Preserve the past to build for the future

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Preacher: Gavin Hunter

[0:00] Let's then hear God's word.

Let's then hear God's word.
Now, does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong, Zerubbabel, declare the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshaphat, the high priest.
Be strong, all you people of the land, declare the Lord. And work. For I am with you, declare the Lord Almighty. This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt.
And my spirit remains among you. Do not fear. This is what the Lord Almighty says. In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.
[1:44] I will shake all nations. And the desire of all nations will come. And I will fill this house with glory. Says the Lord Almighty.

The silver is mine. And the gold is mine. Declare the Lord Almighty. The glory of his present house will be greater than the glory of the former house.
Says the Lord Almighty. And in this place, I will grant peace. Declare the Lord Almighty. Amen. God will bless the reading and the hearing of his word.
Amen. Thank you, Alan, for reading this morning. I really appreciate it. Can you all hear me okay? Yeah. Great. I'm going to ask a quick question. Not in a way to make anyone feel embarrassed. I just want to make that clear. Who was all here last night?
[2:42] Just raise your hand. Just as helpful for me to know for overlap of how much overlap that I need to do. So really, we would have had the call last night, didn't we?

To rebuild the house of the Lord. To consider our ways before God. We talked about how it was a time for God's people to build God's house in the way that God wants.
That God wants to be glorified in his church. And actually, it's really, really important that as we go about that act of rebuilding, that actually it's a job where we're all called to go about that act of rebuilding.
Can you remember what I said? Together, everyone. Anyone remember? Achieves more. Right? So remember that. If you remember anything this weekend, that's what I want you to remember. Together, everyone achieves more. Or you could also have another one, which is quite cheesy. There's no I in team. All right.
[3:42] Think about it. So today, we're going to come to the second part of Haggai. And tonight, I'm going to complete the book. And really, my hope as I've been praying is that really, you won't just read this book this weekend.

I hope that this will be something which stirs in you to read the book after today, to think, to reflect. And the nature of my ministry is I've always been a wee bit provocative.
All right? And today, I hope this is a gentle encouragement. You had the one since the stir up last night. I hope today is more the arm around the shoulder.
Because our football manager knows when to give a kick up the backside. But also, he knows when to put the arm around the shoulder. Different people respond differently to different things.
So I hope this is an encouragement. As I hope last night was an encouragement too. So that's my prayer. I'm going to pray for God's help, if that's okay.
[4:46] So, Father, I just recognize again my dependency upon you, Lord. Because apart from you, I can do nothing. Lord, I want to pray that as I preach today, I pray that Jesus will be glorified in everything that's said and done.

I want to pray for your people. I want to pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. A fresh anointing upon me as the preacher. But I also want to pray for a fresh anointing on those that listen.

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May there be, may we not just hear from you. May we truly put it into practice, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know about you, but one of the things that I find really hard, and this is just being honest, even as a pastor, I find prayer really difficult.
I don't find the act of talking to God hard, but I find it hard sometimes to keep my prayer life fresh. And there's many things that I do.
You know, I go into my study and I close the door like Jesus instructs us to do and pray. But one of the things that I find is just the busyness of life.
[6:01] Busy with family commitments. Busy with church commitments. It's just busy, busy, busy. So one of the things I intentionally do is that it's great when you have a dog, you have to walk the dog, right?

So I get the dog and I take the dog out for a walk. And naturally, I use that time to pray and to seek the Lord, to see if there's anything that he wants to speak to me about.
I pray for the homes in our community. I pray for the members in the church when I walk by their houses. I just pray for people that I've built contacts with.
And about six months ago, I was walking up Chaddacre Road where I live, and there was a van. And the van grabbed my attention. You might think, why is a van grabbing Gavin's attention? That's a wee bit weird. It was the marketing slogan on the van which really gripped me. And it simply said the words, preserve the past and build for the future.
[7:10] Preserve the past and build for the future. That's a great strapline. That might make a sermon one day. And in many ways, it's kind of fought in my life.

And I've kind of fought and reflected upon that strapline. But the Christian isn't just called to preserve and be thankful for the past.
But Haggai would say that we're called to build, not just for a future, but a glorious future. There's a difference, isn't there?
Well, actually, in Haggai chapter 2, Haggai comes to the people, and he asks them a question. Who is left among you who saw the house, the temple, the place of worship in its former glory? Remember, God had given instructions, David, to his son Solomon. And Solomon, build a temple that God would be glorified in.
[8:18] And there's a little passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 7, when the temple was dedicated to God. Remember, Solomon cries out in prayer.

