

Haggai 1 & 1 Peter 2:22-25

Deane 12th February 2017 'Stewardship Sunday'

Let's pray as we get into this passage in Haggai and as we think on about being good stewards of all that God has entrusted us with.

PPT Haggai 1 Title

Well let's just get our bearings with that reading from the book of Haggai.

It's Old Testament times.

Jerusalem had been invaded 65 years earlier.

And God's Old Testament people, the Jews, had been taken off into captivity in Babylon.

PPT Map exile

But now the first waves of Jews were being released and sent back to Jerusalem.

The return of Jews to the Promised Land would continue for a few more years.

But by the time the prophet Haggai is writing, Jews had been back in Jerusalem for about 15 years.

There probably weren't that many people among the returning Jews who remembered Jerusalem as it was. Not after 65 years.

They would have been children when they were driven into exile.

But Jerusalem had been a great city.

The City of David.

And the city had been dominated by the Temple.

PPT Solomon's Temple

A huge building which represented the presence of the Lord with his people.

It was the place where people went to pray, and the place where people went to make offerings to God.

It was the focus of the Jewish faith.

It was the focus of the Jewish nation.

But the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians 65 years earlier.

And God's people, even though they had been back in the Promised Land for 15 years.... instead of rebuilding the Temple...

the Temple that God had **commanded** his people to build and to maintain...

What were they doing?

God's people were busy beautifying their own houses.

v2 'These people say, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house."'

³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ 'Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?'

And while God's people were doing that.

Were they happy?

No!!!

Were they fulfilled?

No!!!

PPT vv4-6

⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'

A couple of weeks back I was preaching on Proverbs 3, where we find a series of instructions from God about how to experience the blessed life... the life that God designed us to live. Life in all its fullness. And each instruction in Proverbs 3 is associated with a promise from God.

Here are two of them.

PPT Proverbs 3:5-6

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.**

**Honour the LORD with your wealth,
with the first fruits of all your crops;
¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.**

The people in Haggai's day had turned their backs on the instructions and promises of Proverbs.

Back in Haggai chapter 1, verse 9

PPT Haggai 1:9

⁹ 'You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away.

Why?' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.

They were ignoring God's instructions and his promises and so were experiencing *the opposite* of the blessed life that God wants for his people.

Now let's just be clear here.

God is not saying to us that we can't build a nice patio onto the back of our house.

God is not saying that we can't have a nice holiday or drive a nice car.

The reason these people are not experiencing God's blessing is that they have their priorities **all wrong!**

They are paneling their own houses while leaving God's house a ruin for the past 15 years.

They're even making excuses about it, v2.

'These people say, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house."

And so God sends Haggai and other prophets to stir up the people and to remind them of what their priorities should be.

What should the top priority for God's people be?

PPT Haggai 1:8

⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,' says the LORD.

So that I may take pleasure in it and be *glorified*.

The primary role of human beings, people made by God, made in God's image to be in eternal peaceful fellowship with our creator.

Our primary role is to honour God.

PPT God first

To bring glory to God.

To put him first and to enjoy all the blessings which flow from that.

Christians have so very much.

PPT 2 Peter 2

²⁴ 'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.' ²⁵ For 'you were like sheep going astray,'^[1] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

To know forgiveness of sins.

To have that relationship with our creator restored.

That Jesus should step down from heaven and give up everything so that we could gain everything.

Who then are we to say to God.... *"The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house."* ?

Now the Temple system was abolished when Jesus died on the Cross.

Everything that the Temple stood for we now find in the person of Jesus Christ.

We don't have to construct a great building in Jerusalem anymore.

God's people today are in the business of **building God's Kingdom**, of which Christ is the King. Building the Church. Building up the Body of Christ.

What does that look like?

PPT. In NZ a man spent four years growing a church from trees. I'm not sure that this is what the Bible means by growing the church.

Buildings are really useful for all kinds of church activities but actually the church itself is **the people**.

PPT People

PPT Globally

PPT Body of Christ

PPT Congregation photo

PPT Blank

So if the church is about people, and our primary mission here on earth is to bring glory to God by extending his Kingdom...

We shouldn't just go to church. We need to **BE** the church!

PPT Don't go to church!

Sunday morning services are the church **gathered**, and it is right and good that we meet together like this, but services are just a tiny fraction of the life of God's church through the week.

Think about Deane Church for a moment.

PPT Deane ministries.

Snapshot of various Deane ministries.

So encouraging in the past year to see...

Lives transformed by the power of God here at Deane.

