

Putting God First

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[0 : 00] Just one more Bible reading from the book of Ezra, Ezra chapter 5, and you can find that on page 476, 477 of the church, Pew Bible.

Ezra chapter 5. The book of Ezra really gives the background to the book of Haggai. Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Edo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was over them.

Then Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

At that time, Tatanai, governor of the Trans-Euphrates, and Sheth Bonsai and their associates went to them and asked, Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?

They also asked, What are the names of the men constructing this building? But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

[1 : 28] This is a copy of the letter that Tatanai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar Bozani and their associates, the officials of the Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius.

The report they sent to him read as follows. To King Darius, cordial greetings. The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God.

The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work has been carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction. We questioned the elders and asked them, Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?

We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information. This is the answer they gave us. We are the servants of the God of the heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago.

One that a great king of Israel built and finished. But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

[2 : 35] However, in the first year of King Cyrus of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild the house of God. He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon.

Then King Cyrus gave them a man called Sheshbazar, with whom he had appointed governor. And he told him, Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem and rebuild the house of God on its site.

So this Sheshbazar came and laid the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present day, it has been under construction, but is not yet finished.

Now, if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. Then the king sent us his decision in this matter.

Amen. And we pray God would bless to us this reading from his word. It would be good if we had our Bibles open at Haggai. Haggai in particular, chapter one.

[3 : 47] The easiest way to find it is to actually go to the New Testament and go three books back. Through Malachi, through Zechariah, and we'll find Haggai. Well, as human beings, we have a fascination with people's words.

You can buy books that quote what people say. And in particular, words that seem to fascinate us are people's last words. The very final words they had to say.

And history records for us many influential historical figures. Maybe they said some interesting and inspiring things through their lifetimes. But their final words seem to be something that we grip onto and quote.

Because these are the last things they chose to say before they died. Well, Haggai, along with Zechariah and Malachi, are God's last words to his people.

Before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, his son. These are the final words that God spoke to his people. Before about 400 years of silence.

[4 : 56] Between the Old Testament and the New Testament. And God's word is so weighty. Because it comes from God. But these books have received little attention.

Despite their importance. Before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're going to do a short series in the book of Haggai. Over the next little while.

And see what God has to say to us. Through this small but very important book. It's only two pages here in the NIV. You could probably flip it over with your finger.

And completely miss it. But if we did that. We would be denying ourselves some very important spiritual lessons. For ourselves. And some challenges from our great God. But along with any historical book.

Especially in the prophets. We need to sketch in the history. To understand what was going on at the time. Because if we don't understand that. We're not going to understand the message of Haggai.

[5 : 52] So very briefly. This is what was going on. When Haggai was writing his message. It fits into the time period. Of the book of Ezra. And in particular.

Right in the middle of chapters 5 and 6. If you had a chronological bible. Which you can buy. Haggai would be slotted right in between Ezra chapter 5. And Ezra chapter 6.

Jerusalem. The capital city of Judah. Ezra had fallen to King Nebuchadnezzar. About 70 years or so. Before. In 5.8.6. And then in 5.38.

Under King Cyrus. As we read in Ezra. Some of the people start to return. To the land. That they had lost. God turned Cyrus' heart. So that he would be favourable.

Towards his people. And the purpose for returning to the land. Was to rebuild. The temple. Of the Lord. Which had been destroyed. When Nebuchadnezzar sacked.

[6 : 51] Jerusalem. The people faced huge. Opposition. To the extent. That the work came to a halt. For 15 years. The temple of the Lord.

Was lying. With its foundation laid. But. If you leave a building. For 15 years. Without doing anything to it. And only the foundations laid. Can you imagine what that building would be like? There's vegetation growing all over it.

There's probably some trees. Making their way up through. The cracks in the cement. There's weeds everywhere. It's hardly a sight. To look on and say. May the Lord. Be glorified. In this.

His people had stopped the work. For 15 years. And this is where the prophet. Haggai. And Zechariah. Prophesies at the same time. They come in. Haggai.

