

# Hope for the Neglectful

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I'll begin by saying yesterday afternoon, I went to May Allen's 90th birthday party at Hilltop House. Well, 90 years of faithfulness. Isn't that a great thing?

That is a great thing. And I loved seeing so many of you there. I was talking with Gord Oranger afterwards, and we were just chatting it up, and so this is unrelated to that, but this is where that conversation took place.

And Gord was telling me how he's been looking at these old slides from the early days of Squamish Baptist Church, and I'm assuming it was like on one of those old slide machines, you know, the kind that sound like you got a few marbles in your washing machine, they make this loud rattling noise in the darkroom.

Kids have no idea what I'm talking about. But he's been looking at them, and we were talking about the building projects that have taken place here on this property.

And if I understand right there, this building has been expanded in four separate building projects, the most recent one being the construction of this ministry center area.

[ 1 : 04 ] And that's when Gord mentioned to me how this worship center was built, and it was built with volunteer labor as a quote-unquote quick build. Now, I can already tell who was around for that based on the reply, because that quick build that was intended to last three months, Gord informed me that it took five years.

So, you know, these quick builds often take a little bit longer than you expect. And that's a good story, but if, you know, I want to one-up Gord's story, I've got an even better one.

I've got the story of a quick build that was supposed to last five years and instead took 21 years. And this is the story of how God's people, the people of Israel, actually, their quick build was, the reason it took so long is it was a result of neglect.

They neglected to rebuild the Lord's temple after returning from decades in exile in the land of Babylon. Babylon. And this story that we're looking at today is, in fact, a story of how the Lord brought hope for these neglectful people.

And he did it through a prophet, through a man named Haggai. And to understand what's going on here, to understand not only what happens in this historical series of events, but also how this is significant for you and for me today, and especially significant for us in this new year, in a time when we're re-examining our lives, re-evaluating our last year, re-evaluating our priorities, to understand the meaning and the significance of this story.

[ 2 : 43 ] We've got to understand the background. And so the background of the book of Haggai is that the 6th century BC, when this was written, this was a time of an incredible amount of upheaval in the ancient Middle East.

The ancient Near East. And if you think the world today is in a time of upheaval, nothing compared to what was going on back then. Because this centuries-old empire, the Assyrian Empire, it had finally fallen to a new upstart empire that was centered in the city of Babylon.

And the Babylonians, they intended to not only replace the Assyrians as the superpower in the region. But they wanted to expand their empire the way the Assyrians did, become even greater than the Assyrians ever were.

And so the Babylonians continued the practice of invading the lands of nations around them. And their goal, first of all, was, well, the first thing we'd like to do is make them Babylonian vassal states. You know, that they report to us. They pay tribute to us. They're under our thumb. And that's how their idea was they would expand their empire. They would, if these nations failed to pay tribute, if they failed to do what the Babylonians tell them to do, if they failed to submit to the king of Babylon, then Nebuchadnezzar the king, he would send his army.

[ 4 : 08 ] And their cities would be destroyed. Their people would be sent into exile. They would be sent away from their lands and from their regional gods. Basically, this is a practice that you might refer to as a cultural genocide.

It's a way to ensure that these people would no longer rebel. They would lose their ethnic identity. They would be lost in the great melting pot of Babylon.

They would lose their heritage. They would forever remain under the yoke of Babylon, never again to rise up. And all of this is what was starting to happen in the 6th century in the kingdom of Judah. In 586 BC, Judah, their position was they had been led for centuries by a line of kings descended from David. David was a king who ruled from the capital city of Jerusalem and his descendants did after him.

And along with the kingdom of Israel to the north, Judah had a special relationship with the Lord. Judah had a special relationship with the same God that you and I worship today.

[ 5 : 12 ] And Judah and its king, they were to remain faithful to the Lord their God, worshiping no other gods, loving him with all their heart, loving their neighbor as themselves.

We saw the foundation of this special relationship last year as we studied the book of Exodus. But Judah didn't keep their part of the covenant.

