

Reflections upon the Past

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[0 : 00] We give you a warm welcome to our service today, and as we come together in this act of worship, we shall seek the Lord's blessing to be with us and upon his word. Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto thee for the great privilege that thou hast given to us when we can come around thine own world, that living world.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou through thy Spirit would open our hearts and apply thy word to us in a way that would bring forth evidence in our lives, to the glory of thy name, to the eternal good of our souls.

We acknowledge, O Lord, that without thee we can do nothing. And so we pray that it would please thee to come along with us through thy Spirit at this time, enlightening our minds, enlightening our understanding, leading us into thine own truth, that we may indeed see wondrous things out of thy word, that we may be encouraged and strengthened in our faith, that we may grow in grace, that we may be faithful to thee, and be a faithful witness for thee in this world.

O Lord, we pray thy blessing to be upon all that gathers in thy name this day, upon all thy servants who have gone forth with thy word, who proclaim thy word.

[2 : 08] We pray that they may know the unction of thine own Spirit upon them, enabling them to proclaim thy truth with all boldness and with all confidence.

We pray, O Lord, that thy Spirit would prepare the hearts of our people, O, and stop their ears that they may hear, and that they may come, O Lord, to know thee as their own personal saviour, that they would come to know that thou art the one who is able to do for them far exceeding our desires.

O Lord, we give thanks for the work of thy grace in the hearts of sinners such as we are. We give thanks that thou art the one who has the power to call us from darkness into light, that thou art the one who has the power to call us from the dead to be living souls for thee.

O Lord, we come before thee acknowledging our sinnership, acknowledging that by nature that we are dead in trespasses and in sin.

But blessed be thy name that through thy Spirit thou doth quicken such and bring them to spiritual life. O Lord, we pray, O Lord, that as thy gospel is proclaimed today, that there would be many who would come to experience that spiritual life.

[3 : 45] It is the work of thine own hand that shall give thee praise. And so grant to us, O Lord, that thou would come in a day of thine own power and that thou would work among our people.

We give thanks to thee, O Lord, for all the tokens of thy goodness and kindness that thou dost so abundantly outpour upon us every day.

And we give thanks that we can come today to a throne of grace and seek thy mercy and seek thy grace to help us in our time of need.

That there is one that sitteth upon the throne. That there is one who can have compassion and pity upon us. O Lord, we give thee thanks that thou art the one that encourages sinners such as we are to come and to bow the knee in humility of mind, of heart and of spirit and to confess our sins, to repent of our sins.

O Lord, how we yearn for days of repentance among us, that we would all come and that we would all bow the knee before thee, that we would all confess our sins, the sins of our nation and our own sins, the sins of individuals.

[5 : 14] that we would come and bow the knee and confess our sins and repent of our sins, seeking the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

We seek thy blessing upon our homes and our families. Remember, Lord, those who are ill. May thy healing hand be upon them. Remember those who mourn the passing of loved ones out of time.

O Lord, thou art reminding us that we are sojourners in this world, that we are all on a journey to our long home. O Lord, we pray, O Lord, that thou would bless thy gospel.

O Lord, that thou would come and that thou would manifest thy right arm in salvation among us. O Lord, we pray that thou would be pleased to be with us as we come to read thy word and as we come to meditate upon it.

O Lord, that we would see wondrous things out of thine own law. We pray, O Lord, that thou would have pity upon us as a nation. O Lord, that thou would remember us in pity and in compassion.

[6 : 38] And that thou would return to us, O Lord, in thy power. O we pray, Lord, for days of revival and days of awakening among us.

Bless thy people, those whom thou hast redeemed by thy blood. O Lord, grant to them that they may be faithful witnesses for thee. Bless our young people and our children.

O Lord, raise up a generation that would fear thy name. A generation that would be thine own witnesses in this world. We pray, O Lord, that we would be led now to wait upon thee.

And O Lord, we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins and for all our shortcomings. It is in the name of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the Old Testament in the book of Zechariah and chapter 1.

[7 : 45] In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berkiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, The Lord hath been so displeased with your fathers.

Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings.

But they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?

And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and according to our rules, so hath he dealt with us.