Was sent. By God. To speak to his people. In this situation. The Lord. Had had enough. And he was not allowing this situation. To continue. So Haggai.

[7 : 49] Preaches. Four. Sermons. Isn't it amazing? There are four sermons. In the book of Haggai. You see that. With a. There's a phrase. That's repeated. Over again.

It says. In a particular year. In the reign of Darius. On this day. And this month. The word of the Lord. Came to Haggai. You get that. Four times. In chapter 1.

Verse 1. In chapter 2. Verse 1. In chapter 2. Verse 10. And in chapter 2. Verse 20. Those are the beginnings. Of the four. Sermons. And each of them.

Have a different. Theological message. For God's people. Which we'll look at. As we go through. And these sermons. Were preached. Roughly in a five month. Period. Between August.

And December. 520. BC. So that's where we're at. At the time. And Haggai. Is not a prophet. To mince his words. He doesn't wax lyrical.

[8 : 43] He doesn't go into much poetry. He just says it as it is. Calling a spade. A spade. And today. We're going to consider. The first. Of these four sermons.

And it's the whole of chapter. One. And if we were summing up. The message of this sermon. It would be. Put God. And his work. First.

Put God. And his work. First. Or perhaps. We could use the words. Of the apostle Paul. In first Corinthians 15. Always give yourself. Fully. To the work of the Lord. Always give yourself. Fully. To the work of the Lord. So that's the theme. For today. And with that background set. Let's go in. To Haggai's first. Sermon. And it's. We break it down. Into three parts. God. Charges. Or brings a charge. Against his people. In verses 1 to 4. And then. God presents.

[9 : 39] A solution. To his people. In verses 5 to 11. And then. God encourages. His people. In verses 12. To 15. So he presents.

A charge. He presents. The solution. And then. He encourages them. So first. In verses 1 to 4. We have God's charge. Against his people. And it's very straightforward.

They had been neglecting. The work of the Lord. For 15 years. And now in verse 1. God has decided. To do something about it. We read there. In the second year.

Of Darius. On the first day. Of the sixth month. The word of the Lord. Came through the prophet. Haggai. To Zerubbabel. The son of Shealtiel. Governor of Judah.

And to Joshua. Son of Jehozadak. The high priest. You're thinking. Well. It's just a bunch of names. Isn't it? What does that really have. To teach us in the beginning? Well it actually has quite a lot.

[10 : 36] God is doing something here. By using these three. Particular people. Because in Haggai. Zerubbabel. And Joshua. We have the three great offices.

Of the Old Testament. We have the prophets. We have the priesthood. And we have in Zerubbabel. The kingship. The kingship. Haggai was a prophet of God.

Who brought the word of God. To the people. They stood as ambassadors. Bringing God's word. To his people. Zerubbabel. Was the grandson. Of King Jehoiakim.

Who was the last. True king of Judah. Before they were carried off into exile. He is the one. Who was the heir. To the throne. Of King David. And now he's a regional governor.

In Judah. And Joshua. Was the son of Saraiah. Who had been the high priest. Just before the exile. See what God is doing. He has been preserving.

[11 : 33] The prophets. The priests. And the kings. Despite this period. Of exile. Those who ruled the people. Those who brought God's word. To the people. And those who ministered.

Before the Lord. On behalf of the people. Were all brought together. Because God. Had something to say. To his people. And we'll return to that. Later on.

And to these leaders. And through them. To God's people. Comes God's charge. His charge. In verse two. This is what the Lord.

Almighty. Says. These people say. The time has not yet come. To rebuild. The Lord's house. Well what's the problem. With that.

So what. Fifteen years have passed. Does it really matter. Does it really matter. That the work. The work of the Lord. Has been neglected. The people are living. Quite a fairly decent life now. Their houses. Have been built themselves.

[12 : 29] That the land is okay. Things are okay. But the very purpose. For them being sent. Back into the land. Was that the Lord's temple. Would be rebuilt.

The whole point. Of God's people. Being set free. From Egypt. Hundreds of years before. Was so that they would. Worship the Lord. And God gave them the instructions. For the tabernacle.