They didn't keep their part of that covenant relationship. They worshiped the gods of the nations around them. They committed spiritual adultery against the Lord by being unfaithful to him. As a result, the people of Judah, they went on this downward spiral of evil behavior, behaving in an evil and unjust manner toward one another.

And the Lord gave them over to the Babylonian empire to be one of these vassal states under the thumb of Babylon. Now, the people and the rulers of Judah didn't like that, so they rebelled against Babylon.

And that's when the Lord sent the Babylonian army to bring judgment on his people, to destroy the city of Jerusalem and even his own temple.

[ 6 : 19 ] Even this house, this building that had been built to replace that old tabernacle, this temple that had been the focus of the Lord's presence, where the Lord was among his people, where his people would come to worship him.

Jerusalem and his temple were burned. They were ruined in 586 BC by the armies of Babylon. And most of the remaining people of Judah, of Jerusalem, were sent into exile.

There seemed to be no future left for the people of God. There seemed to be no chance that a promised king would come from the lineage of David, a king who would come to rule the world with justice and equity, a king who would come to save God's people from their evil actions, from their evil words, from their evil attitudes.

In short, all of our present hope, all of the future that we look forward to, was all in jeopardy. But none of this was a failure on the part of the Lord.

The Lord was about to repeat the great exodus, this exodus that we learned about last year, because just as the Lord rescued his people from slavery in the land of Egypt, once again the Lord rescued them from exile in the land of Babylon.

[ 7 : 38 ] He brought them out. And just as God raised up a God-fearing man named Moses to proclaim their freedom, so he raised up someone who is called God's anointed, but he actually isn't a believer in the Lord.

He's a pagan king named Cyrus, who proclaims the return of the Jewish people to the land of Judah. Cyrus, he was the king of a new empire.

He was the king of the Persian Empire that conquered the city of Babylon in 539 BC. That's 47 years after Jerusalem had been destroyed. Now, the reason Cyrus takes such a prominent place, not only in world history, but also in scripture, is that Cyrus had a very different policy toward the nations that were his subjects.

Cyrus' policy was that these nations should have religious freedom, that they should worship their own gods in their own lands where they belonged. And so the Lord used Cyrus as sort of a type of Messiah, with a lowercase m, as a type of Messiah to return his people to their land the very next year, 538 BC.

And we learned about this a couple of years back in the fall of 2015 when we studied the book of Ezra together. We saw the story of the people of Israel returning to their land. And what we're going to read today from Haggai is just a little piece of that story.

[ 9 : 01 ] Now, here's the proclamation that was issued by Cyrus, king of Persia. It's in Ezra chapter 1. Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth.

And he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place, with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings, for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

So this wasn't only an echo of a past event. This was not only an echo of the exodus that took place hundreds of years earlier. This is also a shadow of an event that's yet to come, something far greater, a greater exodus.

Where God would send his true Messiah, this time with a capital M, a true Messiah into the world to be the king of kings, the king of all the kingdoms of the earth.

[ 10 : 22 ] This king, who would come from the lineage of David, he is Jesus of Nazareth. He is the son of God. And he was born to lead his people, not from political bondage and exile in a foreign land.

He was born to lead his people from a far deeper, far more serious bondage, a bondage to sin, a bondage to an evil heart that enslaves us, from bondage to a world system that resists its true king. From bondage to Satan, who wants to maintain his grip on this world. And so the good news that Jesus came to bring, the good news of the conquering king, is that he has brought us back from exile.

He has died on a cross for our sins. He has risen again to new life. So that now you and I, everyone who believes in him, can live a new life together with Jesus Christ.

And this gospel message, it is a return from exile. This good news has real implications, has real significance for our lives.

[ 11 : 41 ] because it's a message that also gives us a mission. It's a message that gives us a call to spread this good news to the rest of the world.

It's good news that gives us a command to love the Lord our God, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to restore the worship of God to a world that rejects him.

And now the exiles who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC, they were also given a mission. They were given a mission of restoring the worship of God in a world that rejects him.

