

Reconstructing the Temple

by Mark Steberl

God is pleased, glorified, and blesses us when we put Him first in our lives.

Duration: 34:11

Scripture: Haggai 1:5-9, Haggai 2:12-19

Topics: "Building"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying focused and working hard in life. He shares the testimony of a man who achieved great success in his career but gives all the credit to God. The preacher encourages the congregation to prioritize their relationship with God and not let busyness and distractions hinder their spiritual growth. He also highlights the need for families to have regular devotion time and for the church to actively engage in building spiritual values in their community. The sermon references Bible verses that urge humility and reliance on God for blessings and success.

Transcript

Are you here for building the temple? Absolutely. Oh, excellent, because I hear they're building the temple. I almost fell out of bed this morning when I heard it, because it's been such a long time.

You know all the problems they had, you know, the permit problems? You remember the Persian government, the stop work order that they slapped on the project, you know, the neighbors were complaining, all that red tape and everything, you got to go through to build a temple these days. All the hoops, you know. And so, but the thing is, it's been 15 years.

15 years that all they have is the altar and the foundations. About time I think that they get to build it. I was so excited when I heard that they're building the temple that I right away, you know, we had a vacation planned, my wife and I. We were going to go down to the Dead Sea and kind of float around and just take it easy.

But when I heard they're building the temple, I told my wife, I mean, we discussed it and decided that I needed to go be part of this. And I hope you guys are going to sign up. I wonder where do we sign up? Where do we sign up? It's important, I think.

You know, the thing that really gets me is for 15 years this temple was sitting, and you know, just down the street, you know, that new subdivision they're putting in, all those new houses. You know, everybody's so

busy building their own houses and just between you and me, you know Mr. So-and-so, okay? The guy with the big house. You can see his house right from the temple lot.

The big house right up there on the corner. You know, get this, paneled ceilings, okay? Panel, yeah, wood panels on the ceilings just like they do in king's palaces. I mean, the guy is loaded, okay? I wish I had some of his coin.

But the sad thing is, while all this is going on, God's temple is sitting there in ruins. I like that prophet Haggai. He's really getting things stirred up.

I think he's right. It's time. The time has come.

I think it's past due, actually. Because, you know, everybody's wondering why are things getting so bad? You know, the crops aren't coming through. You know the hail.

You heard about the hail. You heard about the blight. You know, you guys heard it on the news.

You know about that, right? And my friend just the other day, he's got a really good job, but he was telling me, he says, it's like I got holes in my pockets. You know, I have no money. I think God's not happy.

I think that he's not pleased at all. You know, it's not an accident that these crops are failing. I think he's got something to do with it.

You know, think of all the things that he's done for us. You know, he took us out of captivity way back there in Egypt, and then now from Babylon back to Jerusalem so we can rebuild our city. Think of it.

And we're not starting, we're kind of going down the same road again. We're forgetting about God, forgetting about putting Him first. Oh, I think it's so important that we put Him first.

You know, some of the old guys, okay, that have been around for a while, they remember Solomon's Temple. And we all heard about it, right? It was glorious. But you know what they're saying? They're saying that it's never going to be like it was.

That's what they're saying. You know? I mean, that was 70 years ago. You know, get with it, right? But they're saying, no, no.

It's almost like they're saying, why even try? It's never going to be as glorious as it was. But I believe that prophet Haggai. He's a good man.

You know, he tells it like it is. Okay? He says that God's going to be glorified and God's going to take pleasure in it. That's what he says.

If we go and build the temple, God's going to be glorified and He's going to take pleasure in it. You know what else he said? He said that we're supposed to be strong and work because God's going to be with us. I think that's pretty good.

You know, and then here, get this. This is the best part of it all. He says, you know Solomon's Temple? You know the way it was? It's even going to be better.

That's what he said. He said the glory of the latter house is going to be better, be greater than the glory of the former. I believe that.

That's why I'm going. I hope you guys are going too. Are you? I hope we're going to go build the temple together so we can get this done and finally put our priorities where they need to be.