To see people healed of all kinds of physical, emotional and spiritual issues.

To see people putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the first time.

To see long standing Christians find a renewed confidence and joy in God.

To see a church having a greater confidence in God.

To see a church more mobilised in prayer.

To see a new youth group up and running this past year.

To be getting more and more invitations to go into local schools.

To see the work in the care homes growing.

To see new home groups springing up.

And as we look ahead there are exciting plans to establish a debt counseling ministry operating out of the Church Centre.

We're thinking how we can more effectively impact Sutton and area with the love of Christ in word and deed.

At our Church Council meetings we always begin with a Bible reading and prayer followed by a time of sharing how we have seen God at work since the last meeting.

And we are so encouraged and so excited about what God is doing through his people at Deane in these days.

A few weeks back I was preaching about the importance of God's people using their God given gifts for the building up of the body of Christ.

PPT Gifts of the Spirit

I was talking about the importance of us not doing jobs but of exercising *ministries* in line with our spiritual gifts.

When God's people do this, lives and communities are transformed in a powerful way.

If you are a Christ-follower and you haven't yet used the Spiritual gift assessment tool that I was commending a few weeks ago...

There are some more copies on the welcome desk.

I know that a lot of people have had a go at that and I have been asking people what their top gifts came out as.

Some people have been really surprised and are now seeking to be using those gifts in a more intentional way.

If you are a Christian, what are your spiritual gifts and how are you using them to bring glory to God?

For a church to be healthy and to be growing, God's people need to be using their God given gifts.

God's people also need to be giving generously, not just in using their gifts, but also in time and money.

PPT Boilers

A fortnight ago I brought to the congregation the news that of the three church heating boilers, one had died and another was on the blink.

They could not be repaired and so needed to be replaced.

At church council we bit the bullet and decided to step out in faith and order the installation of new boilers plus a heat exchange unit. Total cost £11,000 plus VAT. The VAT we would be able to reclaim.

The only way we could afford this though was to take out an interest free loan paid off over one to two years.

I also asked if any members of the congregation felt moved by God to help fund the new boiler installation.

Over the past two weeks, of the £11,000 needed, £5,687 had come in.

Praise God!

And that money has come from you, the congregation.

Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could get together all the money for those new boilers so that we weren't paying off a loan at all?

Grants aren't readily available for new boilers although we can access grant money for big projects involving rain water drainage or building improvements.

This past year we have been awarded nearly £100,000 from the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme so that the church building can be kept dry for many more years to come.

And we will soon be applying for a large grant to cover the costs of new toilet and kitchen facilities for the back of church.

But the day to day expenditures of building maintenance, staffing, heating and lighting, and mission are covered by what we the members of Deane Church give.

PPT Expenditure v income

Unpack main expenditures.

-Deane Church a net receiver from the Dioceses not a giver!

-c£50K a year in share. c£90K received – Rector & Curate.

Giving.

Tax efficient giving.

Tithing.

Biblical principle. [See handout]

The first tenth of income... as a minimum.

A good discipline.

Tithing is a floor not a ceiling!

Giving God the first fruits not the fag ends!

What is your income? Divide by ten. That's your tithing amount.

Becca and I tithe as I know some others at Deane do.

As soon as our salaries come in, 1/10th goes straight back to Deane Church.
Tithing is Biblical and it is a very good discipline.

Filling in and returning response/pledge forms.

If you can increase your giving then get on and do it ASAP.
If you need to adjust a standing order, do it today or tomorrow.
If you leave it until next week, you'll forget and it won't get done.

PPT Deane congregation photo

Do you notice anything special about this group of people?
Members of God's precious creation the church!
People who I their vicar just love to bits, but who God loves infinitely more than I do.
People for whom Jesus died.
People purchased by Jesus blood.

People entrusted with a mission!

Those of us on the Church Council long to see the Kingdom of God breaking into lives, families and communities in this parish.
At our Church Council meetings, we talk about buildings and money but we spend as much if not more time talking about people and mission.
We so want to see this community impacted with the love of Jesus in word and deed.
We want to see people experiencing the lasting hope, joy and security which only Jesus can give.

Do you share our vision?

Do you want to be part of this mission?

If so, what part is God calling you to play in the life and witness of Deane Church?

How are you using the time, talents and money that God has given you to bring glory to him?

How are you investing your life to bring glory to the one who gave up everything for you?

PPT Haggai 1:14

Haggai 1:13-15

¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: 'I am with you,' declares the LORD. ¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

What happened next?

PPT Haggai 2:19

"From this day on I will bless you."

Pray.