Because through Cyrus, the Lord had commissioned them, he'd supplied them to rebuild the temple, rebuild the house of God. So two years after the exiles returned to Jerusalem, they began this building project.

They began to rebuild the temple of the Lord. And you can read about in Ezra how they started by laying the foundation stones of the temple. They paid for masons and carpenters.

[ 12 : 44 ] They purchased great cedar trees that were shipped from Lebanon. Lebanon used to have this impressive cedar forest. They were to be used in the construction of the temple.

This was expensive building material imported from a foreign land. But it didn't take long before construction ground to a halt. The people living in the lands nearby, they wanted to keep the Jewish exiles weak.

They wanted to keep them helpless. They did not want them to reestablish themselves as a nation and to reestablish themselves as God's people with the identity as worshipers of God.

They wanted to keep them weak. They wanted to keep them vulnerable. They wanted to keep them divided. So in Ezra chapter 4, we read, Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

This is a period of 16 years. For a period of 16 years, yes, the foundation of the temple had been laid. Yes, an altar had been built in which sacrifices were offered.

[ 13 : 57 ] But that old temple remained in ruins and the site was just left like that. It was a mess. And the people of Judah just kind of got used to that situation. They just carried on with their lives because, you know, nobody was opposed to rebuilding the temple, but they would get around to it eventually when the time was right, when conditions were better.

But then in 520 BC, and in fact, we even know the exact date. If you look at Haggai chapter 1, verse 1, you'll see that the exact date is given and that corresponds in our calendar to August 29th, 520 BC.

So August 29th, the Lord delivers a message to his people through the prophet Haggai. So once again, if you're using one of the blue Bibles that are Usher's handout, that's page 791, and here's the Lord's message in Haggai chapter 1, beginning in verses 1 and 2.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, these people say, the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord. Notice how that, this oracle, this divine message from Haggai begins, because he starts with the expected announcement of divine authority.

[ 15 : 34 ] This is a common way of saying, you know, this is the Lord's authority. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the Lord of hosts, the sovereign God who commands a host of heavenly armies, speaking with the authority and power of the Lord.

The next words out of his mouth are in fact not divine words. They're words that the Lord is reporting that the people have said. These people say, the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Notice the contrast. We've got divine words, a divine command, and human words, a human command, a human idea, because God's people haven't been listening to his words.

They haven't been paying attention to the commission he gave them through Cyrus. They've spent the last 16 years coming up with their own words, their own slogans, and there is a slogan in here. The English Standard Version, it doesn't do a terrific job of showing us that there's a catchphrase being used. The old King James Version sort of reveals it to us this way.

[ 16 : 46 ] This people say, the time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. So that's the slogan and it comes out, it's I guess a little bit catchy in English, the time has not come.

It's even catchier in the original. The time has not come. It is not the right time to rebuild the house of the Lord. I mean, yeah, yeah, we all want to rebuild it. We all want that. We all want the same thing, but right now, we've got bigger problems.

We all think that building the temple is important, but right now, there are other things going on in our lives that are just a little bit more important. They've got a higher priority. Now, we need to pause here for a moment to realize why this is so significant because the temple, as we saw, that was supposed to be the focus of worship for God's people.

The temple was the place where God's people could experience his presence. That was supposed to be the focal point of their lives as a believing community, as God's family, as his people, his community of worshipers, but now his temple had laid in ruins and by this point, it's been a total of 65 years.

And God's people had gotten used to that, gotten used to that state of affairs. This was now the new normal. Neglect was the new normal.

[ 18 : 12 ] Neglect of their relationship with God. And it seemed like common sense. The common sense of the people, the prevailing wisdom of the day was, the time has not come.

The worship of God, it can wait for later when it's more convenient. And the Lord is about to call out the slogan for what it is. It is false wisdom.

There is a false wisdom of neglecting worship. There is a false wisdom of neglecting worship. It's a false wisdom that still exists for you and me today because you and I, yes, we no longer need that old temple.

