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Haggai 2:1-9: *A Greater Glory*

Preached at Trinity CRC

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The Word of the Lord from the book of Haggai:

On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>2</sup>“Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, <sup>3</sup>‘Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?’ <sup>4</sup>But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord. ‘Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty. <sup>5</sup>‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’

<sup>6</sup>“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. <sup>7</sup>I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty. <sup>8</sup>‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. <sup>9</sup>‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

“Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days”

“Grandpa, everything is changing fast  
We call it progress, but I just don't know  
And Grandpa, let's wander back into the past  
And paint me the picture of long ago

“Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days.”

We get the feeling that something like this is going on in our passage...

Grandpa is telling people about the good old days.

We come onto a scene of discontent in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Haggai.

Reconstruction of the temple has begun...

But the way it's shaping up has some people concerned.

The new temple isn't comparing to the old temple.

There are people standing around the new temple, the older bunch—

--who saw the first temple before it was destroyed...

Maybe they're telling people about the good old days...

Painting a picture of a few decades ago when Solomon's Temple stood in all of its glory...

"Oh, the first temple was marvelous."

"Cedar everywhere. From floor to ceiling, nothing but the best cedar boards."

"On the floor we walked on planks of pine."

"The walls had open flowers and gourds carved into the cedar."

"Palm trees, and angels carved into the walls too."

"And gold. Gold everywhere."

"The inside of the Temple was overlaid in pure gold..."

"Gold chains and gold ornaments."

"It was a magnificent sight!" (See 1 Kings 6 for a description of the first temple)

But then we snap back to reality...

Back to the present where the people are just coming out of exile...

They don't have the resources that Solomon once had building the first temple.

So there's discontent coming from some of the older generation...

There's dissatisfaction.

The Lord through Haggai acknowledges this.

He says, "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory?"

"How does it look to you now?"

"Does it not seem to you like nothing?"

And maybe it's easy for us to relate to where they're at.

Some of us have been around for quite a while.

We remember how things used to be...

The former glory of the church.

When catechism classes were full on Tuesday nights...

And pews were full even on long weekends.

When worship at 2 services on Sunday was non-negotiable...

And the church seemed to take priority.

But now you look and things have changed...

This new church has ousted the former glory of the church that once was.

For many churches in our denomination this is a reality.

For many churches in our denomination memberships are declining...

People are aging and young families just aren't there...

People from the community no longer wander in off the street looking for a church...

Because church is not a given these days...

We're no longer living in a time when everyone just goes to church.

In the last 25 years our denomination has lost 88,000 members...

That's 25% of our memberships gone since 1993.

(see *Agenda for Synod 2018*, p 335).

Many people are looking around at their empty churches longing for the glory days...

The good old days...

When the church was vibrant and it mattered.

Now, I can't say this is the situation at Trinity.

Kristi and I have been here for about 9 months...

And I have not heard much discontent.

There are not too many of us longing for the good old days...

Because we're satisfied with the way things are going...

The good old days are now.

Babies are being baptized.

We have around 50 kids in wee worship.

People are transferring in...

And Sunday worship is full.

The Lord has been good to Trinity.

Our present is looking good, so we don't often long for times that were better.

But, as the people of Israel were locked into a nostalgia about the former temple...

I wonder, Are we locked into a present nostalgia?

Are we so content with how things are going now...

That we're not open to where the Spirit might be moving?

Are we so afraid that any change will disrupt the pleasant bliss...

That we're locked into routines and patterns for the long haul?

Are we afraid that nothing will compare to what we've built here and now?

Our situation is different from that of Haggai's crowd:

They were longing for the old way of doing things.

The Lord says to them, "Don't go off of current appearances..."

"The temple that you're rebuilding may not look like anything special..."

"But just work and see..."

"My Spirit remains among you."

"My Spirit is in your midst."

"And I'm about to do something."

Wherever the Spirit of God is, you can bet that something is going to happen.

The Lord is never content with the way things are...

There are always people that need rescuing...

There is always creation that needs redeeming.

This is the work of God's Spirit...

And this is the work that he's wanting to do among the Israelites.

He makes a promise to them:

"The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former."

He's essentially saying, "I'm going to keep moving things forward...moving things towards redemption..."

"And you're a part of that plan."

“In this place I’m going to give peace.”

He promises this to a people who are discouraged.

They just spent 70 years in a foreign country.

Jerusalem was destroyed:

The walls were knocked down;

The temple was obliterated.

The people are being threatened by their neighbors.

It’s like moving to a different country...

Into a neighborhood with unfriendly neighbors...

And you don’t have a front door.

You don’t have a front door and you don’t have a church to worship at.

You’re afraid and disoriented and longing for the comfort of the past.

But to these people the Lord says:

“I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.”

“I will shake the nations and fill my house with splendor.”

When we think of shaking and trembling we are taken back to Mt. Sinai...

Where God first meets with his people after freeing them from Egypt:

“The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently.” (Exodus 19:18)

God reveals himself and mountains tremble...people shake.