And we read these words. The priests of the Lord could not minister because the glory of God was so thick.
I want you to think about it. Daniel couldn't say a word out of his mouth. Some of you might think that's a good thing. I want to joke with Daniel. Right? Some of you might think it's a good thing if I couldn't say a word because the glory of God was so tangible.
Actually, what is the glory of God? Because it's something that we see all the time in church. What do we mean when we see the glory of God? God's powerful, almighty presence came and rested among his people.
Matt Redmond, some of you might know him as the songwriter. I prefer his books, to be honest, and his songs. But he says, when we see the glory of God, we'll have no other option but to fall face down and worship.
[9:43] Solomon had seen that glory. He says, how many of you remember the temple and its former glory?

How do you see it now? Well, actually, Haggai is saying, well, actually, you know what? In comparison, the structure looks pale.
It looks insignificant. It looks smaller. And actually, he says, is it like nothing in your eyes?
Wow. It's a bit of a despondent note, isn't it? But actually, Haggai turns it around and says, actually, now, Haggai says to the people of God, and would like to say to you, now, be strong.
Be of courage. I'm with you. And I'm going to be honest, sometimes churches, we can go back to golden times in the past, can't we?
[10:52] Certainly, I know of churches that have been like that. I'm not saying that this church is like that. But can I say to you, there's a danger that we can live off our past heritage.

It's good, isn't it? We're thankful. We're called to preserve the past, amen? Be thankful for it. Thank God for all that he's done.

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But we're called to build for a glorious future. You know, I remember a pastor friend who's really, really cheeky.
You think I'm cheeky. He's got ten notches up more on me. And there was a pastor, a long-standing pastor who'd been pastor in his church for over 40 years.
He had a long, faithful ministry. He left in the 1980s. The church had never really moved on from that point when my friend came.
[11:56] And he looked around the church and he was thankful because he saw row by row, person by person, the people were converted under this man's ministry. And then he looked at them and said, do you know how old I was when that pastor left?

And he said, I was minus three years old. Now, can I say to you, there's a danger, isn't there? There's a very real danger that as God's people, you might look back and you say, you know what, we're thankful to God for the last 50 years, aren't we?
Amen? I'm used to Nigerians, all right, so we're cosmopolitan, so if you're a Nigerian, you can shout out a loud amen because I know there is Nigerians here. Okay?
You can pretend that we're Scots or English or Cornish, you know, I should say for Daniel, right? And we have to be people who are strong and courageous.
[13:02] See, I used to read with Haggai, be strong. I thought, oh, here's a rallying cry. I must be strong in myself. Hang on a minute here.

My Bible says that actually our strength is found in our weakness, not in our strength. That actually we can do nothing but through him.
We can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. So I'm going to say, you're in this kind of shift as a church.
Some of you can remember the times gone by. Some of you can remember Pastor Hardy. I can even remember Pastor Hardy. I was six when he died.
I can still remember. I can even take you into the man's at four years old. And he pointed to the globe and Peter was in Ecuador, his son at that point.
[14:08] And he said to me, I remember vividly, when you're older, where are you going to be telling people about Jesus? Profound impact.

You think about all those years. You know, that's 34 years ago. But I still remember it. Now, friends, we need to recognize we're strong not in ourselves, but we are strong in our weakness.
if we want to build for a glorious future. I think it begins by recognizing we are weak, but he is strong.
That's so countercultural, isn't it? The world says it's all about promoting your achievements, your goals, your objectives, but actually the Christian actually recognizes except the Lord build the house or except the Lord build the church.
We as his laborers labor in vain. Can I say to you, I think one of the great needs for the church is this. We need to have a fresh dependency upon God.
[15:34] As I said last night, it's God who brings down peace. It's God who brings changes. God who brings growth to his church. But we have to be strong to rebuild, to have courage because God is with us.

I think we do need fresh courage in our day and age, don't we? I certainly need more courage. You know, Winston Churchill, a great leader, he said, courage is what it takes to stand up, but also courage is what it takes to sit down and listen.
Can I say to you, we need courage to get our place of dependence upon God to know that he is with us.
Amen? Let me say that again. God is with you. God is with you not just in the past, but God is with you in the future because he's interested in building his kingdom here in Western Hills now.
Now. You know, I left here twelve and a half years ago. Hard to believe, isn't it? And I've not even got grey hair yet. Yet.
[16:55] Daniel looked very fresh face last night, didn't he? In some of those photos. I won't say anything about his stomach line. Let's just say it's a wee bit bigger than his start.

It's an occupational hazard, Daniel. I get it. Right? But can I say to you, as a church, the work of God should always be going on.
It should always not be sitting back. Hi, guy. Be strong, people. Be strong. For I am with you. Do you remember how I ended last night?

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I gave you an exhortation, a rallying cry. Remember, friends, when you go about that act of rebuilding for a glorious future, the task ahead of you is never as great as the power behind you. Can I say that again? The task ahead of you, church, in Westerhills Baptist Church, is never as great as the power behind you. My Bible and your Bible says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
[18:14] I have a friend who in one of my churches, she's now with the Lord, precious thing, I won't say her name because Elaine will know her from Bucky. And her family saw a profound move of God where they were brought up, not in Bucky.

