

Haggai 1:15b-2:9; Ps. 98 ; 2Thess. 2:1-5,13-17 ; Lk. 20:27-40

Building a House of Glory

We need to set the scene the prophet Haggai addressed.

A remnant of God's people had returned to their holy city of Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon. Through their leaders, God had instructed them to re-establish their lives there, and **to rebuild the temple** destroyed by the Babylonians some decades before.

The people had started, but for various reasons had become disheartened, and work had stopped. **So God sends Haggai** to urge them into action, to encourage them in spirit, and to reassure them that His glory would be seen in their midst.

It temple was a sign, that God was with His people.

Throughout the ages, temples, churches and houses of worship have been built to God's glory. Even this one here; even the much grander St. Johns cathedral; **and this one.**

Margaret, Susan and I came across it in the city of Konstanz on the Swiss-German border.

Inside it was highly decorated with many religious signs and symbols. Magnificent works of art, all done to the glory of God.

This contrasted sharply with many churches we have seen in rural Australia. Some in towns, some standing alone in fields on farms. Many, no longer used. Some have been recycled to serve other purposes, but some have just been abandoned to the elements.

Reflecting on what we could see, I thought, **"What is missing?** These places are really just buildings, like Haggai's temple and all the other churches I could think of. **What is it that gives life to these houses of God?"**

Soon the answer came. **"It is the people."**; the faithful people of God who came in times past, or who still come in the present, to worship God and share fellowship with him.

It is the people who are the true "house of glory", a spiritual building in the hearts and minds of those who live by faith in God.

But history is studded with people who do not understand the spiritual nature of life, or the timeliness of spiritual realities. They grow impatient, take it upon themselves to initiate a system of beliefs, and advocate a state of life and living that grows out of their own dreams and visions.

One example is **George Bernard Shaw** - playwright, critic, and political activist of 1st half last century. He is well known for the following quote;

Quote: “You see things; you say, ‘why’. But I dream of things that never were, and I say ‘Why not’.” (from Back to Methuselah)

His dream seemed very attractive, and his ideas were taken up by countless others. In time, these ideas permeated every level of national and personal life. They have been, and still are, a predominant force driving what is happening around us today, and have brought us to where we are in national and communal life.

But these ideas, now so popular, **have no place for God**, and truth is reduced to a matter of popular opinion.

We now have a nation that is becoming increasingly godless. Successive generations have been weaned away from a religious life, and society is beginning to openly persecute Christians who challenge popular opinion with the Truth God has revealed.

Without God, a dream that seemed so good, is offering little in the way of spiritual comfort; and sustainable hopes and dreams of a meaningful future are becoming at best, just wishful thinking, and at worst, figments of the imagination.

Lofty ideals and human aspiration alone will fail us, for it is as the Psalmist says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.” (Ps. 127:1)

But despite what the world believes or says, the truth is that God is real. God is still God. God is alive and active in this world.

God will not be mocked, and continually raises up men and women of vision and faith who, like the prophets of old, rally the faithful, call those who have wandered off back to God, and point all people towards the destiny God has prepared for this life and this world.

Another man of vision comes to mind. **Martin Luther King**, the American pastor and civil rights leader, who, in a speech in 1963 railed against the injustice of racial and social discrimination in his nation. He said that he had a dream that one day all barriers between people would be broken down.

His speech reached a climax when he said, **“I have a dream that one day every valley will be exalted, every mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people will see it altogether.....”**

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, he predicted that in God’s good time, this reconciliation of people would happen.

Isaiah spoke these words of comfort to God’s people decades before Haggai, at a time when they were facing God’s judgment, with the destruction of their nation, their cities, and their temple, and who were facing exile in a foreign land.

Isaiah brought them the assurance that God's purposes would not be thwarted, their despair would pass, and there would be new life and new hope.

In God's time a remnant returned to rebuild what was lost. God was building His house of glory; not just the temple of stone and timber, but the living temple, the body of faithful people who God would restore into His fellowship.

That restoration would find its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ.

In Him, God came in person to further build His spiritual house. Jesus lived a perfect life; He taught the principles of life that God desired for His people.

He demonstrated that life in action, and reaching out to peoples' hearts and minds, urged them to believe that following His example was the only way to live in the peace and harmony they were intended to enjoy since the beginning of time.

Jesus conveyed a vision of life as God intended it to be, and made it clear, that dreams of a meaningful and purposeful future life were not figments of imagination, but a definite reality for all who believed in Him, and trusted His words.

When He died, it was possible, that just like the other great leaders and visionaries before Him, all the hopes, dreams and visions He espoused would die with Him.

Even some of His closest followers thought they had, and it might have been true, if it had not been for one thing.

Jesus returned to life; proving to all the onlookers and indeed to all the world that not even death could destroy what He had initiated.

Now it was clear, that all that He purposed was not wishful thinking, but a permanent and eternal reality. Nothing could stop God from building a spiritual house of glory in His people.

In his second letter, Peter describes believers as "living stones". Who derive their life from Christ, the "original living stone", to whom they have come.

The house of glory is invisible, but it is formed by the Holy Spirit who lives in each one. Every stone in this house has been made alive by the Holy Spirit, sent by the exalted "living stone", Jesus Christ.

As God's house of glory, believers are called to reflect the holiness of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. They are to offer spiritual sacrifices and a variety of offerings; eg. Offerings of themselves, offerings of money and material goods, and offerings of service and good deeds, offerings of praise and thanksgiving. They are to intercede to God on behalf of the world and other people, and they are to represent God to fellow human beings.

Thus, Peter conveys the vision, that believers are "living stones" that make up a "spiritual temple", in which as a holy people, they offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through faith in Jesus Christ. (1Peter 2:5)

Each one transformed into a new creation through a complete renewing of mind and heart through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 12:2)

Martin Luther King, in language typical of his day, drew on this vision of the reality of God's house of glory, as he brought his famous speech to an end.

“With this faith”, he said, “we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood”.

I leave you some suggestions for your prayers.

1. Pray for the continuing growth in the number of the redeemed in God's house of glory.
2. Pray for the conversion of the hearts and minds of people who deny the reality of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and have turned away.
3. Pray for insight to discern the pedigree of ideas and visions, that faith filled people might recognize those that originate in God, and those that come from a different source.
4. Thank God continually, that He has called each of us into life in His house of glory, through the saving grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Lead us Heavenly Father, lead us,

O'er the world's tempestuous sea.

Guard us, guide us, keeps us, feed us,

For we have no help but thee.

AMEN.