

**Consider Your Ways
Haggai 1:1-15**

This morning everybody in this room is a part of one of two kingdoms. Everybody here is a servant or a slave of one of two kings; and that is either you are here this morning and you're a part of the kingdom of Christ, and you function as His servant and slave; or you're here this morning under the kingdom of yourself, and you are enslaved to yourself, and you serve yourself. This is not just true for the people that are only here this morning. This is true for everyone that lives.

Doesn't take too long to look around and to assess, maybe, the culture around us. To go to a movie, read a book, listen to some music on the radio, read some articles online, and I think you quickly start to see that what is promoted and what is clearly seen through the various displays in our culture is the promotion of serving self and living for self and being a part of that kingdom. It's encouraged. It's displayed, and people are busy about that work. They're finding new ways to serve self. They're finding new ways to encourage others to do the same. And this is what we continued to examine. And it even has crept into the church; churches that have the label of Jesus Christ on them, they claim to be servants of Jesus Christ, and yet there are still people there that comfortably serve themselves and remain in the kingdom of self while claiming to go to church and serve Christ.

Well, this is no doubt the situation in our day, but to be honest with you, this isn't a new phenomenon. This is something that's been true of all time, and that's what we get to see in the book of Haggai. Haggai will deal with this very issue this morning. This very issue, he will deal with the principle that, essentially, Jesus stated in Matthew 6:33; "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." It's simple; either you are seeking the kingdom of God and you are seeking to serve Him, or you're seeking to serve yourself and build your own kingdom. And so Haggai will address this very same issue in the people of his time in his day in the land of Judah.

So the last time we talked was about the book of Habakkuk. And so we went for the next interesting "h" letter prophet book to consider, and so we've landed here in Haggai. And so Haggai is actually at a different time period of Habakkuk. So Habakkuk was prophesying, if you recall, to the people of

Judah, and this was before they actually went into exile. This was warning them. This was kind of a heads up before God would send His people and punish them by bringing the Chaldeans, the Babylonians and taking them away into exile.

Well, with Haggai, we have a different time period. The exile happens; God's people are punished and taken to the land of Babylon, and then a chunk of time goes by, around 70 years or so, and then God brings them back into the land after the exile. So this is where we find Haggai. He's with the group of God's people that are in the land of Judah after this Babylonian exile that has taken place. What made this happen? Well, while Babylon was the main international power, that did not last for long. Eventually, the Medio Persians came along and this new empire, Persia, led by king Cyrus, came and conquered Babylon. And Cyrus took a different policy internationally speaking, and he allowed the people that he conquered to remain and worship the gods that they worshipped. And so what he does, this is by God's movement, He sends the Jewish people out of Babylon back to the land and encourages them to build the temple and go back to Jerusalem. So it's a glorious thing. It's God's working for His people and bringing them back to the land and the exile being finished. So this is what brings them back.

So they come back in the year 538 BC, and within a couple years, they rebuild the alter, and they start laying the foundation for the temple. And things are exciting. Things are looking up for the people. They're back in their land. The promises seem to be resurfacing, and they're excited. Well, it doesn't take long within those two years that there's other people that are also dwelling in the land, people like the Samaritans and various other people groups that have formed. Well, they rise up and they start to form opposition against the Jews in Judah. And so this opposition comes, and it gets to a point where it's so heavy that the Jewish people cease their work in Jerusalem. They stop building the temple, and they stop their working towards establishing the system of sacrifice that God had designed for them. Ezra 4:4-5 states it like this, "Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." So this opposition ceased to work. Even though the people are back in the land, they are now kind of at an impasse, and they're not able to move forward in building the temple.

Well, this happens, and this ceasing from the work and remaining in the land happens for sixteen years, until Haggai comes on the scene. And it's through Haggai that God will arouse the people to rise up and to remain and resume and come back to the work of building the temple; and we find that happening in 520 BC. So this is where we come in the book of Haggai, and this initial address happens in the first 4 verses of our book. So Haggai 1:1-4, let's read; "In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.' Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?' " So the first wave that we see in our text this morning is the people's priority. We see that Haggai confronts the people in this time where when it comes to the option of serving self or serving God. For them, serving Yahweh or serving what they would have and their comfort, and not the opposition, they are currently serving themselves. And so this is God working through Haggai to address His people about this very concept, serving themselves rather than building and serving God and His kingdom. So this is the people's priority.

