

Where did it all go?

- You get into work on Monday morning: the whole week is ahead of you
 - you have a big piece of work to do, but the time there is should give plenty of opportunity to get it done
 - you are almost quite looking forward to the sense of achievement of getting it done
 - but by the end of the week, somehow, things haven't worked out...
 - somehow along the way you've lost the time, its run out through your fingers and though the week seemed busy, that large piece of work is still unfinished...
- You earn a good salary, or maybe you've made comfortable provision for your retirement
 - your salary pops into your account at the beginning of the month, and things look fine for all you are anticipating buying till the next pay packet comes in...
 - but come the end of the month, things look quite different!
 - somehow you end up watching the pennies, moving money from other accounts, to make sure you don't go overdrawn before the next pay packet!
- I suspect we've all had experiences not so dissimilar to that, at some point in our lives.
 - that leave us asking "where did it all go?"

Context

- That was certainly the situation Haggai was speaking into...
 - but what was the situation all about? what was going on?
- People into exile for failing to follow God
 - had refused to listen to warnings from the prophets
 - those prophets also spoke of hope despite the coming judgement, of the restoration of Israel, of **God's people in God's land under God's rule**, a new Kingdom, the Kingdom of God
 - *This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. (Jer 29:10)*
- So there was a hope - **however faint** - of God's continuing work in the life of his people
 - that hope expressed itself in the partial return of exiles of Jesus in around 537BC, and the beginnings of Temple rebuilding (**SEE TIMELINE**)
 - but, though they'd started well enough (**we read about and thought about it on the 25th of April, the day we looked at "Past, Present, Future"**), after the initial enthusiasm building work on the Temple had ground to a halt!
 - around 16 or 17 years later, in the second year of King Darius, around 520BC, we find Haggai speaking his words of prophetic challenge

Making Connections

- Twice in this passage God through Haggai invites the people to "think carefully", or to "Give careful thought to your ways"
 - the first time is in v.5, and is concerned with the **diagnosis** of the problem
 - and the second time is in v.7, and is concerned with the **response** God asks of his people
- In diagnosing the problem, God asks the people to connect two things:
 - (a) the curse of things slipping away from them, and
 - (b) the half-built Temple
 - note v.2, v.4, the curse in v.5-6 and v.10-11, and critically God's diagnosis in v.9: "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house."

- Some of the detail here isn't clear - they are described as living in panelled houses, a sign of luxury, and yet there is poverty of food, harvest not turning out right...
 - most likely explanation is that God has been good, resourcing generously his newly returned from exile people, but they have not responded in kind!
 - what is clear is that their priority has been number one...
- **But its about far more than just money...**

Think carefully!

- In v.7 we find that phrase again: "Give careful thought to your ways."
 - rather than a diagnosis of the problem, it begins to point towards the response God would love his people to make
 - he would love them to build the Temple
- Now we need to be careful here!
 - it would be easy at this point to make a direct connection between ourselves and the people of Haggai's day, and to infer that Haggai's word from God for them is also his word to us today: **build the Temple**
 - we might then search around and try and figure what that means and wonder whether we need to give more money to the church, or engage in some kind of redevelopment project on the Large Hall, or something of that nature
- If we did that we would be abusing and mis-using the Scripture!!
- For we are not 5th century BC Israelites; we are 21st century Christians!
 - we do not relate to God through in a physical Temple, his presence in our midst is not signified by a physical sanctuary!
- Their problem was their neglect of the physical reconstruction of the Temple: **because that signified their neglect of God's presence in their midst!**
- At this point in God's unfolding plan, all they knew was of God's presence through Temple
 - their great spiritual hope, given them by God's prophets, was of a true Temple where God would be worshipped truly
 - now we know that that hope was fully and finally realised in **Jesus Christ!**
 - **Jesus** is the one who both offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sin on the Cross, **Jesus** is the one who serves as the great high priest; **Jesus** is the one who mediates God's presence in our midst; **Jesus** is the one through whom true worship is afforded to God!
 - and any fulfilment of the prophecies relating to Israel restored, the Temple rebuilt is **only partial** in the rebuilt second Temple described here
- Look at v.8: **... build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured," says the LORD.**
 - they are to think carefully; they are to respond by building the temple **so that** God may take pleasure in it and be honoured
 - **take pleasure:** in a building? the God who made the heavens and the earth? surely not! No, he takes pleasure in the worshipping relationship, in the fellowship with his people!!
 - **honoured:** in a building? Again, he is honoured in the worship of his people, in the obedience and glad service they offer to him as a response of love to his salvation given to them
- God's saying: "I've saved you" (from the exile) "now, as a response to all I've done, will you honour me? Will you give priority to my presence in your midst, to my worship?"

I am with you!

- And then something amazing happens!!
 - in vs.12-15, the people respond to God's challenge that has come from Haggai to them through Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest
 - their response is obedience!
 - *"They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God," (v. 14)*
 - unlike their forebears in the land, who had consistently rejected the prophet's call for repentance and a change of heart!
 - in their obedience they are signalling their desire for God to be in their midst; they are signalling their desire that he delight in them; they are signalling their desire that he be honoured.
- Do you sense God's pleasure? *"I am with you"*
 - do you see God being honoured in the people's response of obedience?
- The whole problem was that their actions in not building the Temple indicated they did **not** want God with them!
 - but, responding to the prophet's challenge with obedience, that situation had been transformed!

Conclusion

- Title for this morning was "Rebuild" - they were rebuilding the Temple
 - but also, as we engage in the CCC process we are seeking to build God's Kingdom here in Fintry, through this congregation
 - and there is a reminder here in this passage about any rebuilding...
 - *that we can't rebuild without a focus on God's presence*
 - PMs and Housegroups are just as much at the core of CCC as are the special services and workshops
- Will we give careful thought?
 - will we respond with obedience to God's call on our lives?
 - will we turn to God that he may take pleasure in us?
 - will we turn to God that he may be honoured in us?
- **Will we rebuild by welcoming Jesus into our midst?**