And the ten commandments. And later the temple. And the worship laws. But for fifteen years. This work. Had not been done. The temple. Was an eyesore.

Sitting right up. On that big mount. In the middle of Jerusalem. Now the situation. Was difficult. For God's people. They faced heavy opposition. From the earliest days.

Of being back in the land. There was international tensions. King Cyrus. Didn't live long after. The people returned. To the land. He was followed by his son. Who dies.

[13 : 23] After a couple of months. And he starts a war. With Egypt. And in order for the armies. Of Babylon. To get through. To Egypt. Where do they have to go? They have to come straight.

Through the land. Of Judah. There is armies. Passing through. The territory. All the time. The harvest. Also hadn't been good. As Phil was saying.

In the children's address. They were eating. And not having their fill. The land was not producing.

The harvest. It should. They're putting their money. In purses. With holes in it. Inflation rates. Were high.

And also. The people's expectations. Had been dashed. Dashed. They returned to the land. With great gusto. The prophet Isaiah.

Had said to them. You will return to the Lord. And my glory. Will come upon you again. The prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel said. You will return. The temple will be rebuilt. And it will be like never before.

[14:18] Even compared to Solomon's temple. And has that happened? No. Because Isaiah and Ezekiel. Were prophesying. Of quite a different time. Which was yet to come.

But the people's hopes were dashed. And they became. Apathetic. They let their faith. Wander. They let their hearts wander. They let their minds wander.

They become apathetic. To the work of God. They were disinterested. It's not that they were against God's work. But they were apathetic. And disinterested.

I think that's more dangerous. Infinitely more dangerous. Is to be apathetic. And disinterested. In the work of the Lord. Now these were real problems.

That the people faced. But they were using these problems. As excuses. Not to do. God's work. Apathy is not saying no.

[15:14] To God's work. It's saying not yet. Not yet. The people were saying. Let's get everything sorted out first. And then we can be about.

God's work. Let's wait until that opposition dies down. Before we start rebuilding the temple. Let's wait until the political situation. Gets a bit more stable. And there's been a king on the throne.

For a number of years. Let's wait until our economy. Has recovered a bit. Let's wait until we are stronger. As a people. But they were totally.

Missing the point. The reason why. They were facing some of these difficulties. Is because they placed God in a box. And tried to bury him. Under that foundation.

In the temple. They weren't interested. In the Lord's work. They were waiting on circumstances. Becoming more favourable. As they judged them.

[16:09] But you know. There is never. A good time. To be about the Lord's work. And there is never. A bad time.

To be about the Lord's work. How can I say that. With so much confidence. Because we are always. To be about. The Lord's work. Whether it's a good time.

Or a bad time. We are to give ourselves. Fully. To the work. Of the Lord. When things are going well. We are to serve him. When things are quite difficult for us.

We are to serve him. It's always possible. To point to reasons. For not doing God's work. But you know. Even when things are messy.

As they so often are in our lives. God works through the mess. He's a God of order. He brings about order. To the mess. He brings about order. To the chaos.

[17:03] And that's why we press forward. Trusting in him. When the people face the opposition. They should have been saying. Lord what will you have us do. When they started to face difficulty in the land. Lord what would you have us do.

To continue the work of building the Lord's house. Trusting in him. Every step of the way. That's what they should have done. But they didn't. They used the opposition as an excuse.

For not serving the Lord. And what happens. When you don't serve the Lord fully as a Christian. What happens. What creeps in. Well verse 4 tells us.

And the Lord says to his people. Is it a time for you yourselves. Notice that's emphatic. You yourselves. That's reflective. It comes back on the people. You yourselves.

To be living. In your panelled houses. Where the house. My house. Remains. A ruin. Instead of being about God's work.

[18:00] They had drifted. They had replaced the Lord. With themselves. They were to be about their own work. Before the Lord. They had neglected his house. And when his house was lying neglected.

Their own houses. Got a makeover. Out comes the paint. Top quality. Out comes the wallpaper. Top quality. The panelled houses there.