Right? How about that? Amen. Let's take our Bibles and turn to Haggai. We're going to look at the book of Haggai.

And that is just about at the end of the Old Testament. And I hope that little skit kind of brought you up to snuff on what's happening here. Next week I expect to see everybody with tool belts and hard helmets.

We're going to just focus in on a few verses from both chapters of Haggai. Let's ask the Lord's blessing as we look at a few thoughts this morning. Lord, we thank You for this book.

We thank You for what You did with Your people here. We thank You for the words that were written down for us. I think they're very applicable for us today and I ask that You'll apply them to each one of our own lives and our own situations and to our lives together as a body.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Verse 7 and 8 of chapter 1. I kind of singled those out as the theme of the message this morning.

Let's read those. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Consider your ways.

Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified. Wow! That God may take pleasure in it and be glorified. The building of the temple was important because God was going to take pleasure in it and be glorified.

There's no greater joy in life, I think, than to know that the God who made us, the God in whom we live and breathe and have our being, is pleased. So, the first point this morning. God is pleased when we put Him first.

It's all about our priorities, this message. Putting God first. After all, He's the Creator.

We're the creation. The truth is, we need God. We will never make it on our own.

God made the world and all the things that are in it. Seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and Earth, He dwells not in temples made with hands, for we live in Him and move and have our being. What a beautiful verse from Acts 17.

We live in Him, move and have our being. You know, Caroline Mines is an exciting place for myself and my kids, but it's a dangerous place. I don't encourage anybody to do what we did.

Go down into those tunnels. Okay? Because it can be dangerous. And in those tunnels, there is the possibility that one of the tunnels will go into a dead airspace.

You know, we tried to keep in the tunnels where there was always a breeze. But if you go into a tunnel that had a dead end, it could be possible that you could enter into a dead airspace where there's no oxygen and that's it for you. Drop dead and die is the next thing.

Can you live without oxygen? Can you live without God? Satisfaction comes when we put God first. Matthew 6.33 is my favorite verse. One of my favorite verses.

I've got a lot of favorite verses. Matthew 6.33 Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. What things is He talking about? He's talking about the physical things.

You know, the houses that we need to live in, the clothes we need to wear, the money we need for buying food and all that stuff. That's secondary. Not that we're to throw it all away.

Not that it's not important. But it's about putting first things first. God is first.

God is the reason we're here. God is the reason we live. God is the reason for life.

Seek first the kingdom of God and all the other things will seem to come in order. The Jews were heading down the wrong road. Their neglect of the temple was robbing them of blessings and contentment.

I like that verse in the Bible that says godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and clothing, let us therewith be content.

The important things are spiritual. The important things is the contentment inside our hearts. You know, I heard a story about a lawyer who was on his deathbed and they sent him home to die and he was laying there in his bed.

His wife was caring for him and he was rich and he said to his wife, he said, you know, I'm going to try my best to see if I can take some of that with me. Can you take this pill case, fill it with money and put it right above the bed here? When I die, he says, I'm going to try everything possible to grab that. Well, he died and about a month later, she remembered.

Pillow case, I'm going to go see if it's there. So she went up to the attic right above where she placed it. Sure enough, it was still there and she said, I knew I should have put it in the basement.

You know, we can't take anything with us. Naked we came into this world and that's how we're going to exit this world. This world is just this world.

It's temporal, it's temporary. The important things extend way beyond this world. They're spiritual.

And that's where our attention needs to be. That's where our priorities need to be. Number one, number first, God.

Material things are just for this world. Spiritual things extend beyond. Jesus said it this way, don't store up treasures on this earth where moths eat holes in it, rust ruins it, thieves break in and steal, but store up treasure in heaven.

It is possible to store up treasure that is outside the physical realm that we live in. And that is what God is telling us this morning. Focus on that.

We know that we should put God first. We know that we should pray more and develop our dependency upon God more. Read his Bible more.

We know that as a family we should have a family devotion time and encourage our kids in that direction. But how often in this life, in this culture, we are so busy. Busy, busy, busy.

How long can we put it off? The kids will grow up. They'll get older. There won't be a second chance to do that with them.