So, some background that Haggai gives us... Even in the first book, we see that a new king is in order here, and this is the king of, not the Jews, this is the king of all Persia, Darius, as he's mentioned. And we see that it's on the first day of the sixth month. And so normally on the first day of every month, the Jewish people would come and bring offerings to the alter, and they would make offerings unto the Lord. And so here we are, the first of the month - another reminder of what they should be doing - coming to the temple, making offerings unto the Lord - and yet there's no temple. There's still no temple, and they're still lacking in this worship that God has created for His people to perform unto Him.

And then we see two leaders that are noted here. First, Zerubbabel who's functioning as the governor, and then Joshua who's functioning as the high priest. All right. Both interesting because Zerubbabel would be the king if Israel was actually independent and they could have a king right now; but Persia's in control, so he's more like a puppet leader of the people of Judah

who responds to the Persian magistrates and the king Darius himself. And Joshua the same thing; he's the high priest, yet once again, I remind you, there's no temple; not a whole lot of function for the high priest when there is no temple in this time.

So this is the scene that Haggai comes on, and God brings Haggai to speak this message to the people. Starting in verse 2, the content comes out, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.' " Notice first of all, it just says, "This people..." God doesn't say My people. That's how God has described Israel all throughout the Old Testament whenever He would address them. He would say I will be your God; you will be My people. It was a personal connection between Yahweh and the people, and yet here is God addressing them, indicating that things are not okay, things are not restored. Things are still broken in their relationship to their God when He says, "This people..." "This people..." here, they're not My people. "This people..." this is what they say, they say the time is not come, the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt; so that here they are once again, fine, comfortable, serving themselves, okay with the way the situation is when they have no temple. They're completely comfortable with that, serving themselves.

But notice, they're not opposed to the idea of rebuilding the temple; I mean, sixteen years earlier, they tried. They got the foundation laid, and they had the alter, so they did start this process. So they're not opposed to the idea of getting the temple rebuilt. It's just that they don't think now's the time. They might not have enough resources. They're not motivated. There's too much opposition around them still. They'd like to see God clear it all out first, and then, when they have peace on every side, then they'll think about building the temple. So, the idea is fine; the timing is bad to them. Now is not the time; we're not ready to do this yet.

And then, God puts forth a stinging rebuke in verses 3 and 4. He says, "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?'" Interesting that we see that God describes the temple as His house. To make it very clear, let's make a contrast here, a very remarkable contrast for the people of Israel. You have your houses, and how are they? They're nice. They're paneled houses. They're not living in tents, right? They're living in actual structures, and they're paneled houses. They probably have, not just

walls on the outside, but even on the inside, interior panels and walls. It's not bad. It's not bad at all. Now how does the house of God look? It's in ruins. It's desolate. And God just says, tell Me. Is there something wrong here? I see all your houses; where's Mine? Oh, is that it? Is that it? Is that My house right there that's desolate and in ruins? There's something wrong with this. This picture is not right. And so this is God rebuking His people firmly in stern fashion.

So for the people of Israel, their priority was not the temple. Their priority was not the worship of their God. Their priority was not service to God in building His kingdom. Their priority instead was for themselves. They were content with their houses, and they liked how things were going in that manner, and they had no movement towards moving forward in the sacrificial system. Well, in all reality, this is not just a small matter, it's a big deal because God says something, but when you think about how the temple functioned for the people of Israel, this heightens the importance. The temple was obviously the dwelling place of God. So it's essentially saying, we're okay. We don't need You, God. The temple's where God dwells among His people. That's how it was established. That's what it was known for, and they're okay with God not being there. They don't need God. They're not rebuilding the temple. They're okay without His presence, but not just that, the temple was, as we've already stated, how the people were right with God. How could they be right with God? Well, they had the sacrificial system where they brought the offerings and the priest, and they went about it in the way that God had deemed and set up in the first five books in Moses. They're not doing that because they don't have the temple. They're okay with that, apparently, and they don't mind that they're not offering the sacrifices to be right with God... and not just that; from the temple, we learn that as Solomon dedicated it in 2 Chronicles 7 when he talks about this, this is where God would listen to the supplications of His people. The people want to pray. They want to talk to God. He would hear from the temple. The people want to come and confess their sin and repent to God. They come to the temple, and He listens from the temple. The temple is central. If foreigners outside of Israel wanted to connect to God, they came, not just to Jerusalem, they came to the temple. This was central for the nation, and the purpose and function that God had for them. And so, their apathy, indifference, in this situation, that the temple lies desolate, speaks very strongly about their opinion of God and His desire for them as a nation.