And the reason we don't need it is because we have the true temple. The shadow's gone. The reality has come. We have Jesus Christ, our Lord. We have God with us. And everyone who believes in Jesus now belongs to Jesus, is connected, included, united with Jesus.

Each of us is now a temple of God, the Holy Spirit. And together, we as a church are the temple of God. We gather together to worship Him. Together, we represent His presence here in this world.

[ 19 : 31 ] So we have to start thinking about how we as individuals, how we as a church, are there ways that we have neglected our worship of the Lord? Now, neglect is the surest way that we can slowly dry out our relationship with the Lord.

To illustrate that, I've got a plant at home. I've got a poinsettia. Maybe some of you do too. I got it a few weeks ago for Christmas, and those things are hardy.

They are, I guess, you know, plants for an arid area, and that's a good thing because I pretty much haven't watered it at all. Yeah, don't anyone ever give me as a gift a plant that requires a lot of maintenance. It's already dead.

You know, you're condemning it to death if you give it to me. I'm not very good at taking care of plants. You know, maybe I should get a hamster or something instead. It's a question of priorities, isn't it?

I mean, if we're being completely honest, am I capable of taking care of plants? Yes. It just doesn't register as a very high priority to me.

[ 20 : 35 ] Some of you are much more gifted in creation care. Thank God for you. If it weren't for you, you know, probably all the plants in the world would be dead. But I've got higher priorities, and I go a week without watering it, and the plant seems to be doing okay.

You know, it seems to be maybe a little dry, but it's getting along fine. But if I keep denying that poinsettia, the water that it needs, it's going to eventually shrivel up and die. It can't last forever like that. And so it is with your communion with God.

So it is with the vibrance of your personal relationship with God. Because you and I, you've received good news that you've been brought back from exile.

You have been saved by God's Messiah. You have been welcomed into a new, life-giving relationship with God and His family.

And when I say God's family, that's not just this theoretical idea of, oh, all the Christians throughout the world. You know, it's easy to love the idea of people. It's a lot harder to love real people, isn't it?

[ 21 : 40 ] The real people of our church. Specifically, you've been welcomed into this family, into God's family as it appears here at Squamish Baptist Church. But that relationship with God and with His family, it's no longer going to be a life-giving thing if you and I neglect it.

Think of it like any other relationship in your life with your spouse, with your children, with your parents, with any other family member or friend. The relationship remains.

You don't stop being a father just because you never spend time with your kids. But when neglected, it no longer gives life. It's no longer what it's supposed to be. It's a shell of its former self. So we have to ask ourselves first, especially at the beginning of this new year, first, as an individual, what have you been neglecting lately? Has it been the means of grace, God's Word, the Bible, prayer to Him?

And that's another way of saying, are you no longer listening to God's Word? Are you no longer speaking words in response to God? Is there no communication back and forth?

[ 22 : 58 ] Is there some sort of act of obedience that you know you should be doing but you've been telling yourself, you know, the time has not come? Just like the people of Judah were saying, the time has not come.

You know, I can think myself, I mean, this is very, this hits me hard because I can think not only of my neglect of prayer, of speaking to the Lord, but I can think of at least a couple of ministries that I've, I should be developing but to be honest, if I'm quite frank with you, I've let that excuse, I've let that excuse, the time has not come, allow me to neglect my obedience to the Lord.

You know, the time has not come, you know, when we get a lead pastor, then that'll be the time.

Well, I guarantee you that when he comes, there'll be another excuse and another excuse later and another excuse later.

There's, the time never comes. How about as a church? Certainly, there's a lot more we could be doing together but I suspect the thing that we need the most in our relationship together with the Lord is we need to strengthen our prayer together.

Do we pray together as a church? And to be completely frank, I think the answer is hardly at all. We've been through a challenging season in our life and I think it's high time that we begin either taking our Sunday night prayer meetings more seriously or we start finding other ways to pray together as a church.

[ 24 : 24 ] I am all open to ideas. Come talk to me about that. You know, I would, I would love in this year for every single person in this room to be involved in some sort of gathering with other believers in this church praying on a weekly basis.

