

Where do you put your Hope?

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[0 : 00] Let's pray first. Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for this opportunity to read your word and to study it.

Help us to understand, Lord, through your spirit and help us to apply it to our daily lives. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen. Well, last week when we went through Haggai chapter 1, we asked the question, what are your priorities this year?

Well, today our question is slightly different, and it's this. Where do you put your hope? Where do you put your hope for satisfaction, for fulfillment, to fulfill your deepest longing?

Where do you put your hope? Well, in this passage, we see three different kinds of hope. And you might be able to relate to one or two or even three of them.

First, some of us might put our hope in what we can do, in our action, in our work and abilities. So we might be confident that we will get satisfaction and fulfillment in life if we work hard enough, have enough skills, have enough focus in what we do.

[1 : 26] And so we put our time and energy into hard work, into improving ourselves. Not only in our career, but also in other things like raising a family, in our relationships, even in our relationship with God as well.

As we strive to be more holy, we rely on hard work. I confess that I have some tendency to do that. I often think if I work harder and study harder, I'd be able to preach better, minister more effectively, and, oh, how magnificent would I be.

And people would praise me and that would satisfy me. Even when I don't think that way, I know deep down that I sometimes feel that way.

I wonder if you've ever felt that as well about hard work in what you do. We put our hope in our hard work and abilities.

But what might happen if we do that? We might get disappointed. In our text, in our passage, in Haggai chapter 2, after being rebuked by God, the Israelites began working on the temple.

[2 : 52] But when they relied on their own hard work and abilities, they became utterly disappointed. In verse 1, God spoke to the people again through the prophet Haggai.

And this is what he said in verse 3. Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?

And the answer is supposed to be yes. It seems that the people were disappointed. They began their work. Not long after that, two months after the first message, it seems that things were not going well.

Now, the seventh month of the year when this message was spoken was the month with many festivals. And we learned last year how elaborate the Old Testament festivals were.

And so, they might not have been able to focus on the rebuilding project. And they were frustrated. They were not able to focus. And not to mention the disappointing result.

[4 : 05] Compared to the former temple that King Solomon built, with all its gold and Lebanese cedar, this temple was disappointing.

The people were disappointed because of the puny result of their work and perhaps with their inability to focus in the midst of festivals.

They were feeling a bit down. Have you ever felt like that? Again, not only in your career, but also in your family, as you're raising kids, and relationships, even in your relationship with God.

Have you ever thought, if only, if only there were more than 24 hours a day. If only I could focus without kids around me. If only I didn't have all these household chores.

Then I could just work and achieve. I could be a better person. I could work more.

[5 : 14] I could be a better parent. I could be more holy. And then I would be fulfilled. But can we ever reach that fulfillment?

No, because there's always going to be another thing or person that would make our work look like nothing in comparison, just like the temple in this text. There's always going to be a better person at work or a better parent than us, or a holier person that we can compare ourselves to.

And we find that we will never work hard enough to be able to get that satisfaction or fulfillment, let alone to achieve the standard that God demands of us.

We can't put our hopes in our hard work and abilities. Our hard work is puny. And that's why after God points out the puniness of the result of their work, God doesn't say, work harder.

Nope. Rather, he says, in verse 4, be strong, for I am with you. In verse 5, my spirit remains among you.

[6 : 29] Do not fear. And more importantly, in verse 6 and 7, I will shake the heavens and the earth, and I will bring glory to this house.

This temple might look puny, but I will bring glory to it. They only needed to put their hopes, not in their hard work, but in God.

How would God do that? How would God bring glory to the temple? Well, ultimately, the answer is in Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus said that the real temple was himself.

And nothing on earth is more glorious than God coming down here on earth. God brings glory to his temple by bringing his glory down in the person of Jesus.

But here's the irony, right? Jesus was the glorious temple, but he became the shameful one on the cross. Stripped naked, mocked, flogged, nailed, and hung there with criminals.

[7 : 54] He brought glory through facing shame. But that's precisely how we share his glory, because on the cross, Jesus took our shame and disappointment, that's why he faced shame.

And so when he was raised from the dead, he shared his glory to us. There was an exchange happening. And if we believe in Jesus, we share his glory, because we are grafted into him.

Our position is in Jesus, in the real temple, sharing the glory of the Son of God himself. Can you imagine that?

Every time God the Father looks at us, he is saying, you are glorious, my child, not because of our own hard work or success, but because we are in Jesus.