And the spirit of revival, basically in the Western Isles, where her family were converted. They never left this woman. And I remember visiting her and I said to her, what's changed in the church? And I was expecting some deep theological answer. And you know what she said? Nothing's changed. Nothing's changed.
I said, what do you mean nothing's changed? Society's changed. She said, yeah, you're right. she said, but nothing's changed because God's not changed.
It's God who is with us. Just as he was with Haggai, just as he gave them a covenant, just as he was with God's people in Egypt in the past, slavery, bondage, and they knew the hand of God's deliverance.
[19:28] God will be with us, and God will be with you. God was with you when you planted this church. That's amazing, isn't it?

50 years. God was with you in the good times in this church. God was with you, can I say, in the ugly times of this church. It's not about the bush.
There's some times in church life where it's difficult, but God is still with us in the ugly times. God's with us in the times where we're just plodding along, and God will be with you church in the future. Why? Because it's his church, it's not our church, it's his church, and he will be with you always.
Hi, guys, it says, who's left among you who's seen the house in its former glory? Well, those days were pretty glorious, weren't they? But he says, actually, if you're going to build for a brighter, glorious future, it's not just an assurance that God is with us.
[20:40] He reminds us that there's a time coming where God is going to shake the nations and that the house will be filled once more with glory again.

In fact, he says, not just in those days where the priests cannot minister because the glory of God was so real. The glory of the future house will be greater.
Wow! Imagine that's the case if the priests couldn't minister and the glory was even greater to come. Can I say one thing about the glory of God quickly?
I didn't mention this earlier than I should have. Can I say to you, God is passionately committed to his glory. And God will not give his glory to another.
So can I say to you, when this church experiences the growth of God and the grace and the glory and power of God, can I say to you, please don't take the glory for yourselves.
[21:40] Trust me, God, when we experience growth in Bucky, when we experience growth in Weshy, when we experience a wee of growth in Stone Lee, can I tell you, I recognize more day by day, it's God who builds.

I feel totally inadequate. And actually there's not a day which doesn't go by where I'm crying out before God before I come up here saying, God, I am petrified.
I cannot do this unless you turn up. I cannot do this. But actually God would say to you, the glory of the future house will be greater.
I'm thinking about, if I'm like Haggai's contemporaries, I'm thinking, how's the future going to be even more glorious than Solomon's temple? I look around and sometimes, look around, just look around at your friends, have a look and smile at them.
And sometimes you think, oh, I remember when all these sites were filled. Or sometimes you look around and you can go, oh, I remember all those people who used to come to the church week by week.
[23:05] Can I say to you, I'm not asking what type of church you were in 2010 when Daniel came. I'm asking what type of church you want to become by 2030.

I'm asking what type of church you want to be by the end of 2023. I'm asking what type of church you want to be next month. Because according to my Bible, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

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Remember, Moses cried out before God, God, show us your glory. Solomon experienced the glory of God when he dedicated the temple. But for Christians here, some of you are saying, that's okay for Moses, that's okay for Solomon.
I've never had that tangible experience of seeing the glory of God. Yes, you have. You're saying, how have you seen the glory of God?
Because the Bible says, in my Bible, and your Bible says that the sun is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being. So if you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord, you have seen the glory of God.
[24:31] Now, friends, that's a thought, isn't it? That if you know the Lord Jesus, you've seen the glory of God himself.

Actually, as Christians, we recognize the glory of God has come in a person, the person of Jesus. And there's an assurance that when he's the one that builds his church, he's the one that shows his glory, in that place, he will bring peace.
Peace with God. We can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that glorious? Isn't that glorious, church?
I say I'm used to Nigerians, sorry, I'm just rude now. Right? But can I say to you, friends, the most important thing in life, is that people know peace with God.
And that's only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ. But we're called to preserve the past and build for a glorious future.
[25:52] Can I say to you, as a church, can I say to you, preach the gospel in season, out of season, even when it's out of trend, can I say to you, Jesus still honors it when people are bold and courageous.

But actually, when we have peace with God, it's more than just a right relationship with God, it's about wholeness, completeness. Can I say to you, you have everything that you need in life when you know the Lord Jesus.
Do you believe that, friends? You have everything that you need as a church when you have Jesus Christ. Everything.
Everything. You know, one thing that I do know about building work, which is nothing, is that I know that tools are important.
And can I say to you, in ministry, I see a lot of fads and I see a lot of techniques and I love innovation and I love creativity, but can I say to you, can we remember ourselves something really important?
[27:07] If we want to see the glory of God, build on the tool of the gospel. Can I say that again? Build on the tool of the person, the Lordship of Christ and the gospel.