Can you imagine what the Lord would do? The powerful moving of the Holy Spirit if his people would just pray, just speak to him together. We can't allow neglect to become the new normal. There is a false wisdom of neglecting worship. And we see in verses two through six some of the possible excuses for neglect. I mean, we've already seen opposition, that we grow discouraged and weary from opposition.

And verses two through six contain other possibilities. Thus says the Lord of hosts, these people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?

[ 25 : 40 ] Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough.

You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. So notice, first, the Lord is calling out people who seem in some ways to be well off.

Verse four, is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins? Referring to his own house, the temple.

So in the ancient Near East, you know, in our house, the wood paneling is common. I mean, quality wood that you can use for building a house is available literally next mountain over. It's easy to get. It's cheap. Not so in the ancient Near East. Not so in the land of Judah. Wood paneling was hard to get. It was an import. Remember, you'd have to bring cedars from Lebanon or something like that.

[ 26 : 42 ] It was something that was found in the houses of the wealthy. It was found in places like Solomon's Palace. And wouldn't you know it, you know, if you're wondering, well, where are these people getting this wood from?

If you sort of put two and two together, where's a large stash of unused cedar wood that's been sitting around for the last 16 years? At the temple site. You think it just sat there and no one ever used it and just let it rot?

You wouldn't want to let all that wood go to waste, would you? Now it's in their houses. The false wisdom of neglecting worship. That's something that first of all wealthy people can fall prey to. And if you've got a lot of changes of clothes in your closet, if you've got money and investment accounts, if you've got a pretty stable financial situation, if you know where all your food's coming from for the next month, by biblical standards, you're wealthy.

All the warnings that Bible talks about rich people are directed towards you and me. We're the wealthy ones. We're the rich ones. We're the ones that the Bible is writing about when it says it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for you and me to go into the kingdom of God.

[ 27 : 58 ] And wealthy people, especially now, tend to be busy people. The time has not come. Why? Because we're all running around frantically and that's something that you'll even see all the way down in verse 9.

Each of you busies himself with his own house. Busy, busy, busy, running, running, running, running around. The time has not come because we're working and working and working to sustain our income that gives us a higher standard of living.

We're running around all week, shuttling our kids to school and sports programs. I'm too busy.

That's become the modern version of the time has not come. Here's sort of, whenever you hear the phrase I'm too busy, here's the filter you can use to understand what that means.

It means I have higher priorities. It always means that. And sometimes that's good. Sometimes you are too busy for things that you really shouldn't be a high priority and it's a good thing.

But sometimes we're too busy for things that really should be the highest priority in our lives. And wealthy people like you and me, we need to be reminded what our priorities really should be. One popular illustration that I've seen in a number of different places, you've probably seen it yourself at some point, you take a glass jar, you fill it with large rocks, small rocks, and sand, and the order is important.

[ 29 : 11 ] Because if you start with the sand and the small rocks and you put them into the jar first, you notice the large rocks don't fit. That's what it's like to be wealthy and to neglect worship, both as individuals and as a church.

You put everything else into your life first. All the stuff we worry and worry and worry about. All the stuff we're busying ourselves in, running around, trying to take care of, and then you try, you know, you try to find a place for God and his family.

There's not a lot of room left over and that jar is your life. And worship doesn't fit into our lives. Worship as individuals, worship as a family of God.

There's no room left. If you want it all to fit in the jar, you can't, it requires a massive radical shift in the way you think. And the massive radical shift is this. You have to put the big rocks in first. And then when you do that, you find that everything else actually finds its place. These jars both contain the same material. But if you put the big rocks in first, everything else sort of finds its way in and fits into the gaps.

[ 30 : 25 ] You can fit a lot more into the jar that way, including the small rocks and sand. There's a quote attributed to Martin Luther that he almost certainly didn't say, but it's, it definitely captures his life.

And he is basically like, I have so many things I need to do today, I better start by praying for three hours. In other words, I'm not going to get anything done unless I start with the big rocks unless I start with worship.