So at this point, automatically, you might say great, that's awesome, but our church is built. It looks pretty nice. We're not in desolate ruins around here, physically speaking, right? We're not bringing animals in here and sacrificing them, and so you're starting to wonder how this starts to actually connect to you. How does this connect to you? How does this connect to me? Well, this very physical reality that we have in the Old Testament of the Jewish people having temple and having God's presence and offering sacrifices and prayers to Him is something that is carried over in the New Testament... carried over in the New Testament. And you probably are aware of this, but let me remind you of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. "...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." And again, 1 Corinthians 3:16 states, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? The New Testament... Paul picks up on this and makes it very clear that we function - the people of God now in the church, you and I - we function as the temple of God. His spirit dwelling inside of us, working through us, for the purpose of glorifying God in our bodies. And as 1 Peter 2:4-5 would go on to state, "we offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God..." And you might think of other passages as well where Paul says in Romans 12:1, "offer your bodies as a living... sacrifice... to God..." Not the animal sacrifices that would get slaughtered in the Old Testament, but now as a living sacrifice unto God as His servant. A part of His kingdom to build His temple.

So the question is this, is this a priority in your life? And better stated, is this the priority of your life, because this is who we are? This is how the New Testament defines us, as the people of God, His temple, His spirit, His presence dwelling in us, that we might offer up sacrifices of our lives that are acceptable to God. And you might think I like what you're saying, but I'm not sure what this is looking like. I mean, I can't get down on my knees and pray twenty-four seven. Is that what you're talking about? Or am I supposed to quit my job and come to the church every day of the week? What are we talking about here? And I'd say, no, we're not talking about that. We're talking about every area of your life. Glorify God in your body means whatever it is you're doing, whether you're eating, whether you're drinking, you're doing it all for the glory of God. So how do you see your job and your career? Is it a means for self-promotion, or is it an opportunity

for you to serve your Creator? How do you see your family? Are they a thief? Do they steal all your personal time and energy and suck you dry, or do you see your family as members, people, who need the gospel and need encouragement? How do you view classes and schoolwork? Are they an obstacle to all that you want in this life, or are they stepping stones for you to grow in your diligence and service to your Lord? Are you busy trying to build your kingdom or God's? That's it. It's that simple. When you leave today, what're you busy about doing? Are you busy about representing God and building His kingdom and offering your life to Him in everything He puts before you this week, or are you quick to look towards yourself and to be comfortable and to forget all this until next Sunday comes around?

Matthew 6:33, once again, let me remind you; "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The people in the time of Haggai were not interested in this at the time. This is why God has to address them. They were not interested. They made their one attempt at trying to build the temple. They hit a little obstacle. They hit some opposition, and they stopped, and for sixteen years, they got comfortable with where they're at, no desire to represent God, no desire to represent Him and build His kingdom. This is the priority of the people of Haggai's day, and, unfortunately, it's the priority of several people in our day. We look to ourselves. We promote that. You look out for number one, and we forget the ultimate king and ruler of all, Jesus Christ. We were bought with a price. We need to honor God with our body; that is our calling as His church as His people.