And older houses. You would call it wainscotting. Some older houses still have that. Wainscotting. Panels going right along. In fact we've actually got wooden panels. Going along the side of this building.

Designed for decoration. They were doing all of that. In their own homes. And the house of God. Was lying. With wheat. Growing out.

Of the foundations. And that building. That neglect of the work. Was a physical symbol. Of the state. Of their own hearts.

[18 : 57] Before God. Their hearts. Were so disinterested in God. It was like spiritual weeds. Were growing up and choking. Their faith. Their faith was still like a flickering ember.

And it was about to be snuffed. Out. So it seemed. They had started. To do God's work. They were zealous about it. But apathy.

Had set in. They were excusing their apathy. By saying. That they didn't have. The resources. To be about the Lord's work. They didn't have. What was necessary. But you know something.

As Phil said again. Who is it. That provides the resources. In the first place. It's the Lord himself. They were trying. To do the Lord's work. And they'd taken their eyes.

From the Lord. And apathy. Is a very subtle thing. And it creeps into our lives. Very easily. The people here. Wouldn't have been aware of it. Before it crept into them.

[19 : 54] And then 15 years down the line. They're so far removed. From what they were. They probably didn't even notice it. Themselves. And it's so easy with us. So easy with us as well.

My own life. I can see apathy. But it creeps in so easily. So easily. I remember speaking to someone. Who said. I don't really need to come to church. Every Sunday.

Or on a Wednesday. For the prayer. I don't really need to do that. I can be a Christian. Out there. In the world. And I will use my gifts for God. And I don't need to come. To the Lord's house. Well first.

They stopped attending. The prayer meeting. And then they stopped attending. The evening service. And then the morning service. Became an optional extra. And before they knew it. They were so far away. From the Lord.

That they couldn't even call themselves. A Christian anymore. A little tiny bit of apathy. Had gone through their whole life. And before they knew it. They were far away from the Lord. It's a subtle tactic.

[20 : 51] Of the devil. Apathy. I hope. I wonder if you've read. MCS Lewis's book. The Screwtape Letters. It's an amazing book. He pictures a senior devil.

Training a junior devil. On how to do the work. And each devil gets a patient. Who is a. Who's someone who's not a Christian initially. And the whole work of the devil. Or the junior devil.

Is to prevent this person. From becoming a Christian. You're to do all in your power. Says the senior devil. To prevent this person. From becoming a Christian. And the junior devil. Goes in a few weeks later.

And says. I failed. He's become a Christian. What do I do now? And the senior devil says. There's only one thing you can do now. Make him as ineffective. As a Christian. As he possibly can be.

Make him disinterested. Make him apathetic. In the work of the Lord. So he's not as effective. In God's work. As he should be. Apathy. And that's Satan's tactic.

[21 : 48] It's his tactic. One of his most powerful weapons. Apathy never happens overnight. But over a long period of time. And it often goes unnoticed. The people here didn't wake up.

On the morning of the 15th year anniversary. And say. Oh goodness. We're apathetic this morning. Aren't we? No. They drifted into it. It happened over 15 years.

Now we'll see how the Lord dealt with us later on. But now we can see. The signs of apathy in these people. And can we see them in ourselves? Let's search our hearts this morning.

Let's ask God to search our hearts. Are we starting to make excuses. Not to be about God's work. Not to be about God's work.

Do you hear yourself saying to the Lord. Not yet. Not yet Lord. Do you weigh up things. Against coming to church on a Sunday.

[22 : 42] And do these other things. Trump church. Most of the time. Do we really desire. To be in the presence of the Lord's people. Deep affection with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Are we almost entirely focused on ourselves. Ours and our own. Does opposition make us immediately want to give up. Instead of running to the captain of our salvation.

Are our prayers becoming drier with time. Or perhaps we're starting to pray a lot less often. Than what we once did. The Lord charged his people with apathy.

And disinterestedness. And if God was looking at your heart this morning. If he was looking at my heart this morning. As he is. What would he find?

What would he find? If God were to take our spiritual temperatures this morning. Would the nurses be running for hot water bottles. And heat blankets to warm us up. Just a bit.