You can fit a lot more into your life than you think you can. But only, only if you rebuild your life, foundation up with God and his family as your highest priorities, as the things that you put in first, as the things you put onto your schedule very first, nothing else pushes them aside.

Your life is centered on that. And then you start filling in the cracks with everything else. Everything else will just have to fit into the space left over. And I find that the people who are the most productive that I know of are the people who do that.

They start with the most important things first. They start with worship and it's amazing what the Lord does through them in their families, in their churches, in their communities. What's the case for wealthy people?

[ 31 : 44 ] For the poor, verse 6 talks a lot about the poor. People who are encountering hardship when it comes to food and clothing and money. We don't know, maybe these are a different group of people from those who are living in the paneled houses.

Or maybe, you know, the living situation has gotten worse and at one time they could afford to make paneled houses but now they're pretty much running out of money. Either way, it's hard, you know, my tendency is to be like, oh, how can you really blame them for not putting worship before their own needs?

You know, they're hungry, they don't have enough, their harvest isn't good. Can you blame them for failing to work in the Lord's house when they have so many of their own needs to tend to?

The Lord says, yes, you can. Yes, you can. And Jesus specifically says, yes. Yes, that's a problem when even our earthly day-to-day needs come before worship.

Consider Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 6. Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? Notice these are the exact same categories you see in Haggai, eating and drinking and clothing.

[ 32 : 59 ] For the Gentiles seek after all these things. And your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

That doesn't make any sense unless God is a real God worthy of worship, someone you can entrust yourself to. But Jesus is saying, put the big rocks in first.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God will make sure that your jar gets filled. So whether we're rich or whether we're poor, worship has to come first.

Your relationship with God has to come first. There is a false wisdom that you and I want to believe that we can sideline our relationship with God and His church or that we can suspend our relationship with God and with His church.

the time has not come. But God is telling us the time will never come because now is the time.

[ 34 : 11 ] Now is the time. January 7th, 2018, now is the time. Now is the time to rebuild because there's a false wisdom in neglecting worship.

And if you and I follow that false wisdom, we're going to dry out like that poinsettia on my table at home because Haggai chapter 1 verses 5 through 6, they tell us what has happened in the 16 years since the Lord's people have abandoned His temple.

Verse 6, verses 5 and 6. Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough.

You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. Consider your ways.

Stop. Stop that frenetic busyness and activity. Just for a moment, stop and think. Reflect. You're poor.

[ 35 : 16 ] You're struggling to get by. You're seeing all your hard work produce no results. Or you're rich. You find yourself unsatisfied. You find yourself restless. You find yourself disappointed with life.

You've sown much seed in the ground. Your harvests have been meager and disappointing. You eat food, but you never have enough to make you happy. You have wine to drink, but you feel unsatisfied.

You've got clothes to wear. They're not keeping you warm. And you're shrinking wages. They seem to disappear as soon as you earn them. Have you ever gone through a season of life where you just can't seem to get ahead?

Where you're always fighting an uphill battle just to keep your life from spiraling out of control? Or have you ever gone through a season of life where nothing you're doing is bringing you joy?

Just all dry and dull and lifeless. Or just a source of anxiety and stress. In Ecclesiastes chapter 2, we're reminded, what has a man, what has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?

[ 36 : 21 ] For all his days are full of sorrow and his work is a vexation. Even in the night, his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. Whether it's the food itself or whether it's the joy of eating that food, whether it's the drink itself or whether it's the pleasure that drink brings, all of it comes from God.

He gives all of it. Both rich and poor alike depend on God for provision and for pleasure. That's why in Ecclesiastes chapter 2, we read, there is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.

This also I saw is from the hand of God. For apart from him, who can eat? Or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him, God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy.

But to the sinner, he has given the business of gathering and collecting only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

So the one who pleases him, that means the one who is worshiping the Lord, who puts the big rocks in first, who seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, who values the Lord, who loves him and his people, God has given him wisdom and knowledge and joy.