So, it doesn't stop here. We see that God continues with this rebuke and correction of His people as we get into verse 5, and we see the command to consider... the command to consider. So we'll see this in three different sections here, and we'll start with the first two verses, verses 5 and 6. In verses 5 and 6, we see the problem that is clearly addressed by God to the people. In verse 5, "Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.' " At this point, God is essentially saying wake up, look around, just take inventory for a second. Take assessment of everything that's happened in your life, and just look around for a moment. Is everything fine? Are you completely satisfied? Are you

receiving the fullness of the abundance and the plenty of the crops that you would expect to be the people of God? Are you receiving all that? The answer is obviously not. God has to point it out in several ways. Look at the food you're getting. Look at your clothing. Look at your drink. Look at your corps. Look at all these things; they're not coming to you in abundance. You're not satisfied. Just look, you're not even satisfied with what you have. This is a problem. "Consider your ways!" Just look for a second at what is happening around you. Take a look around. Is this what you would expect the people of God to look like if they're in a right relationship with Him? And the answer is obviously not, because at this point, they should, hopefully, be recalling some of the words of Moses from the book of Deuteronomy and maybe Leviticus where you hear the covenant curses that come upon the people of God when they disobey. What does God do? What does He cut off? What does He start to affect in his people, the crops, their food, what they had to drink, their clothes? All these things, God said I will do to you if you disobey.

So, hopefully, the people start to make a connection now, and they go this is not right. This is a problem. I'm not satisfied. We're not looking like the people of God in all our glory, that he would intend for us to be, and certainly this is a sign of God's curse upon us because of what we're bringing in. We're earning wages almost to put them in a purse with holes in it to lose it. So, God makes it very clear; this is a problem in case you haven't noticed. "Consider your ways!" Look around. Does this look right? Clearly not, so God offers the most obvious and clear solution in verses 7 and 8; and you couldn't be more clear with the solution. Verse 7, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,' says the Lord." Simple, right? It's a very simple solution. These people have become okay with no temple, with no presence of God among them, an God says once again, "Consider your ways!" Why do you think this is all happening? The temple remains in desolation, in ruin. So, I'll give you simple commands: "Go to the mountains, bring back [the] wood, and rebuild the temple..." At that point then, God says then I'll be glorified, and then I'll be pleased. And then you might expect things to turn around rather than this dissatisfaction that you're experiencing, this lack that you're experiencing in all areas of your life.

To make sure that it's very clear to the people that this is something that all is a part of their relationship with God, He gives the reason for it in verses 9-11. So He makes it abundantly clear in these verses why this has happened. Verse 9, “ ‘You look for much, but behold it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away, Why?’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.’ ” God makes this clear. He wants His people to understand that He is the one that's directly involved in this, because this issue - it's not a light issue. It's not something that just happens to be. It's coincidental. It's inconvenient for them. No, this is a direct relationship to how they are with their God, so God wants them to understand that this is all because of their relationship which is not right with Him.

Notice in verse 9, in the beginning He says, “You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away.” So it's like a kind of a hilarious scene to picture these people bringing back all their produce, bringing back all of what they're expecting, what they're hoping for, and then God just simply exhales and it's gone, saying I did this. You look for all this. You want this abundance and that's totally right, but I just blow it away. I send it off. And it's interesting because the word for “I blow it away” is the opposite, the exact opposite of God in taking and smelling the pleasing aroma of the sacrifices that they were to offer in the temple, the exact opposite. They were supposed to come and offer up sacrifices, and those would be a pleasing aroma to God, but instead here they are wanting all this and neglecting their relationship with God. And so, rather than smelling and bringing it up as an aroma, He just exhales and sends it. I don't want this. I'm trying to get your attention.

God makes it even clearer if that's not enough, if that's not clear enough, He asks the question in verse 9 “ ‘Why?’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house.’ ” Once again, no question, they were okay with God's house being desolate and being in ruin; and what would they do instead? Run to their own house. Run about their own business. Gladly continue in engaging and serving self, being completely fine to be a subject of their own kingdom where they are

the center of their world continuing after building up and pursuing their own passions, their own interests. So God says this is why. This is why I simply blow away your harvest that you're expecting. The temple desolation explains the dissatisfaction of the people. And then verse 10, God continues on, "Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce." There's no question who's at fault here. Because of the neglect and the apathy of the people of Israel, because of their neglect, the sky has withheld, the heavens have withheld it's dew, and the earth it's produce. It's interesting here that God commands the sky, and He commands the earth to withhold. ...says do not give them the produce. Do not give them the dew that they need.