[23 : 43] God has presented his charge. Against his people. The next two points are more brief. Verses 5 to 11. God presents the solution.

To the problem. The solution. To the problem. God doesn't just condemn. He presents a solution and salvation at the same time. Because he is gracious. He says to his people in verse 5. Give careful thought to your ways. Now this can also be translated. Direct your hearts. Direct your hearts. You see. The ultimate cause of apathy.

Is not all the excuses that we find to make. Not to be about the Lord's work. The ultimate cause of apathy. Is that we have allowed our own hearts and minds.

To drift. From God. The first thing God reminds the people of. This is the solution he presents. He says to them. Look. This is futile.

[24 : 41] Life without me. My work without me. Is futile. He says in verse 6. You have planted much. You have harvested little. You eat. You do not have enough.

You drink. You are not filled. You put on clothes. You are not warm. You earn wages. Only to put them in a purse with holes in it. You see. God is saying. In your everyday lives.

These everyday essentials of food. And water. And clothing. And providing for your families. In all you do. You are not prospering. You are not prospering.

No matter how much you have. You are not satisfied. You don't seem to have enough. In anything you do. And this is because. They were neglecting the work of God.

And even in their everyday lives. They'd squash God. Into a compartment. Into a box. But the thing is with God. As he says to his people.

[25 : 38] He is the Lord God Almighty. He is the Lord God of hosts. He cannot be squashed in. To a box. You can't compartmentalize God. And life doesn't make sense without him.

Even in the basics of life. The deep longings inside our souls. Will never be satisfied. Without the Lord. Never. Never.

We can try. You can build your panelled houses. You can decorate your wainscoting. You can get a big flash. Fancy card. You can fill it with people. You can fill it with hobbies.

You can fill it with everything you try to. And you will never be satisfied. If you don't have the Lord. That's what he's saying to the people. In all we do.

We need to be about the Lord's work. Sunday through Saturday. A Christian is not something we do. On a Sunday. Maybe on a Wednesday night. A Christian is who we are.

[26 : 38] It's not something we do. It's who we are. Through faith. In Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ. And if we get that right. Everything else in our lives. Will fall into place.

If a relationship with God. Is right. If he is first. And at the centre. Of our lives. I love how the Sing Sam's. Translators.

Rendered Psalm 103. Verse 5. He satisfies. Your deep desires. From his unending. Stores. Of good.

His people knew that. As Christians. We know that instinctively. That's why God was saying to them. It's futile. To drift into apathy.

Because you know. That only your God. Can quench the thirst. That's in your soul. And the wonderful thing is. God quenches our thirst. Perfectly.

[27 : 34] Perfectly. As the old saints used to say. There is a God shaped hole in your heart. Which only Jesus Christ can fill. And he fits that hole. Perfectly.

Perfectly. Jesus says much the same thing. In the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are those who hunger. And thirst for righteousness. For they shall. Be.

Filled. The other thing the Lord asked them to do. As implied in the text. The problems they were facing. They were facing the Lord's punishment. For disobedience.

Back in Deuteronomy chapter 28. Verse 38 to 40. The Lord tells them the consequences. Of disobeying him. In the land. And if you actually go back. We'll not turn there just now.

But if you go back there and read it. It reads exactly like Haggai. Your crops will not come. You will not be filled when you drink. The Lord was saying to them. You have disobeyed my word. And what I said I would do.

[28 : 29] I have done. It's implied in the text. The great challenge to apathy you see. Is to recover a love for.

And an obedience to. The word of God. And how do we do that? How do we do that? We read God's word. We study God's word.

With a humble dependence. Upon the Lord in prayer. And you're saying. Alan well. Does that not sound like circular argument? Circular reasoning? Because the whole point of apathy is. I can't read my bible. I don't want to read my bible.

As I was taught in teacher training college. You learn to read by reading. You learn to read by reading. You learn to love God's word. By reading God's word. By studying it.

By being in it. By praying about it. And asking God. Asking him. That you would love him. Love his word. And that the Lord would bring you out. Of this apathy.

