

Introduction

- Jobs half done!??
 - now I'm **not** meaning this to prompt all the married couples to turn to each other and bend their ears over things that haven't been done at home!!
 - do you ever get started into something, and then not so much lose interest but get **disheartened by the apparent lack of progress**
 - I suppose the classic example would be a **building site** - a lot of preparatory work, clearing, laying foundations, before anything visibly like the building materialises...
 - maybe as simple as **clearing up after dinner!** the kitchen and dining areas are a scene of devastation, but before you can actually clean those dishes you need to move them to the side, wipe the table, put back in the fridge all the things that need to be kept cool... you get into that, pause and think "I haven't really done anything!"
 - or **decorating!** you clear the room, you end up sorting some of the things you find as you clear the room, you create mess and disturbance, and you haven't lifted a paint brush yet!
- Its easy to be discouraged half way into a job!
- This incident happened about a month in to the rebuilding work of the Temple
 - *"They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, twenty-fourth day of the sixth month..." 1:14-15*
 - *"On the twenty-first day of the seventh month..." (2:1)*
 - have the foundations been done? but little signs of real progress?
 - that's **speculation!**
 - but here we certainly do have a **word of encouragement from God** for his people in their service and in their obedience

Now! (vs.1-5)

- *(1) On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: (2) "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, (3) '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? (4) But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD. 'Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, 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. (5) 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'*
- There are two parts to this word of encouragement from God.
 - the **first** part comes in **vs.1-5**, and has its focus in their **current situation**
 - the **second** part comes in **vs.6-10**, and his its focus in **God's future purposes**
- I am with you:
 - on the basis of my covenant promises (v.5), made in the past, sure and reliable
 - on the basis of the presence of my Spirit among you (v.5), present and active now
- He was encouraging them, standing with them, in the midst of the task:
 - "I understand what you are doing, and it matters to me..."
 - "how you are doing in the midst of this matters to me..."
 - "be strong, do the job, keep going..."
- **Taking teenagers rock-climbing...**
 - often just that littlest bit of **encouragement** will help them attempt something they've never done before!
- **God is with us still, in the tasks he invites us to co-labour with him**

Then! (vs.6-9)

- (6) *"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. (7) I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. (8) 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. (9) '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."*
- Encouragement in the purposefulness of their task: it mattered!
 - the Temple where God was worshipped, where relationship with him was mediated - this project they were working on - was going to be a place filled with God's glory! And a place where peace would be!
 - it was worth putting brick upon brick, it was worth adding this task to the general struggle to make ends meet...
- Puzzle: the actual physical Temple they were building never really shone with much glory!
 - it wasn't physically a match for its predecessor, never mind the extravagance of Herod's Temple that followed it (the one Jesus would have known)
 - the period following the rebuilding of this Temple wasn't one of particular peace for Israel; she wasn't really an independent state for most of the period, Alexander the Great swept over the area, there was civil war within his vast empire in the years that followed his death, and eventually the Maccabees fought their way to a kind of uneasy independence, before being subsumed into the Roman Empire!
- So this word from God may have been encouraging... **but was it true?**
- Yes, because:
 - there is a prophecy here of the coming of Jesus: **"the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory..."**
 - **the glory was to come with Jesus' coming**, and he wasn't born until after this Temple was replaced
 - and in fact we now can see that God's plan was that the **true Temple**, of which any of the bricks & mortar temples were but foretastes or pointers, **was Jesus himself!**
 - but it was out of the genuine faithfulness of God's people through this period of turmoil that Jesus would emerge, into an Israel ready and expectant for the promised Saviour - and the Temple they were building would serve as a lynch-pin
 - **God used this period - and this Temple - to prepare for the Saviour!**
 - and in the coming of the Saviour history pivots, the nations are shaken and God's glory bursts into history in a new way
- And more, because:
 - Jesus will come again!
 - the glory that **we** see now will be seen by all nations when Christ comes again!
- **And so for us:**
 - we labour, because our calling to serve is one to be a **co-labourer with God Almighty!!**
 - remember "Jim'll Fix It", and how often the dream was to play alongside a sporting or musical hero?
 - we don't have to have Jim fix it for us - God invites us to be on his team, to labour alongside him at tasks of eternal significance!
 - to labour with Christ and in his strength that people might come to know the peace of God pervading their lives, in their physical situation and in their relationship with God
 - what greater glory is there than that? to work that the **"desired of all nations"** might come into someone's life and experience!!

Conclusion

- God's encouragement is for us too:
 - our task may be somewhat different... not a Temple made of stones and mortar, but a living Temple, built together out of lives given over to serving Christ
 - but **the Lord is the same!**
 - a Lord who has **covenanted with us**: he will be our God, he will forgive us, he will be with us - and whose promises are sure
 - a Lord who is **with us**, by the power of the **Holy Spirit** dwelling in each one of us who has come to saving faith in Christ;
 - and a Lord who is **still working out his purposes** - and choosing to use us and include us in that!!
 - a Lord who has promised to bring glory and peace!
- **Isn't that worth giving your life for?**