In Exodus the trembling earth is in response to God’s appearance...

But Haggai uses it in a slightly different way.

The shaking of the earth is now linked to something *new* that God is doing.

It’s tied to what he’s going to do for his people.

It’s not just the earth that’s shaking either...

It’s the heavens and the earth...

The sea and dry land...

It’s the entire cosmos that shakes as a result of what the Lord is doing.

The Lord is acting on behalf of his people. (Petersen, OTL)

The Spirit of the Lord is in the midst of his people and something new is on the horizon.

God is calling people out of their nostalgia for the past...

And he's calling them to committing themselves to his work now...

Inviting them into *his* future.

The Spirit of the Lord is with his people;

And where the Spirit is, you can guarantee that something is happening.

At Pentecost the Spirit of God was unleashed on his people.

Jesus Christ drenched his followers with his Spirit...

Causing them to dream dreams and see visions...

Moving them to be a people of wonder, peace, and blessing in the world.

This is the same Spirit that is among us today...

The same Spirit that's with us as we consider the rebuilding of the Lord's house...

As we consider where he's leading us as his church.

Right now I think that we're a content people.

We're generally happy with how things are going....

And we rightly offer our thanksgiving to God.

But I want to stir up a spirit of discontentment among us.

I want us to be discontent that our neighbors—

Who live a couple hundred feet in either direction—

I want us to be discontent that they don't know the Lord...

Discontent that they don't have the peace that their only comfort in this life and in death is the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

I want us to be discontent that some of our neighbors are lonely.

While we go about our busy day with family and friends, there are people around us desperate to connect with someone.

I want us to be discontent that some of us are not growing in our walk with Christ.

If you look at a snapshot of where we were 10 years ago and a snapshot of where we're at now spiritually, would you notice much of a change in yourself?

I want us to be discontent knowing that our church is only growing through transfers and infant baptisms...

Not through evangelism and seeing new people experience the love of Christ.

Our situation may be different from that of Haggai...

But to us the Lord says the same thing:

“Work, for I am with you.”

“My Spirit is among you.”

“And the glory of this house now...”

“What you have here at Trinity now...”

“It doesn’t compare to what I have in store for you.” (PAUSE)

Because Christ took the burden of sin upon himself;

Because he was crucified, died, and was buried;

Because he was raised from the dead by the Father and ascended into heaven;

He is able to give us his Spirit.

He has drenched us, his followers with his Spirit.

And this Spirit is inviting us to grab on to His coattails...

He’s inviting us on this grand adventure...

Leading us into God’s future.

Who here has seen the movie Aladdin?

There’s a scene in the movie where Aladdin is on his magic carpet, and he flies to the palace to see Jasmine the princess.

He says to her: “You uh, you don’t want to go for a ride do you?”...

“We could get out of the palace and see the world.”

He reaches out his hand and asks, “Do you trust me?”

She jumps on the carpet and then starts one of the most famous Disney songs of all time:

*A Whole New World.*

“I can show you the world, shining, shimmering, splendid.”

“I can open your eyes, take you wonder by wonder.”

A Whole New World.

Church, this is the same invitation we’re given.

“My Spirit is among you...”

“The latter glory of this church will be greater than what you see now.”

The Spirit reaches his hand out to us and says, “Do you trust me?”

“Do you trust me to use you in ways you’ve never even imagined?”

“Do you trust me to show you a whole new world?”

“A world of joy and celebration as hurting people encounter the living God?”

The Spirit of the Lord is upon his people here...

And he wants to use us to bless this community.

He wants to use us as his witnesses to the love of God in Christ.

In the final verse of our passage the Lord says through Haggai, “in this place I will give peace.”

“In this place I will give shalom.”

For the people of Israel this meant peace from their enemies.

It meant a restoration of their destroyed city.

It meant an abundance of crops and provisions for them.

It meant that they would triumph over the nations.

But to us, people of the new covenant, it looks a little different.

Christ has already triumphed over our enemies.

So now we don’t have to fear death.

Those in Christ don’t have to fear punishment and wrath...

Because Christ has paid it all.

When things aren’t going our way in life...

When our marriage is struggling;

Or our families are at odds;

We know that the Lord is seated on the throne...

The person who loves you more than anyone else in heaven or on earth is in control of the entire cosmos...

God is for us because Christ made everything right between us.

He has brought peace into our lives.

And now, by the Spirit, he's doing this in the whole world.

"From this house I will grant peace."

"From this church—

Christ's instrument on earth—

I am will bring shalom to northeast Edmonton."

By the Spirit, the church is a beacon of light in the darkness...

By the Spirit, the church is a vessel of God's love to a broken world.

The Lord has promised a greater glory in this place.

We think that life is good at Trinity now...

But by his grace he's moving us forward...

He's moving us to be his people in this community.

And he's doing it by his Spirit.

The Spirit of God is moving in this place...

And where the Spirit is, you can bet that something amazing is going to happen.