We'll grow old and get old and we'll look back on our lives and we'll wish we had. Oh, what's it going to take? Shake us in. Engage us.

Let's be strong. Let's work. Let's build the temple.

Let's build the spiritual values of our life. Let's build the spiritual values and culture of our community. Let's build the spiritual values of our church and the direction that our church is going in and the way it's going to reach out into the community and proclaim the name of Jesus.

Let's work on those type of things. God was giving the Jews an eye-opener. He was pulling on the strings of His providence.

You know, look at it. V. 5-6 Consider your ways, He said. You've sown much and bring in little.

You eat, but you don't have enough. You drink, but you're not filled. You clothe yourselves, but no one's warm.

He who earns wages, earns it to put it into a bag with holes. And jumping down to v. 9 You looked for much, but indeed it came to little. And when you brought it home, I... see, God is saying, I blew it away.

It wasn't by chance. It wasn't that they were just unlucky in their situation. But God was interfering.

He was saying, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because my house is in ruins while every one of you runs to his own house.

Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock and all the labor of your hand. Why was it getting so hard for these people? Because they weren't putting God first.

They were neglecting the building of the temple. The building of the temple was significant in the Old Testament time. The temple was a significant place where man and God united.

Second point. Let's go on to the second point. God is first.

First point was God is pleased when we put him first. Secondly, God is glorified when we put him first. God is glorified.

I will take pleasure and be glorified, God says. There's something special about seeing God glorified. You know, three weeks ago when there was the baptism service here, one of the best services in my life, I think.

I don't know about you. I loved that service. I loved the presence of God.

I loved the unity that came together in our community as the other church joined us. And we joined together, okay? Joined together. And we saw these people make a commitment to the Lord.

And we saw God glorified. Because they said they weren't up there bragging about what they'd done to change their lives. They were up there bragging about what Jesus did to change their lives.

I love that! Don't you? Oh, yeah. There was a great glory to the former temple that Solomon had put together. I mean, it was a magnificent structure, but the best part of the glory was what the Jews call the Shekinah glory.

It was the presence of God on the mercy seat. And the cherub. Oh, my.

The glory. That was the glory of the temple. The presence of God.

Some of the old men wept when they laid the foundation for the second temple we read in Ezra. They seemed to think that it would never compare to the one Solomon built. But God encourages their hearts.

In v. 4 of our text, He says, He vows to strengthen them. Actually, we're in v. 4 of chapter 2, not chapter 1. Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, says the Lord, and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadek, the high priest, and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. Be strong.

I'm with you. God is glorified. His presence.

His presence is the glory. The Bible says elsewhere in Romans 8.31, for us today, He says, you know, if God be for you, who can be against you? Jesus says, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the earth. Jesus prays for us, even today.

Jesus is confessing our names before the Father. You know, I don't know. I love this Scripture in Matthew 10.32. It says, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father, which is in heaven.

And I think that verse is a continual verse. It's not just a one time. Yeah, once back in my past, I confessed Jesus as Lord.

You know, I gave my life to Him. But it's a continual confession of the Lord through the way we live. We're confessing the Lord as the reason for our living.

He's the glory of our lives. And we're walking around with that kind of confession through the things we do, through the words we say, the thoughts we keep. And Jesus, He sees that and He's confessing our names before the Father.

He's saying, hey, there He is. You see Him? Yeah. He needs this.

He needs this power. Jesus. The presence of Jesus.

The interest of Jesus. With us. Strengthening us.

What encouragement these people have. God's with you. Be strong.

Build. I think we can safely say that God is with us when we put Him first. And secondly, God encourages them in v. 9 of chapter 2. He says, the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former.

He encourages them by giving them a vision towards the future. Something to work towards. And I think that's the vision we have today and we need to encourage each other in that vision.

The vision of God's glory. The establishment of His kingdom. And the hope that we hold of His soon return.

Oh, that He would return. Some of us, you know, we feel that. Oh, that if He would just come tomorrow, we'd be so happy.

Set up His kingdom. The glory of His peace. The glory of His kingdom.