We are sharing his glory, and the Father sees us as he sees his Son. That gives fulfillment and satisfaction.

[9 : 02] Not our boss's praises because we work hard, or our parents' praises because we study hard, or our pastor's praises because we work hard in being holy.

It's the praise of our Creator, which fulfills and satisfies us. And we get that in Jesus. Don't get me wrong, we still work hard, because we want to use the talents and the gifts that God has given us, but we don't put our hopes in hard work.

We put our hopes in Jesus. So put your hopes in Jesus. Now second, some of us might put our hopes not in what we do, but in who we are, like our status.

It might bring us some confidence when we can introduce ourselves like, hi, I'm Ricky, I'm the director of such and such. Or like cultural and family backgrounds.

I grew up with people who like to boast in their family backgrounds, like, don't you know who I am? Don't you know who my father is? Or like sexual identity.

[10 : 25] We put our hopes in who we are. I have some tendency to do that too. When I was jobless, I was struggling to find a job. Meeting new people was painful.

Because every time I was asked what you did, what I did for living, I could only say, I'm looking for a job. But once I found a job, I found myself inflated again, proud again to be who I was.

Because I could finally say, hi, I'm Ricky, a designer. I wonder if you've ever felt the same, putting your hopes in who you are.

But what might happen if we do that? Again, we might get disappointed. In verse 10, God spoke again. And remember, the Old Testament Israel, just like what Fiona illustrated, the Old Testament Israel took pride in their status as the holy people of God.

God chose them, and God gave them the holy law. And so this time, God asked the priests about the law. I'll summarize. In verse 12, God asked, if there's some consecrated or holy meat, and that meat touches other things, will that meat make the other things holy?

[11 : 55] The priests answered, nope. In verse 13, what if it's the other way around? If a defiled person touches other things, will that person make the other things defiled?

And the priests answered, yes. Here's the surprise. It's not just about the law. It's about the people. In verse 14, then Haggai said, so it is with these people, and these nations in my sight, declares the Lord, whatever they do, and whatever they offer there, is defiled.

Whoa! The people of Israel put their hopes in their status as the holy people of God, and yet God here is saying that in His sight, these people are defiled.

Unholy. God doesn't consider them holy anymore, and so whatever they touch, and whatever they do, becomes defiled. Why? Why?

Because holiness is only found in the presence of God. And when the Israelites in chapter 1 failed to prioritize the presence of God, they became defiled.

[13 : 10] Unholy. And so everything that they touched, every work they did, became defiled, dry, unfruitful, in verse 15 to 17.

Their work became cursed, shameful, unworthy, rejected by God. Unblessed by God.

They worked and worked, hoping that God would bless them because of their status as the people of God. But they faced failures. If they put their hopes in their own status and name and honor, they must have been so disappointed to find themselves defiled, shameful, cursed.

But that's who we are as well. We too are defiled and shameful and cursed, every one of us.

Because every one of us fails to honor God and His presence that brings holiness.

And we try to cover our shame and defilement by putting on masks when we face other people.

[14 : 34] We try to cover our shame with achievements. with our status, with a new sexual identity, with our cultural pride.

We try to shape who we are on the outside to cover the shame on the inside because we know, we all know that there's something lacking about us, inside of us.

But when we put our hopes in our outside identity, we find ourselves disappointed because our souls keep telling us that we are lacking, we are defiled, shameful.

And in ourselves, that is true. But what does God say at the end of verse 19?

From this day on, because you have prioritized my presence, I will bless you. In their own identity, they're not worthy, they're defiled, but once they return to the presence of God, God will bless them nonetheless.

[15 : 48] God will make them worthy. How? Again, this is primarily achieved in the person of Jesus.

He took our defilement, our shame, and our curse and nailed them on the cross. In exchange for our sin and defilement, He gives us blessing after blessing.

An exchange. This is what our New Testament reading says in Ephesians 1. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Every spiritual blessing. Verse 4. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.

Pay attention to the words. They're opposite to God's words in Haggai. Because now we are in Jesus. In Haggai, God says, these people are defiled in My sight.

[16 : 56] But in Jesus, in Him, we are holy and blameless in His sight. Again, if we are in Jesus, every time the Father looks at us, every time God looks at us, in His sight, He sees the holiness and the blamelessness of Jesus Christ.

No more shame. No more defilement. No more curse. verse 5. Verse 5. In love, He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will.

We're not only made holy and blameless, we are adopted to be the children of the most holy God.