[8 : 57] Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month's abut, in the second year of Darius came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Edut, the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold, a man riding upon a red herd.

And he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom, and behind him there were red horses, speckled and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these?

And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, How long would thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against whom thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, say, thus saith the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

[10 : 26] And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they held forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.

My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, thus saith the Lord of hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad, and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head.

But these have come to free them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah, to scatter it. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

[11 : 44] Now, seeking his blessing, let us read again from the beginning of Zechariah, chapter 1, and we'll read verse 1 to 6 again. In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Edo, the prophet, saying, The Lord hath been so displeased with your fathers.

Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings.

But they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?

And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. This book, Sechariah, belongs to that section of the Old Testament, which we call the minor prophets.

[13 : 22] Now, they are not called minor, because they are unimportant, but because of the size of their books. Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, have large books, and so these prophets are called the major prophets, only because their books are larger, not because they are more important.

The minor prophets are probably not the most popular books, because we regard them as books of gloom and doom. The minor prophets consist of 12 books, and we recently studied one of them in some detail, the book of the prophet Jonah.

We also looked at certain themes that was found in the book of the prophet Micah, and we are going to endeavour to do the same with the book of the prophet Zechariah.

His prophecy is the longest among the minor prophets. Much of the book of Zechariah is similar in style and content into the New Testament book called Revelation, with its visions and symbolic imagery.

The prophecy of Zechariah was delivered after the people returned to the land from their captivity in Babylon. The word Zechariah, the name Zechariah, means the Lord remembers, and this is certainly the theme of this whole book.

[15 : 00] Zechariah was among the people who returned after the Babylonian captivity, and after returning, they began to build the temple, but soon they became dispirited and downhearted, and the work on the temple stopped.

Now, this prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai. Haggai started preaching two months before Zechariah, and he gave four messages to the people, all condensed within four months.

We have them in a book that is called after his name, the prophet Haggai. Haggai. His first message resulted in work being resumed on the temple, but soon after work commenced, the people got weary, especially because they saw that the rebuilt temple had little of the glory of the first temple that King Solomon built.

So Haggai gave a second message in order to encourage the builders to continue with their work. Two months later, Haggai delivered his final two messages.

Now, it is between Haggai's second and third messages that Zechariah began his prophecy. This was delivered over a period of three years.

[16 : 23] Both prophecies were given about 18 years after their return from captivity. As a result of Haggai and Zechariah, Zechariah, and as a result of their preaching, Zerubbabel set about the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

While they preached to the people, the work continued. For in Ezra chapter 6, we read, and the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Idul.

Haggai and Zechariah were faithful in their calling, and they both lived to see the completion of the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah is written to encourage the people of God in their work and witness, and also to warn them that they did not fall into the sins of their fathers, which brought the people into captivity.

In the day of Zechariah, the people needed to be encouraged to continue with the rebuilding of the temple, and also to live a life that was obedient to God.

He begins his prophecy with words which may seem strange to us. The Lord hath been so displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, this saith the Lord of hosts, turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

[17 : 58] Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings.

But they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? One writer puts it like this, that Zechariah told the people to look back with discernment and to look forward with reassurance.

Zechariah called them to remember their painful past and to make sure that they would not repeat the same errors as their fathers did. The captivity proved that although God in his long suffering may for a time delay judgment, it does come at last.

Despite warning after warning from the prophets, the people did not return to the Lord in repentance, but continued, especially in the worship of idols.

And so finally God gave them over. And Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came and eventually destroyed Jerusalem, taking the people as captives and leaving the temple and the city of Jerusalem in ruins.

[19 : 21] The situation is recorded for us in Jeremiah's book of Lamentations and chapter 1, where we read, How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people?

How is she become as a widow? She that was great among the nations and princess among the providence, how is it she became tributary?

For the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions. Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. You see, Jerusalem lay in ruins.

Her walls are torn down. Her buildings, including the temple, is destroyed. And as we reflect upon the ruined city of Jerusalem, it teaches us to defeat to the one who is given to us by God.

If we refuse to return to God and to the ways laid down so clearly in his word, then we shall have to suffer for it.