[ 37 : 42 ] As for the one who's neglecting worship of God, God has given the business of gathering and collecting. Busy, busy, busy, running around, running around, only to give to one who pleases God. You lose it all in the end.

Which one of these is your life? Is it the wisdom and knowledge and joy or is it the gathering and collecting, the vanity and the striving after wind?

You and I, we just can't do this anymore. We can't follow false wisdom any longer. There's a false wisdom in neglecting worship leading to a dry and deficient life.

There's a false wisdom in neglecting worship leading to a dry and deficient life. And this is not the good life that God has called us to. This is not the life that God promised you and me when he brought us out of exile.

This is not what God saved us for. He didn't save you for this. It's time to embrace the good life that God wants for you and for me. Now is the time.

[ 38 : 47 ] So in Haggai chapter 1 verses 7 and 8, the Lord once again tells his people, a second time he says, consider your ways. And here's what he says. Thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways, go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house.

It's time to gather wood from the hills around Jerusalem. It's not going to be paneling for the temple, but they can start by building the scaffolding. So they can just get started on the construction again. It's not the whole building, but it's a first step.

The Lord says, just take the first step. Just do this little thing. Get started. It's time to abandon the slogans and the excuses. The time is now come to rebuild the temple.

And so it is for us because the time has now come. The time is today. The time has now come for me. The time has now come for you. And the time has now come for Squamish Baptist Church. Last week, Kyle said, 2018 is going to be an important year for our church. And he's right. And we can sit around and we can wait until a better time comes that we can, you know, okay, now we can start doing what God has called us to do.

[ 40 : 00 ] Or we can take action now. Because the time is now come. There is a false wisdom in neglecting worship leading to a dry and deficient life.

So God calls us to rebuild our worship. God calls us to rebuild our worship. I mentioned, let's start by praying.

We need to be a family that prays together. Tonight is 6.30 p.m. Show up. If you can't make tonight at 6.30 p.m., come talk to me. Let's find another time during the week.

Let's just do anything. Let's just do something. Join a growth group. Show up at the growth group that you've joined and then start making a ruckus. Insist that prayer become more than just an afterthought at the end of your meetings than you do for a few minutes.

I'm guilty of that as a growth group leader. God's calling us to rebuild our worship. Remember, this is not something we're doing to win God over.

[ 40 : 59 ] Remember, we're not doing this as though, oh God, you know, we have to prove ourselves to God. We have to prove that we're good enough. We have to prove that we're worthy of Him. That's not the case. Remember, we've already been brought out of exile.

We already have this new relationship with God. What God is calling us to is He says, I want my relationship with you to be good. To be a delight.

You don't have to earn His love and win His favor. He's already given His only Son for us. He's already delivered us. He's already welcomed us home. Haggai chapter 1 gives us three reasons why He's calling us to rebuild our worship.

Here's three reasons. Three reasons to have hope. Three reasons why even though we've neglected Him, we can find hope. Verse 8, the Lord says, Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord.

So first, God is calling you and me to rebuild our worship for His pleasure. First, for His pleasure. Because God tells the people of Judah, rebuild the temple because it's going to bring Him pleasure and delight.

[ 42 : 13 ] Why? Because He's going to be honored. He's going to be glorified. They're going to show the world what God is really like, that He is worthy, that He's worth putting first.

He isn't someone you just cram into whatever's left over, the little nooks and crannies of your life. He isn't someone who you just give whatever, you know, money happens to be left over at the end of the month. He's someone that you set aside money for. He's someone that you set aside time for.

He's someone who's worth it. When His people seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God is not going to think, well, I guess that's okay. He's not going to frown at their efforts.

He's not going to roll His eyes. He says, I'll find pleasure. Just get some wood. Just build some scaffolds. I love that. Yes! He'll find joy in what they're doing.

He'll use this temple to show that He is a God who is worthy of all honor, who is worthy of all glory. God is calling us to rebuild worship, rebuild our worship for His pleasure.

[ 43 : 17 ] His pleasure in you, His pleasure in us. Second, God is calling you and me to rebuild our worship for our provision, for our provision.