The glory of His rule. And these people were encouraged that God was going to do something greater than He did in the past. There's going to be a greater glory.

Putting God first. There will be a greater vision and experience of God's glory. I like the verse in 1 Corinthians 10.31. Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

When someone puts God first, there is a glory that fills the temple. There is a light that fills that person. And it seems like people like that that are filled with that light, that are filled with the glory, that are aware of the glorious presence of God in them.

Okay? I'm talking about the temple now. The temple of the Holy Spirit. I'm talking about the body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

You and me. And us together. The presence of Christ in us.

The glory filling the temple. Beautiful. And when somebody does that, there's a light that shines on everything they do.

Everything they do. I like this light here. How many have one of these? These are great lights.

You can get them at Princess Otto. Make sure, guys, that you allow yourselves at least an hour and a half for going into Princess Otto. Okay? So, there we go.

Why do I like this light? I like this light because wherever I look, there's light. Whatever I look at, there's light. I can be in the dark and I can read a book because I'm looking there.

The light's there. You know? Wherever I look, there's light. And that's the way it is with somebody who puts God first.

They see, even in the menial tasks of life, they're able to see light. They're able to see God's purpose and God's power and God's presence. It becomes exciting.

You don't have to be the preacher up here on Sunday morning. You could be the person who vacuums the rugs in the church. You could be the person who is out there and nobody really knows what you're doing, but you're helping somebody.

But God knows. That's what I'm saying. People don't have to know.

People don't have to know what we've done or who we are. It's God. We could be washing dishes.

We could be scrubbing vegetables and know the presence of God and the power of God in those things. When your selfish ambitions are first, it breeds discontent. You know, when it's all about us and it's all about what we attain to and it's all about building our own homes, it breeds discontent.

We're not satisfied. We'll never be satisfied. You talk to those that go down that road and have ended up there, they say it doesn't satisfy.

We're just discontent. It breeds hardships because the time that we should be putting into other relationships, we're putting into these selfish interests and there's hardships created there. It breeds hardships because the money that we should be putting into other things of life, we're putting it all into these selfish interests and we don't have money over here.

And so there's hardships financially. There's all kinds of hardships when we live selfishly. And there's envy because we look at those people that what we're trying to attain to, they've attained to and we become envious of them or maybe we attain to something and it's the others that become envious of us.

What's the point in that? Just making enemies, making people envious of you. No way to live for selfish ambitions and not to mention the competition that happens, the anger that it breeds. Oh, humble yourself under the hand, the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time and He will get the glory.

That's why three weeks ago we sat in this congregation and tears streamed down our eyes because in our hearts we were saying, I don't know about you, but I couldn't stop saying that that Sunday. Every time they would say, God did this. God changed.

I was going here. God took me there. I just kept saying in my heart, Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. And finally, last point. I didn't even ask for a watch.

How am I doing? Last point. God blesses those who put Him first. God blesses.

The promise that we find here given to the people is that God will bless them if they continue to build and to put Him first. Verse 14. Well, let's look at verse 12 first.

Can righteousness be passed on is the question in verse 12. If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and with the edge touches bread or stew or wine or oil or any food, will it become holy? Okay, in other words, can righteousness be passed on? Can they, by just putting their hands to the temple, like just being part, just coming here on Sunday morning, can you be holy? Can you be holy by helping in the church program? Can you be holy by helping? You know, the church is going to go out and feed the hungry. Can you be holy just by helping? Just by hanging out with the other holy people.

Can you be holy that way? Like a bag of potatoes. You know, you've got a bag of rotten potatoes. You've got a bag of five rotten potatoes and you take one potato that's new and fresh and you put it in that bag of rotten potatoes.

Will all of a sudden all the rest of those rotten potatoes become whole? No. What will happen is the reverse. That potato will start to rot.

So in other words, what's being said here is that if you really want to experience the blessings of God, it has to be real. It can't just be an external thing. You have to really experience the presence of God.

You have to really come to the significance of what God has done to reach out to you. You have to come to the cross. You have to come to what Christ did on the cross.