[29 : 25] Because only he can. Only he can. And the third solution God gives. To them is in verse 7. He repeats the challenge for them. To consider their ways.

And then he says. Go up into the mountains. Bring down the timber. Build my house. In other words. God is saying. Stop making excuses. And just do it.

Stop making excuses. And just do it. Get to my work. You know sometimes. You've just got to pick yourself up. And do it.

You might not want to. I've been there myself. Some Sunday mornings. You walk in and say. Lord I really don't want to preach this morning. I don't want to be here. And God says.

You're going into that pulpit. And you will do it. And the interesting thing is. When you feel like that at the end. The Lord always gives you an encouragement. More so in days when you really wanted to be in the pulpit. The Lord is so gracious.

[30 : 21] And kind. And then he says to his people. Why does he want them to do it? So that I may take pleasure. And be glorified and honoured in it. God will be glorified.

Through the work of his people. In his name. And this is the highest calling of a Christian. Because our chief end is to glorify God. And to enjoy him forever.

In other words. We're to be about God's work. Because of the relationship. That we have with him. Apathy is not a question. Of not doing the work. It's drifting away.

From our loving heavenly father. And when we are not doing God's work. It's a sign. That our hearts are turning cold. Towards him. And that needs to be fixed.

That relationship needs to be fixed. Before we'll be about the Lord's work. Again. The issue of the temple not being built. Was a physical sign of the spiritual state.

[31 : 18] Of their hearts. And it always is. It always is. Jesus said to his disciples. John 15.8. This is to my father's glory. That you will bear much fruit.

Showing yourself to be my disciples. As our love for God grows. Our desire to do his work grows. And he is glorified. When his work is done. Remember this is what I said.

I would come back to it. Back in verse 1. We noticed. That God spoke through the prophet. The priest. And the king. As the message to his people. And as the Lord's people today.

We need to return. To the true prophet. The great high priest. And the king of kings. And the Lord of lords. Who is Jesus Christ himself. He is the one through.

Who Haggai. Joshua. And Zerubbabel. Point to. We need that relationship with Christ. That's ever growing. And ever deepening. Because if that's not right.

[32 : 15] All the work we're doing. We're going to be neglecting it. Because we're neglecting the Lord. And a relationship with him. It's so important. So we've seen the Lord's charge.

The Lord's solution. And lastly. God's encouragement. To his people. In verses 12 to 15. The words of the Lord thus far. Have been quite hard hitting. They certainly hit me.

As I was doing the preparation for it. But the wonderful thing. Is about the Lord. And you see all the way. Through the prophets. That while he always judges sin. He is always also.

Slow to anger. And abounding in steadfast love. And faithfulness. And that's what we see. In verses 12 to 15. In verses 12 and 13. The people. Along with the prophet. Priest and king.

They agree to do the work. Of the Lord. It says. They feared him. The whole remnant of the people. Obeyed the voice of their God. And the message of the prophet Haggai. Because the Lord their God.

[33 : 12] Had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. They were fearing the Lord. Now this is an attractive thing. It's not a repulsive fear. But an attractive one. An attractive fear.

They were wanting to have that relationship with him. I think I used the illustration before. Of a father. Who was playing. Pretending to be a lion. With his two young daughters. And they would say.

Roar louder daddy. Roar louder daddy. So he would roar a bit louder. And they would run round. They would get down on all fours. And roar a bit louder. Roar a bit louder. So he did. And what happens was. He decided to really let rip.

So he stood up. And all. He stood right up. And roared as loud as he could. And the two girls were terrified. They were screaming. What did they do though? They were scared of their daddy. But where did they go?

They ran to their daddy. Because they knew he was their daddy. It's the same with the Lord. It's the same with the Lord. He's the God who. Is that fire.

[34 : 07] That cannot be quenched. He's the holy one. Enthroned in the cherubim. But he's also our heavenly father. It's about relationship. And then he says through Haggai wonderfully. I am with you.