[20 : 25] Our God is a consuming fire and he will judge those who refuse to return to him and his ways. For the Bible tells us that God is angry with the wicked every day.

Are we among those who refuse to acknowledge the Lord and follow his ways? T.V. Moore says, The seedlings of life on earth shall be harvested in heaven or hell.

These fathers behaved as though they did not believe that God meant what he said. The enemy of your soul has this great weapon of apathy to the word of God and he uses this weapon to the destruction of millions.

You make sure that you are not practicing apathy towards the word of God. What the Lord says, he will carry it out.

It is sometimes said, God loves the sinner but hates the sin. Now that is not quite accurate because you cannot divide the sinner from his sin and God hates sin.

[21 : 48] The prophet says to them, The Lord has been so displeased with your fathers. He does not separate the fathers from their sin.

What God loves is for the sinner to repent of his sin and to turn back in obedience to him. Zechariah begins his prophecy by saying, The Lord has been so displeased with your fathers.

God was not displeased with their fathers because he wanted to punish them but he wanted to bring them to repentance. The Lord had warned them through his servants that if they would not amend their ways and turn back to him that they would be sent into captivity.

And their fathers did not listen. And so in the end the Lord brought them into the captivity that he had warned them about. Jeremiah sums up their state in chapter 2 at verse 11.

Hath a nation changed their gods which are not yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

[23 : 06] Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this and be horribly afraid. Be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Despite all the warnings the people did not give heed, God was displeased with them because they ignored his warnings and persisted in their disobedience which eventually brought upon them the punishment of God.

The captivity of Babylon was a painful period for many of them. In the same manner it would be good for us to take heed to the warnings given to us by God and his word.

The Lord warns us that if we do not repent of our sins that we will be punished. The word of God teaches that God is holy and cannot look upon sin and that he will judge every person according to what he or she has done.

The word teaches that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse. The word teaches that sin must be punished.

[24 : 28] These people doubted that God judges sin or even rules in history. Jeremiah said about them they have belied the Lord and said it is not he neither shall evil come upon us neither shall we see sword nor famine and the prophet shall become wind and the word is not in them.

They showed complete defiance to the word of God. Are things any different tonight? How many people in our villages towns and cities show defiance to the warning of God's judgment today?

Today, this morning and this night things are not different. Yesterday and today things are not different. Things are not different today, tonight, yesterday.

In our villages, in our towns and our cities many still show defiance to the warning of God's judgment. Let us not deceive ourselves and say that the Lord is not going to fulfill his word and judge each one of us.

Let us not say that the ministry of the word is wind and that the word of the Lord is not with the ministry of the word. Now, the people were religious religious because religion was particularly important to the Jews.

[26 : 14] However, the prophet wants them not to be guilty of presumption like their fathers were. They assumed that having the temple and the sacrifices would save them.

These people were strangers to the reality of heart submission to the Lord. I say, I said, Wherefore the Lord said, For as much as this people draw near me with their mouth and with their lips to honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.

The people of Judah had come to put their trust in the outward observance of religion. They had put their faith in a building instead of the living God. And Jeremiah said to them, Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.

They thought that as long as they went to the temple and brought their sacrifice to the temple, that was suffice to save them. They thought that as long as the temple of the Lord was among them, that that was suffice to save them.

they thought that as long as they fulfilled their religious obligations, that they could do whatever they wanted with the rest of their lives.

[27 : 49] These people were treating the temple with great superstition because they thought that observing temple rituals was enough for salvation. they wanted faith without practice, they wanted covenant blessings without covenant obedience, they wanted justification without sanctification, they wanted to be declared righteous before God and then go on living in sin.

They were like people who want the death of the righteous but to live the life of the unrighteous. A person who wants to go to heaven but live the life of sin.

One of the snares of the devil is presumption and it comes in many forms. Some will assume that they will be saved because they were baptized or they partook of communion or they were the recipients of prayer and they live and die deceived and all because of presumption.

Judah believed that nothing could touch them even after being warned by God through his prophets that unless they repented that he would destroy the city and bring the people into captivity and they presumed that because they had the temple and its rituals they were saved and so they went about crying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple will of the Lord.