And they listen. All right? The earth and the heavens they listen to God, but here's God's people and they still fail to listen. They still fail to comprehend and do what He's asking. The sky, nature listen, but not His people. Verse 11, perhaps, can't get stronger than this. In the beginning of verse 11, "I called for a drought on the land..." God's not ashamed to say it. He's not saying yeah, you're having some tough times. You know, I might be able to help you out with it. He's like, of course, you're having tough times. I gave you the tough times. I'm the one who did it. Hello? Wake up. "Consider your ways!" "Consider your ways!" This is coming from Me. This is My indication that you are not right with Me. Wake up. It's interesting here, too; there's another - we don't know Hebrew, so we're not reading this in the Hebrew, but this is the language they were speaking at the time, but there's a word play that's going on here. It's almost like a more cutting rebuke that comes through this, the word play between the word drought in verse 11 and then the word desolation that is used for God's temple. And they sound in Hebrew almost identical, almost like the same word. And so God's making this connection. He's saying because you have left My temple a desolation, I'm giving you a drought. That's what your payment is. And so, when they're hearing this in the Hebrew language, they're hearing, yeah, the temple's a desolation. And then they hear God gives them a drought, and they realize this connection. It's unquestionable. It's undeniable. Their actions have caused God to, really, have no other choice but to wake them up through taking away their crops, taking away their plenty. Notice the crops that are mentioned, the grain, the wine, the oil, those are the major crops of the land. That is what they depend on. That's their goal to produce, and God's saying I cut them all off. Right. I'm getting your attention. I was

the one that did this. And He even goes so far as to continue and say of all the ground produces and anything else.

So there's a clear problem here. The people are dissatisfied. They're not bringing in the plenty and abundance that the people of God ought to be bringing in at this time. The solution is clear; build the temple. God makes it very obvious. And the reason for all this, and why this is happening, is because God is disciplining His people. He's disciplining them; this is the point. He's not afraid. He's not ashamed to say very clearly I'm doing this because I'm trying to get your attention. So, the question for you - are you satisfied, and are you content? Is that where you're at? If you're not satisfied and content, then there's one of two options; one option is you don't have Christ, and you will continue to be dissatisfied the rest of your days. If you don't have Christ, if you have not come to a place where you know that it is well with your soul, you can't be satisfied. As long as your soul is not right with God, and you still have sin that remains upon you, then God's wrath is stored up for you. But if you recognize what Christ did in shedding His blood on the cross for you and taking and removing all that sin so far away from you, if you recognize and hold fast to that sacrifice, then God's wrath has now been removed from you and put on His son Jesus Christ; and that's good news.

After that it doesn't matter what your life looks like, you can be satisfied in any circumstance. You can be like the Psalmist who says, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Or stated differently in Psalms 16:11, "You'll make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." If your soul is well with God, if you are right with God, you have satisfaction. You need nothing else. So if you came in and you're not satisfied this morning, and you're not content, it's a very real possibility that you're not with Christ. You do not have Christ as your savior and advocate on your behalf, and I would encourage you to make that right.

But there's another option; you could of walked in this morning not being content; not being satisfied; although you have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In that case, I would say beware, you're inviting God's discipline into your life. If that's you this morning, you know that you are a child of God redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen to that, but if you

are not content, and you are not dissatisfied... if you are not satisfied, that means you are seeking after satisfaction in something else, and God loves you too much to let you continue in that route. God is a loving father and He disciplines those who are His own. Hebrews 12:6; “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines...” An later in Hebrews 12:10, “He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” God isn’t in the business of letting you just kind of be happy, finding satisfaction in other things in this life. He’s not in the business of letting you, be deceived in yourself, thinking that you can serve your own self in your own kingdom and build your own house as these people were doing in the days of Haggai. God wants you to understand full satisfaction which is only found in Christ. So as long as you continue down this path of trying to serve yourself through other means of what the world has to offer or what you can invent on your own, God will discipline you. He loves you too much. He will punish you. He will bring you back to Himself as He’s doing here with His people in Haggai. So I would encourage you - get right with God - find true satisfaction that will last. And it doesn’t matter if your flesh fails. It doesn’t matter if something happens to your body because you have Christ, and there’s nothing greater on this earth or in heaven. If you have Christ, you will be satisfied.