What God did in sending His only begotten Son Jesus to die on that cross. That's the first step. And you know, we should come to that cross daily.

You might say, I've heard that message over and over again. That's like being born again, isn't it? But that's coming daily. We come to that cross.

We rely. We cling to the cross. We love what Jesus has done for us.

And that is the basis. And that is the basis of putting God first and blessings will come. Blessings.

Blessings will come. God points out in Haggai 2, v. 12-17, the unfaithfulness of the people. It's infectious.

But now that the foundation of the temple is being laid, the place that it represents where man is able to unite with God, God is saying to them, build on the right foundation and I will bless you. V. 18-19 says, consider from this day forward, 24th day of the ninth month, that from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it, is the seed in the barn, as yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not yielded fruit, but from this day will I bless you. From the day you put God first, He'll bless you.

He'll bless you. A foundation has been laid for you and I. That is Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us take heed how we build on it.

1 Corinthians 3.10-16 We're not going to read it, but just write it down. Read it later, this afternoon or sometime. 1 Corinthians 3.10-16 talking about the foundation that has been laid for you and I and how we should build on that foundation.

It's what's in your heart. It's your dedication. It's your love, your desire.

It's your faith in Christ. Colossians 3.23 Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will be blessed. You will receive the reward of the inheritance.

For you serve the Lord Jesus. The Lord is the source of our blessings. The Lord is the source of our future inheritance.

The Lord is the source of our inheritance today. All the blessings that come to us come through Jesus. And so we should put Him first.

And whatever we do, we should do heartily as unto God. With God first, we may not end up anywhere near what we had in mind, but God will bless your life. He'll take you places.

Everything will become an adventure because God's blessings are flowing. You will be so thankful. You will be giving praise to Him every chance you get.

Someone will come to thank you for what you've done and you'll be quick to say, no, no, it's not me. It's God. I'm doing it.

It's God and I'm just glad I can be a part of it. God has a plan for everyone here. Believe that.

Believe that. Believe that. If you don't believe anything else this morning, believe that He has a plan for you.

It doesn't matter where you've been, what you've done, how low you are in your spirit or how guilty you feel. God has a plan for you and He can restore you and He can bring you to that plan. And every plan is just as glorious.

It doesn't matter what the plan is. It's the presence of God in that plan. That's the glory.

It's the presence of God in the temple. That's the glory. I'm going to finish this morning by letting you hear from a bodybuilder.

I like this guy. Look how big he is, eh? Do I kind of... Is God interested in bodybuilding? I don't know. But God is interested in a bodybuilder named Ronnie Coleman.

Every time this guy speaks, I'll tell you something. He speaks about Jesus. This guy, I think, knows a little bit about that verse.

Whatever you do, word or deed, do it all to the glory of God. Do it heartily. Let's just listen to what he has to say.

My message to each and every one of y'all is let's start being good to one another. Let's start putting our faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let's start making this world a better place to stay.

Let's try to get along with one another because God has a plan for each and every one of y'all. There's something that He has in store for you that you never know what it is until you just keep your faith in Him. You keep striving.

You keep working hard. You stay dedicated. You stay faithful.

You keep your prayers going every night. You just try to do the right thing. But the most important thing of all, keep your faith in God.

God will lead you to greater heights. This is my job. It is because that I kept my faith in God.

So all I want to say to y'all is God has a plan. I think those are good words. And I want you to know that he said that in front of a secular crowd.

He said that when he received his award for Mr. Universe the eighth time, breaking all other records. The eighth time at about 41 years old. And his testimony is amazing.

How he went from just a pizza delivery boy to that. But he gives God all the credit for what God is. His whole life is about God.

At least that's what I can tell. And I give God the glory for people like that who can just say it's because of God. It's God.

I give God all the credit. We're going to sing a song in closing. And as we sing this song, let's think about what we've heard this morning and let's think about the changes that we can make because I'm sure we all can make them.

I was challenged so much from this message this week. And there's a lot of changes I have to make. And I want you to think about the changes you can make to actually physically, spiritually live out putting God first in everything.

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