Oh my dear friend, what are you basing your eternal destiny upon? Also, their fathers were very selective in what they wanted to hear.

[29 : 40] The prophets that they listened to were the ones that they wanted to hear who told them that everything was alright, that there was no need for them to change their behaviour patterns who preached peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Now, this is not something that merely belongs to the Old Testament. Paul warns Timothy and says to him in his second letter in chapter 4, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned into fables.

There is always a danger that we will only hear what we want to hear. None of us like to be made to feel uncomfortable, or stir it up in our minds.

We all like our comfort zones, but if we are to preach faithfully the word of God, then we must stir people up from their comfort zones, because our message is one of urgency.

Our everlasting destiny, whether heaven or hell, depends on our response to the gospel. God's word endureth forever.

[31 : 16] It does not change or alter with the fashions of our society. We cannot modify the Bible's teachings to fit in with today's moral standards.

God did not intend that the principles for living contained in his word should be adjusted or to suit present-day ideas. This word applies to all ages.

We read in Haggai about this people that they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and feared the Lord and as a result they got on with the rebuilding of the temple.

Now that was good as far as it went. However, what seems to be missing is a whole hearted turning from all sin. See, we can all come up to a certain point and stop and that seems to be the case here.

In our own day, it is good and worthy to be in the worship of God and when we are able to be in the building set aside for the corporate worship of God.

[32 : 27] But let us not rest merely in the fact without a whole hearted turning from sin into God. Let us not rest in the mere fact that we are in the worship of God without a wholehearted turning from sin into God.

In other words, without repentance. Let us not rest to be merely found in the worship of God without repentance.

repentance. This is a requirement not merely for the unbeliever but also for believers. Who of us is not in need of a renewed and deeper dedication to God?

God. It is quite easy for me as a believer to be content with my presence in the worship of God whether in a building or joined by means of our technology but what is required of me is to repent and seek a deeper dedication to God.

we must always be warned to follow close after God. Although we may have turned from sin to Christ in our conversion there must always be a turning from sin to Christ in our life here in this world.

[33 : 56] In other words, repentance is not just a one-off event. Repentance is continuous. Now we know that Israel did not learn from their past.

The answer is the same for us all there is a human problem called sin. As one writer puts it, we are all born into this world with a past.

We carry a legacy from our first parents Adam and Eve. We are born sinners. The psalmist writes, Behold our shape and iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Well, may we ask, is there any hope? Well, here we have the key and we have it here in Zechariah chapter 1 verse 3 where we found these words.

turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. He is calling them to repentance, he is calling me and you to repentance, to a change of heart, mind, and will.

[35 : 18] What a gracious call this is to a people who have sinned against him. He does not say you are too bad, I don't want anything more to do with you.

Instead he says turn ye unto me. Do you see your need? Do you recognize the awful plight that you are in?

He does not say return to doing good although good works are desirable and necessary, but God does not first of all call them to return to good works, but he calls them to repentance.

God does not call the people to return to religious rituals, even though they are trying to rebuild the temple. He says if your heart is not right with me, then your devotions can never be acceptable in my sight.

The psalmist said, for thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.

[36 : 41] forgiveness. The only hope for the people is to return to the Lord in wholehearted condition and seek his forgiveness. And that's the hope for me and you today, to return to the Lord wholehearted and seek his forgiveness.

forgiveness. They must show their sorrow for their sin and seek to return to the Lord. They must decide a personal right relationship with God and that is our need, that is my need, your need, to make sure that we have a personal right relationship with God.

Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts. And the Lord adds the promise. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

God is so gracious. He continually calls his people, back to himself, and he waits to receive them when they return. We recently saw this illustrated to us in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15.

When the son eventually returned, he saw his father was already waiting to receive him. In fact, it would appear that his father saw him first.

[38 : 15] Why? Because the father was waiting for him and had been waiting the whole time the son had been absent from home. You see, repentance is a key word throughout the Bible.

Let's hear what Isaiah says. seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Amen. Ezekiel chapter 18. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, everyone according to his way, saith the Lord God, repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your own.

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel, for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God.

