

Consider Your Ways: First Things First pt. 2

Haggai 1:5-15

Bethany Assembly of God

4/30/2023

Central Proposition: You should put (God) first things first.

Introduction

In many ways, priorities define our lives, don't they? Not so much what we say are our priorities, but what we actually do. If you say your family is a priority, but you regularly neglect them for work or hobbies, are they really a priority? If you say that God is a priority, but you don't spend any time reading His Word, you neglect church, and you spend all your free time and money on yourself, is He really a priority?

Let me take a moment to step on your toes. Sometimes, people won't move until their toes are stepped on but the call of a Christian is an onward, upward call. In the words of the apostle Paul, we are to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." **(Phil. 3:14)**

However, sometimes we get stuck. We're not moving. We're not prioritizing God. We're going through the motions. Maybe you're claiming God is your priority, but you haven't put Him first in your relationships: you're dating someone who isn't a believer and draws you away from God rather than closer to Him. You're living with someone to whom you're not married. You say God is your priority, but you haven't prioritized service in His Kingdom. You haven't tried to discern how your skills and gifts could be used to benefit others. You haven't considered how God wants you to worship and bless Him with what you're good at. You say God is the priority, but there's never any time at the beginning or end of the day for His Word or prayer.

I hope I've stepped on some toes. That's my goal, because stepping on our toes is the mercy of God in our lives. It's why He sent Haggai the prophet to His people. He wanted to call out their excuses and misplaced priorities and get them moving again in the right direction.

The point for us is the same as the point for them: **you should put first things – in this case, God – first.** Last week, we saw that you can do this by remembering who is actually in charge and by cutting out the excuses. Let's pick up in verse 5.

3. You can consider the consequences.

Read **Haggai 1:5-6**

In verse 5, we find the phrase that we're using as a title for this sermon series, "Consider your ways." Literally, the phrase meant to set your heart upon your ways, to ponder what is happening in your life with the deepest, most sincere part of you. That points us to the third means of putting first things first: you can consider the consequences.

I think the perfect word to describe what Haggai was talking about is frustration. You know what frustration is, don't you? It's when you put in effort to accomplish or change

something but you aren't able to achieve the outcome you seek or expect. It's an emotion of disappointment and angst.

Sometimes, we feel this way spiritually. We want to grow, we want to experience God's presence, we want to be used by God, we want to see Him move in our generation, but it seems like it never happens. In times of frustration, we may need to consider our ways.

- Look at how the remnant of Judah was frustrated. They sowed much, but harvested little. They ate and drank, but never to satisfaction. They had clothes, but weren't warm. And we can all probably relate to the last one, "He who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." It seems like money goes out faster than it comes in.
- There can be two kinds of frustration when our priorities are out of alignment. There is the very literal, external frustration we experience through the consequences of bad decisions. When we fail to honor God with our lives, it shouldn't surprise us when life doesn't work the way that it should. There's also another kind of frustration that isn't caused by external factors, but by internal factors. This happens when life appears to be going very well by every common measure. Your life isn't falling apart. Maybe your finances are in order, you're doing great in your job, and your family appears happy, yet you're frustrated. You live with that proverbial "quiet desperation," wondering if your life matters. Perhaps that's because you've not prioritized what is most important: the Lord.

Read **Haggai 1:9-11**

- Notice how the Lord took credit for the frustration of His people. Sometimes, our frustration comes from the Lord. Maybe it's a very literal frustration because we're not succeeding even though we think we're doing all the right things. Maybe it's an internal frustration because we are succeeding, but we still don't feel satisfied.
- Frustration may not always be from the Lord. There may be circumstances in which we are opposed by the world or a spiritual enemy and we need to stand firm and persevere in the work God has called us to do. But perhaps we can say that frustration should at least cause us to consider our ways, to think about the way our lives are going and ask the question, "Could this be because I've not honored God or put Him first?"
- Frustration is sometimes discipline from your loving Heavenly Father to help you turn around. The solution is simple, even if it's not always easy. Consider your ways.

You might need a straightforward nudge today as well. You're frustrated and know that you need to honor God, so what do you do? Stop making excuses for your frustration and instead, repent and do what you know is right, what will please and honor the Lord. To put it in the words of Jesus, "You are forgiven. Go and sin no more."

4. You can count on God's faithfulness. vv. 12-15

Read Haggai 12-15

The people heard Haggai's words from the Lord and in one of the more encouraging responses to a prophet in the whole Bible, they actually did what he said.

- They knew the prophet was correct. They felt the conviction of His words, and so, they obeyed.
- This should be our response to God's Word as well. It's true that God's Word brings encouragement, comforts, and gives wisdom, whether we're reading it for ourselves or hearing it taught or preached. But God's word also brings correction and conviction and, when that's the case, repentance and obedience should be the result.

But there is something very encouraging here, even in the midst of correction, discipline, and the fear of the Lord. The Lord said to His people, "I am with you." What a comfort and encouragement this must have been. And what a reassurance this is to us! Jesus is with us! He will stir our spirits by His grace. And we must respond with obedience when He does.

Read Haggai 1:14-15

- The Lord stirred up, awakened, sparked the enthusiasm of the leaders and all the people and they worked on God's house.
- Isn't this the very same thing God does and promises to do in us? **Ephesians 2:22** tells us that we are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Of course, we must be willing and obedient, but we should not think that this is all up to us. The Holy Spirit is at work in God's people.

Christian, if you are afraid of obedience because of what others might do or because you fear failure, the word of God today calls you to fear the Lord more than you fear others or even than you fear your own weakness or failure.

Conclusion

The last verse of our passage says, "On the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king." We were informed in verse one that Haggai's message came on the first day of the month, which means that this turn around happened in about 23 days. They quickly began getting materials ready and swiftly began the work God had called them to do. They took the word of the Lord, recognized its truth, responded in faith, and obeyed.

Perhaps there are misplaced priorities in your life and maybe you've toyed with the idea of getting them in order. Perhaps you know what God has called you to do and you've been offering excuses and delaying for a long time. Maybe you're frustrated with life and today, the Holy Spirit has revealed that the frustration is because your priorities are out of order and God is not first in your family, your time, your finances, or some other area.

Or perhaps, for you, today will be the day you look back on and say, “On April 30, 2023, I heard the good news about Jesus and I gave my life to Him.” If you don’t have a relationship with God through Jesus and you’re living in frustration, that’s because you were made for a relationship with God and you won’t be fulfilled without it. If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

We have time now to consider our ways. I would ask you not to leave it vague. Make an altar to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit inspire you and speak to you how to properly arrange your life for the Lord.