And with that, I’m happy to say that we have a good response today from the people. We get to end on a good note. We see the reverent response of the people in verses 12-15, starting in verse 12; “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people saying, ‘I am with you,’ declares the Lord. So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.” It’s interesting. This is kind of how God works. Often, He wants to get someone’s attention; He will use pain and sorrow and suffering to get people’s attention, and that’s what He’s done here. He’s used difficulty, hard times, for the people to wake them up, have them consider their ways and speak to them, and they respond. It’s as C. S. Lewis put it; “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is

His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” God uses pain. He uses difficulty and lack to get our attention - a captive audience if you will.

So in verse 12, we see the response of not just Zerubbabel, not just Joshua, but notice it says all the remnant of the people. Everybody’s responding to this. Everybody’s on board with this and listens to the message. And notice the two things they do; they obey the voice of the Lord their God, and they show reverence for the Lord. So not just in their actions obeying God, but also now in their thoughts. You can tell that there is a complete perspective shift. They have a new found fear of the Lord. A reverence and respect and awe for who Yahweh is - that He would come to them and work with them in love in this discipline. So they both are obeying with their actions, and they are now revering the Lord. Notice that it says that they respond to the Lord their God which is a contrast to earlier in our passage when God said, “this people” God referring to His people as distant, not close, not personal. And now here they are responding to their God, and we already see a restoration happening in their relationship to God, that they can call Him their God.

Then in verse 13 - this amazing promise that comes with the work that they have set out before them; “the messenger of the Lord, spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people saying, ‘I am with you...’ God encouraged the people with the promise of His presence for the rebuilding knowing that, obviously, the temple was the key. When you had the temple, you had the presence of God; that’s how they understood it. And here they are without the temple, and they have the work to do the temple; yet, even in that work of getting the temple built, God says I will be with you in that process. There will be opposition. There will difficulty. You don’t have a lot of resources in front of you, but I will be with you. With this commitment, you have to obey Me. I am with you - are similar words that God has said to several people in the Scriptures. It’s how He encourages the Patriarchs like Jacob. It’s how He encouraged the leaders of Israel like Moses and Joshua when He constantly said you have a massive task in front of you, but I am with you, therefore you have nothing to fear. I am with you.

Notice finally in verse 14, God’s continued work in this response on the people’s part; “So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel...” He stirred them up; so this is God’s work in saying, not only will I give you this promise that I am with you, but also I will enable you. I will strengthen you.

I will empower you to do this task. I will stir you up, and that's what He did. He stirred them up just like He stirred them up to come out of exile and come back to the land and have the courage to do that. He will continue to stir them up and give them the courage to rebuild this temple no matter what opposition is before them.

Some people look and they see.... Wow, so it looks like they finally did this on the twenty-fourth day of the month. So why'd it take them so long? The message came on the first day of the month and they're responding. Why the twenty-fourth day are they finally doing something about it? Well, more than likely, the obvious answer is that it kind of takes time to go up in the hills and get the wood and bring it back down, and it takes a little bit of planning to get this thing all set up, and it takes actually getting people in the right places and doing the right things to get this rebuilt. So this need not be some criticism of the people's response. This is just merely showing the historicity of it, that on the twenty-fourth day they got to work. They got to action; all by the hand of the Lord working through them. So our story ends on a good note as the people respond appropriately to this call, to this rebuke from God.

And so we come back to our simple question; what is your priority? Which kingdom are you of? Which king are you serving? Are you serving the king of self? If so, then be prepared for a life of let downs; and the ultimate one to come at the end when God's wrath is still upon you. But if you are serving Christ the true king, if you are making your every effort to seek first His kingdom, His righteousness, then guaranteed you have satisfaction, and it is well with your soul. That is what we know for sure, and in this as we've just seen, God will be with you. His Spirit indwells us. He stirs us up. He enables us to pursue righteousness and holiness, sanctification. So what work are you busy about doing? I'd encourage you to let that work of God's kingdom, Christ the King, be not just today but carry out into this week.