in the little things. That's the first encouragement that the Lord gives but he's not done. He gives the second encouragement as well.

I'm going to try to go through this quickly. I will admit I really struggle to understand this so I'm going to try to walk you guys through it but it's a little complicated so bear with me. Everybody buckled in? Ready to go?

Alright. Second encouragement that the Lord gives to us from verses 6-9. For thus says the Lord of hosts yet once more in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land and I will shake all nations so that the treasures of all nations shall come in and I will fill this house with glory says the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the Lord of hosts and the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former says the Lord of hosts and in this place I will give peace.

[27:38] So the heart of the second encouragement is this is that the Lord is saying it doesn't seem glorious to you right now but it will be.

There is a greater glory that's coming out of this and specifically that happens through the Lord shaking the heavens and the earth and causing the treasures of the nation to come in.

So what does that mean? If that makes intuitive sense to any of you become a preacher. This does not make intuitive sense to me. So my two questions as I wrestled through how do we understand this?

How is this an encouragement to the Israelites? He's encouraging the Israelites don't pay attention to how small and insignificant this feels. I'm going to bring a temple of greater glory in and I want to figure out but he's going to do that by shaking the heavens and the earth and bringing in the treasures of the nations.

What does that mean? These are my two questions that I want us to answer that will help us then interpret the passage. What does it mean that God will shake the heavens and the earth? And then what is the temple of greater glory that he's referring to?

[28:43] So how do we go about answering these questions? Today we get to cheat a little bit because the answer is actually given to us in the New Testament.

In Hebrews these exact verses from Haggai 2 are quoted verbatim and explained for us. So praise God. We don't have to do that much hard thinking.

This is from if anyone you want to look there this is from Hebrews chapter 12. At that time his voice oh and I should maybe give a little bit of context before we jump in here while you turn there in your Bibles.

Hebrews 12 the context for this Hebrews is all about Jesus is better. Jesus is better than angels he's better than Moses he's better in every way and specifically this section is talking about Mount Sinai versus Mount Zion and again complicated stuff but he's basically saying here was there was a certain goodness that came at Mount Sinai when God gave the law.

There was a certain amount of goodness that came there but there's a way better goodness that we have in Mount Zion which is the biblical symbol for God's eternal heavenly kingdom.

[29:54] So that's the context he's comparing and contrasting Sinai and Zion Old Testament law God's eternal kingdom. That's the contrast enter verse 26 at that time when God gave the law Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth but now he has promised yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.

This phrase yet once more indicates the removal of things that are shaken that is the things that have been made in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.

So this is the New Testament interpretation of our passage in Haggai. Make sense? Got it? Well I didn't. It took me a long time to digest this.

So if you got it you're quicker than me. So again asking these two questions how does the author of Hebrews understand God shaking the heavens and the earth?

[31 : 11] How does the author of Hebrews interpret God shaking the heavens and the earth and Haggai? And what does the author of Hebrews say is the temple of greater glory? So starting with that first question this one's pretty clear.

the shaking of the heavens and the earth the author of Hebrews tells us is actually the removal of creation. Whoa does that feel big?

That's a lot bigger than that's a big yeah a lot bigger than just silver or gold coming in. But he defines it very clearly for us here.

The things when it talks about the things being shaken he's talking about the removal of the things that have been made. So that tells us that for the author of Hebrews as he reads Haggai chapter 2 he understands that this is actually referring to an end times thing to at the end of creation when all of this creation is going to be removed.

All of this these things that have been made are going to be shaken or are going to be removed when God shakes the heaven and the earth. So what does it mean that God will shake the heavens and the earth?

[32 : 25] According to the author of Hebrews that means the removal of this current heavens and earth at the end time when God will bring then the new heavens and new earth and all that will remain going back to our text and all that will remain is the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

And this also doubles as the answer to our other question. So what is the temple of greater glory? Is the temple a building? Is that the end time hope that we have? Are we looking forward to a great big building with lots of gold and silver?

What is the thing that we're looking forward to? It's not a building but a kingdom. A kingdom of God that cannot be shaken.

So putting these together and back to these two questions. How does the author of Hebrews tell us to interpret Haggai? He says we should interpret Haggai chapter 6 with the end of the world in view. With the end of times when God will remove this whole creation and bring about the new heavens and new earth and we should be thinking temple as the kingdom of God instead. Now let's go back through Haggai and see how that works itself out.

[33 : 36] When he talks about here the shaking the heavens and the earth as we've already said that's talking about end times removal of creation.

When he talks about the treasures of the nations coming in what do you think that that means in the end times? Are there any images from Revelation that come to mind there? Perhaps it's not the physical treasures of the nations but perhaps it is people from every tribe and tongue and people and language and nation coming in so then the way that this house will be filled with more glory is because now in our end time hope is that there will be people from every people group on the planet.

It's not just for Jews as it was in Haggai with a few exceptions. Now it is for all people. God will bring in the treasures from all nations from Kenya to Japan to India to wherever.

God has people who he will bring into this kingdom from all over and that is the treasure that he is bringing in to fill the house with glory and the peace that he promises here is not just a material prosperity.

The peace that he's talking about is the end times final peace that we will experience with God. When all of the tears are wiped away when all of the thorns and thistles are totally removed when there are no more horrible semicolons that I have to find.

[35 : 05] It's just us and the Lord. So how does that then so that's how the author of Hebrews he's pointing way forward to the end of times.

How does that encourage me in my disagreement? Go back to my chair as I just finished debugging my code. How does this encourage me in that moment? In short this world is not my

home.

My hope doesn't have to be in finding a more fulfilling career. That's not my hope. I don't have to find the most spectacular the most fulfilling thing in the world in order for my life to be valuable. I'm headed for a kingdom that will never be removed. I have an eternal hope that will never go away. this text is telling me all of whatever my current work is that feels unspectacular it's shakable anyways.

Who cares? I have an unshakable kingdom where I will spend forever and forever and ever with God in his presence and therefore my hope is in finding a better job more spectacular life.

[36 : 19] My hope is in God and his kingdom. So to just kind of wrap all this up what do we do when our lives look less impressive than we thought it would be?

What do we say to ourselves? Firstly invite God into all of whatever happens in our lives. Live your life with God and it will be valuable in the kingdom forever.

And then secondly remember that our hope is not in this life. This world is not our home. we will look forward to the unshakable kingdom and that is where our hope lies.

Let me pray. Father I thank you for these realities. I pray Father now that you would do the work that only you can do of applying this to our lives.

Cause us to live truly in communion with you throughout our whole week through the gospel remembering those fundamental gospel truths and our union with you and may that transform the way that we do everything down to our eating and drinking and to our code and whatever else may be in our laundry.

[37 : 34] And then Lord may we remember our eternal hope the kingdom that will not be shaken the hope that we have in eternity. May we set our hope not in shakable things of this creation but in the unshakable kingdom which will never be taken away and therefore may we offer up acceptable worship to you our God the consuming fire.

We love you Lord Jesus and it is in your name we pray. Amen.