He gives an assurance that the people of God will know peace. Can I tell you, in our society, I don't know if this is, I can't talk about Western Hills anymore.
I can talk about people that I meet on my day-to-day life. But there's people who are really struggling with a lack of peace in their lives. There's a lot of uncertainty, isn't there?
There's a lot of fear in the air. I was talking to the air steward, like you do on the plane coming up, and I just looked at it again, I thought, he's deeply troubled.
He needed to know peace. I meet people just there, I say, day by day, who are struggling, because in one sense, they see the ripples effects of conflict, they see the ripples of just disappointment in life.
[28:24] peace. They need to know peace. And Jesus gives an assurance towards the end of his earthly life, before he endured the cross and was resurrected and ascended to be with his power.

There was an assurance in John 14. Jesus says, my peace I give to you that the world cannot give. Now, do not be afraid. Can I say to you, church, are you fearful for your future? Don't be afraid.
He's building his church. There's an assurance, hi, guy, how many of you remember those times in the past? I remember the good old days.
I can take you to the 4th of March, baptized in that time, 2001. I can take you to the 1st of October, where I gave my life to Jesus, exactly where Rebecca McKinnon is sitting.
[29:28] I can take you to the exact spot on the carpet in the cress room where I was called into ministry. But the reality is, don't get me wrong, I'm thankful for all of those wonderful, God-given moments, but I'm not stuck there.

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And I want to say to you, church, press on, be bold, I'm with you, don't be afraid, the task ahead of you is never as great as the power behind you.
I'm going to conclude the story, the sermon, with an encouragement about a church that I know, I won't name the name of the church just for confidentiality, okay, just to encourage you with what God can do.
There's a church in Scotland's second best city, Aberdeen, no, I'm only joking, it's that place at beginning with G, right, Celia's hometown, right, and when I preached there in 2003, there was about six people there, the average age was about 86, that's not an under exaggeration, that's probably been generous, and I looked at them and thought, they'd be better closing their doors, and that was honestly one of my initial reaction was, and they asked me, did I want to come back and preach, I was a bit cocky and I sent them the fly back, saying, no thanks, I'm not interested, and then they called a pastor in about 2010, with six praying ladies, and by that point they weren't about 86, they were probably about 90, right, and they carried on, they called the pastor, and the pastor was younger than me, right,
I'm 38, some of you are trying to figure out, 38, and it was about 12, right, okay, so he was about, I would guess, probably about 33, and he loved these wee ladies, and he encouraged them, keep going, he says, great that you're praying, that church today is now a church of about 85, that church has now got a second church building, that church now has got a hump where they've got a community shop, you know what I saw, they've seen the former days and they thought they were glorious, they've come to nothing, you know what Jesus saw, Jesus saw gems which he could build his kingdom with, and you might look and you might remember the former times, and hey, we're thankful for them, aren't we?
[32:48] but the best in Western Hills Baptist Church is still to come.

Let me say that again, the best is yet to come because God is not finished with this local church. I'm just going to simply pause at this point.
I want you to think, and some of you, this will become easier than others if you've been in the church longer. Think about the amount of people in this church who've been called into ministry. Nick Blair, pastor at Merkerson Castle School, chaplain, Ray McKenzie, Robert and Miriam Young, I know that they came here a long time.
People who had gone on from here and had brilliant ministries. People like David Wilson, who had an outstanding ministry in Shetland, and a good ministry in Hamilton, and Peterhead.
[34:07] people like Pam and Simon, people like Robert and Philippa, people even like a pleb called Gavin Hunter, people like you, people like Melissa Sharp, remember Melissa Kuhl, remember her?

people like Lucy Bannister, where Lucy heirs now, the amount of young people that have been sent out from this church, it's phenomenal in 50 years.
And can I say to you, and this is what I want to encourage you with, your legacy isn't just what you see here, your legacy is the ripples of how it's came out from here, the legacies which even go into America, you're now an international sending church, but can I say to you, the ripples are white, because we're preserved the past, amen?
We're thankful for it, but we're building a glorious future, far beyond Westerhales, far even beyond Edinburgh, far beyond even Fife, but literally the world has been turned literally upside down.
Some of you might think that's extreme, but I don't think it is extreme. upside down because of the witness of this local church.
[36:07] I don't think that's too bad in 50 years, do you? Who's left that's seen the temple in its former glory? How does it look now? You know my answer to that?

It looks pretty glorious, and I want to say thank you, thank you, and thank you. This church, for this church, here, here, I can't talk about this, please, will I cry?
I'm not going to cry, because big boys don't cry, well I do, but can I say to you, this church has invested in so many people, because you preserved the faithfulness of the past, but can I say to you, please build for our glorious, wonderful future, because I am with you, always.
Amen. Let's pray.

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