I am with you. Here is something very precious. The people had not yet. Restarted the temple building work. And God said I will be with you. Because their heart had changed.

They were now promising to start the work. Their heart had changed. And the Lord said I will be with you. That's when he promises to be with them. And here is something precious for us all.

It's when our heart motives are right. That we're seeking to do God's work humbly. And righteously. In dependence upon him alone. With an eye to his glory. That he promises to be with us.

He goes ahead of us. Into the work. That's what the people had forgotten. He goes ahead. The Lord never asked you to do a work for him. And he not go ahead of you into that work.

[35 : 06] Because the wonderful thing is. When God calls us to do work for him. He invites us to be co-workers. Co-workers. And that is what ultimately. Not our own weak.

And feeble efforts. But God himself in the midst of the work. That will cause our flickering embers. Of zeal to ignite. Our God encourages us. To be about his work.

That encouragement. Is his presence with us. The people in Haggai's day. Had that promise. That God would be with them. But see as Christians. We have a far greater promise.

A far more wonderful promise. Than even what the people in Haggai's day had. Because the Lord Jesus Christ. Repeats that very same promise. I will be with you always.

Even to the end of the age. But as Christians. We have something even greater than that. In the fullness of God's revelation. God has always been with his people.

[36 : 03] To encourage them. And spur them on. He has never left them. Remember when they left Egypt. A pillar of fire. By night. A pillar of cloud. By day. Guarded and guided them.

When the tabernacle was built. For the Lord's glory. His glory cloud of his presence. Descended upon it. It would later descend upon. The original temple as well. But these are just shadows.

Shadows. Of what God. Would yet do. 400 years after the book of Haggai. The Lord would visit. His people. And the person of his son.

Jesus Christ. Jesus would become a human being. And he would dwell on earth. With human beings. And if that wasn't great enough. What did Jesus say.

When he was returning to heaven. I will send another. I will send another. I will send the spirit of promise. And that spirit.

[37 : 01] Will dwell within you. If you're a Christian today. The Holy Spirit. Is living within you. You take God wherever you go. He is with you.

Is that not an encouragement. Against our apathy. And to be about the Lord's work. That he is within you. But that's not even the end of it either. We have another encouragement.

To be about the Lord's work. That promise is finally fulfilled. When we get to the new heavens. And the new earth. Absent from the body. Present with the Lord. How does it end? Forever.

Forever. Forever. If we are discouraged. In our work of the Lord today. As it's so easy to be. Let these truths. Fill you. Anew. Fill you anew.

God encourages. His people. He charged them with apathy. Gave them the solution. And encouraged them. And he commands us. To put him first. To start taking him seriously.

[37 : 59] In our lives. Because you can't fool him. He sees through the masks we put on. But he is with us. And gives us strength we need. To do the work.

Jesus. I my cross have taken. All to leave and follow thee. Destitute. Despised. Forsaken. Thou from hence my all shall be. Perish every fond ambition.

All I've sought or hoped or known. Yet how rich is my condition. God and heaven. Are still my own. Let the world despise and leave me. They have left my saviour too.

Human hearts and looks deceive me. Thou art not like them untrue. Oh while you still smile upon me. God of wisdom, love and might. Foes may hate and friends disown me. Show thy face and all is bright. Man may trouble and distress. But it will drive me to your presence blessed. Life with trials hard may press me. Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.

[39 : 00] Let's pray. Our great and glorious God. Send your spirit in power. Send your spirit into our midst.

Spur us on to love and good deeds. Lord we are so prone to make excuses not to be about your work. Lord forgive us for that. Spur us on to ever greater service in your sight. Heavenly Father we pray for ourselves as a congregation. Keep us, keep those fires burning within us as you promised to do. Satan seeks to pour water on that fire.

But we thank you that the Holy Spirit is standing behind him throwing on oil. That it would continue to burn. Father we want a deeper relationship with you. We want to know Christ better.

We want to be people who are serving you. being about your work. Because we love you. And our relationship with you is ever growing. We also pray for anyone here today. Who doesn't know you.

[40 : 02] That today may be the day of salvation. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.