Wherefore turn yourselves and live ye. In the book of Joel, we have these words, Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with your heart and with fastings and with weeping and with mourning, and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto me, the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repent of him of the evil.

[39 : 59] Who knoweth he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him? In the book of Malachi, we have these words, Even from the days of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine, all ordinances have not kept them.

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. After Malachi, there was a period of 400 years of silence, and what broke that silence?

The voice of John the Baptist, and what was he crying? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. When Jesus began to preach, his first public utterance was, repent, and repentance finds its place in the great commission given to the apostles.

apostles, in Luke it's recorded, and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in its name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And the preaching of the apostles contained that basic element. In Acts 17 we read, and the times of the sickness God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

[41 : 13] Oh how gracious is God. He forgives those who are truly repentant and who turn to him in faith. And he saves them with an everlasting salvation.

How sad it is that many reject Christ because they find his way of salvation too simple for their proud hearts. They want to earn their salvation rather than casting themselves totally upon God, seeking his mercy and grace.

Zechariah goes on and we find these words, your fathers where are they? And the prophets do they live forever? Time is passing so quickly and it is not only the elderly and the infirm who are called to leave this life, many who are young are also called away.

We need to ask ourselves where do I stand with God? God says to all of us, turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

James writes, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. And this is made possible because the Lord Jesus Christ went all the way to Golgotha to suffer and die in order to take the punishment that was due to his people because of their sin.

[42 : 49] When God makes a promise, he always means it and he will always keep it. He is never prevented from fulfilling his promise nor does he forget it.

then we read in verse 6, but my words and my statutes which I commanded, my servants, the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?

The answer is of course. Yes, there was no disputing the fact that the warnings of the Lord did come true. If that had come true in the case of their fathers, then the people of Zachariah's day could be sure that it would be in their case also if they neglected the Lord's requirements and warnings.

The words take hold here pictures a hunter catching a game or a wild animal and grasping its prey. So their fathers were pursued and caught by the inscapable curse of God.

The New Testament asks how shall we escape if we neglect so greater salvation. Verse 6 says and they returned.

[44 : 09] Now there can be a problem here to determine who they are that returned. Was it their fathers or the present generation? Well however we take it the truth is that they recognised that the Lord's warnings were real and that their own expectations and conduct had been blameworthy.

And they returned and said like as the Lord of forethought to do unto us according to our ways and according to our doings so hath he dealt with us. He hath dealt with us according to our ways and according to our doings.

But that recognition had come too late as far as the fathers were concerned because the calamity had already engulfed them. However it was not too late for that generation but they must ensure that they repent of their sin and that they live close to God.

And it is not too late for our generation but we must ensure that we repent and live close to God. So Hariah begins by showing that although the work on the temple has resumed and that it's good it needs to be accompanied by a total inner commitment to God.

Good works they are good but good works must be accompanied by a total inner commitment to God. There is always the need for ongoing repentance and a close walk with God.

[45 : 46] Martin Luther says rather than all good works he wants faith and a heart converted to him. That is all he is interested in. This must come first and be preached first.

Return to me after that build me a temple and not first build me a temple and after that return to me. He says good works inflate us and makes us proud but faith and conversions humble us and makes us despair of ourselves.

What is God's message to me and you today? It is always his message. Thus saith the Lord of hosts turn ye unto me saith the Lord of hosts and I will turn unto you saith the Lord of hosts.

May the Lord bless his word to us. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord grant to us that we would be given that wisdom to take heed to the warnings that thou dost give to us in thy word.

We give thanks that thou art a God who is long suffering. We give thanks that thou art a gracious God. We give thanks that thou dost warn us in thy word to come before thee and to confess our sins and to repent of our sins to turn unto thee.

[47 : 32] And we give thanks for the great promise that we have that if we turn to thee that thou will turn to us. That any who will come to thee that thou wilt in no wise cast them out.

And so we pray oh Lord that thou would bless thy word to many today. That they would hear. That they would understand. That their understanding may be enlightened.

Their hearts may be opened. and they would turn to thee knowing oh Lord that thou will fulfill thy promise that thou will turn unto them and save them.

We ask oh Lord that thou would continue with us during the day. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more.

Amen.