No more leaving His presence.

We live in His house. That's what children do. And we share in His holiness. That's what we get in Jesus, the true temple.

What a blessing. The defiled is made clean and welcomed into the family in Jesus.

[18 : 15] After all this, how dare we put our hopes in our earthly identity again. Going back to our defilement and shame again. No, we put our hopes in Jesus, in our identity, in Him.

And so, come to Jesus and put your hopes in Him. Now, if right now you're hearing this and you think, I've seen so much.

I'm not worthy to come to Jesus. I've met quite a few people who say this. I've seen so much, I've got to clean up my mess first before I come to Jesus.

No! You're not worthy. Of course not. But that's the point. In yourself, you're not worthy. You're defiled. And so am I. And He still welcomes you to put your shame and defilement in Him and nail them on the cross.

Leave them there forever. And receive the adoption as the child of God. Don't you want that?

[19 : 30] Last point. Some of us might put our hopes not in what we do or who we are but in who leads us.

We put our hopes in human power or government or policies. And we might be confident in what a certain political party promises or what a certain ruler is able to do to change the world to change society to make things better to make a country great again.

But here's the problem with human power and government. When people have power the temptation is too great for them to misuse it to oppress others.

In verse 20 to 21 after talking to the whole people of Israel on the same day God spoke to one person only Zerubbabel the governor and the background of his identity speaks of oppression. Zerubbabel was a descendant of David. His name literally means the one sown in Babylon which bore the testimony to how the Israelites were taken to Babylon as captives oppressed.

[21 : 04] Even his title shows it. He's a descendant of David but he's not a king. He's a governor because Israel was under the occupation of Persia. He was a puppet.

They were still oppressed. oppressed. But we also have to remember why the Israelites were oppressed in Babylon. It's because their kings disobeyed God and oppressed others.

In verse 23 God promised to make Zerubbabel his signet ring. The signet ring is a symbol of the king's power. Now that term the signet ring reminds us of what happened to Zerubbabel's predecessors.

In Jeremiah 22 God complains because the kings of Israel who were supposed to be God's signet ring misused the power and committed injustices.

And so he surrendered them to their enemies. This is Jeremiah 22. As surely as I live declares the Lord even if you Jehoiakim who is the grandfather of Zerubbabel son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on my right hand.

[22 : 21] I will still pull you off. I will deliver you into the hands of those who want to kill you those you fear. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the Babylonians. The kings of Israel were God's signet ring a symbol of God's power but because they misused the power and committed injustices and disobeyed God.

They were pulled off from God's finger delivered into the hands of Babylon. Now imagine being the people during this time. Perhaps they were disappointed disenchanted by human power and government their own and Babylon's full of oppression and injustices.

If they put their hopes in human power they would have been disappointed indeed. And it's the same now isn't it? Oppression injustices everywhere misuse of power.

But what does God promise in verse 21 to 23? God promises earth-shaking victory for Zerubbabel and that he would once again be God's signet ring.

now victory would be given by God rather than taken from the oppressed. But is that possible?

[23 : 50] Is it actually possible for victory to be achieved without the oppression of the loser? Well we know the answer to this don't we?

This promise again was fulfilled in Jesus. God's signet ring. the descendant of David, God's appointed king, the symbol of his power, who surrendered power.

He achieved victory in his resurrection through humility, service, and the surrendering of his life to death. He won against sin and death, the greatest powers that hold humanity enslaved.

But he won by keeping up and taking sin and death upon himself so that when he rose again, he was victorious.

He defeated the power of sin and death. And when he comes back, he will win against evil and oppression.

[25 : 01] and he will share his victory with us. And so rather than putting our hopes in some human power or government or policies, let's put our hopes in Jesus, God's king.

So friends, our application today is simple. Come to Jesus and put your hopes in him. Rather than in what we do or who we are in this world or who leads us, put your hopes in Jesus.

How do we put our hopes in Jesus as Christians? Well, by being prayerful, like we talked about last week, surrendering all our hopes, all our hopes for ourselves, our families, our church, our jobs, our country.

We surrender them all while we do things and work, in this world, we do them prayerfully because we surrender the hopes to Jesus.

And so let's pray now. Father, we thank you that you have been faithful to your promises expressed through Haggai, and you fulfilled them all in your son Jesus.

[26 : 22] And so help us by your Holy Spirit to daily come to Jesus and put all our hopes in him. While we work for you in this world, in the name of Jesus, our hope, we pray.

Amen.