Verses 9 through 11, the Lord reveals to His people that it is He, He is the one who withheld good things from them. So the fact they've been going through all these difficulties is not a coincidence. They've been misinterpreting it. They've been thinking of that as, oh, that's an excuse why we can't put the worship of the Lord first. The Lord points out, no, actually, that's been my discipline. He's been withholding good things from none.

The things, all these things they were desperately gathering and collecting and striving in vain for. Verses 9 through 11, you looked for much and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away.

Why, declares the Lord of hosts, because of my house that lies in ruins while each of you busies himself with his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you have withheld the dew and the earth

has withheld its produce.

[ 44 : 23 ] And I have called for a drought on the land and on the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast and on all their labors. This doesn't sound good, but it is good.

Because sometimes the Lord withholds what seems to be good for us and the Lord does this not because he's a killjoy, but because he wants us to have true joy. We've settled.

The problem's with us. The problem is we're satisfied with lesser things. And the Lord is disciplining his people because he's got something better in mind for us.

You know, he's got something better in mind for you than you have for yourself right now. He's disciplining his people so that we'll no longer settle for anything less than solid joy and lasting treasure.

God no longer wants you to live by bread alone, but to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Remember in Matthew chapter 6, that passage we quoted earlier, Jesus says, the best way to provide for your own needs.

[ 45 : 30 ] So, you know, you wonder, what's the best way to take care of my needs? The best way to provide for your own needs is to rebuild your worship of God. That's your best strategy.

Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear?

You know, worrying yourself, you know, fretting over everything, scurrying back and forth, hurrying. Jesus says, that's not the best way to take care of those problems. Here's the best way. The Gentiles seek after all these things and your heavenly Father knows.

You need them all. You do need them. But your Father knows that. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

You put worship first, the Lord will take care of that. It's not like you're going to sit around and, you know, bread is going to rain into your mouth or something like that. But the Lord will take care of that.

He will supply for you. I know so many stories I could relate from my own life and from friends where entrusting themselves to the Lord in ways that seem foolish, the Lord always gets them by.

[ 46 : 39 ] The Lord always takes care of them. And the Lord will take care of you. God is calling us to rebuild our worship for our provision. That's His way of providing for you.

Trusting Him as your Father in Heaven. And finally, God is calling you and me to rebuild our worship for His presence. For His presence. Because look how the Lord responds to the people of Judah as they answer His call in verses 12 through 15.

Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnants of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai, the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him.

And the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message. I am with you, declares the Lord.

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnants of the people.

[ 47 : 52 ] And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the 24th day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. So in verse 12, we read that the people feared the Lord.

That was their response. The Lord now appears to them to be the most powerful, the most awesome, the most significant being and person there is.

He is the most significant relationship in their lives. The Lord and his temple, that's the big rock that goes in the jar first. Everything else now fits around that, the worship of the Lord.

And the Lord responds with a single sentence. It's just, this is one little tiny message, but this little tiny message means more than the world itself.

I am with you, declares the Lord. Oh, to hear that. But that is God's message for you today. I am with you. If you fear me, then you obey my word.

[ 48 : 56 ] I am with you. And that's what we long to hear. We long for the presence and the power of the Lord. We long to see him stirring up our spirits and the spirits of our children and of our friends and of our family and the church.

We long to see the Lord reviving his people. We want to be rebuilding in hope because the Lord is doing the work that we can never do ourselves.

And this is the promise of hope for the neglectful. Because yes, yes, you and I, we've neglected the work that God has called us to do. But he is ready on his toes, ready and eager to say, I am with you.

And he will be pleased and he will provide and he will be present as we rebuild our worship of the Lord this year. He will be.

This is good news of hope for the neglectful. God has not abandoned us but is stirring up our hearts. We can turn from our false wisdom of neglect.

[ 50 : 02 ] We can leave behind a dry and deficient life. And we can rebuild our worship for the pleasure of the Lord. And he provides for our needs, reassures us with his presence.

That's the good news. Father, we thank you. Father, we thank you.