

Sermon—May 24-25, 1997
Major Lessons from Minor Prophets
Haggai

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Preparing the Church for the 21st Century

I'm going to start a new series this evening called "Major Lessons from Minor Prophets." We are, this September, going to celebrate the 10th anniversary of joining the Vineyard and the 10th anniversary of my functioning as senior pastor here. So during this time of reevaluation, I've asked our staff to work together a five year plan that will take this church to December 31, 2000. By that time, with God's grace, we will have built a new auditorium, and if present growth trends continue, we ought to have 5000 people. In a year, we will engage in a major capital campaign to complete the building complex. I'm going to be reminding you that every generation is called to the task of building and rebuilding, because we live in a universe that is governed by the law of entropy. Entropy basically means that everything around us tends to deteriorate over time unless we put energy back into the system.

Do you see signs of entropy around you at home? If you have children, have you ever noticed that, if left alone your, children won't develop warm, caring, compassionate relationships with each other? Just take a six year old and a four year old and put them in a room together with a dog and a cat, a couple of marker pens, some scissors, some paint and say, "Now, children, be good and mommy and I are going out for a walk." What would you expect to find in 15-20 minutes when you came back? Would you expect that they would have made each other Valentine's Day cards with the scissors and paper and written "I love you" to each other? Or would you expect just as easily to find that they have used the

markers and the paint to change the color of the dog and the cat? And the four year old's hair looks a little shorter and kind of punk because the six year old was playing barber.

Left alone everything tends to deteriorate. I know this is true with my children. When my kids were younger they could fight about anything. I remember one time Marlene and I were taking them for a long vacation, which for whatever reason I think we were temporarily insane to drive with two preschoolers in the car for two days. But I heard them getting into a fight in the back seat. The fight was about the fact that my son was deliberately looking out my daughter's window in order to make her mad. He wouldn't look out his own window, but was deliberately looking out her window.

The law of entropy—everything breaks down over time. Left alone, your house doesn't get cleaner. The yard doesn't look better. Your car doesn't stay in tune. Consider what the top of your desk at work looks like, if you regularly don't get after it with a dumpster.

Relationships tend to do the same thing. When left alone, relationships tend to deteriorate. Friendships become more superficial. Marriages become colder and more distant.

As I've been thinking about getting the church ready for the 21st century, I want to share with you some things from the book of Haggai, which is a little Old Testament book that issues a call to build and rebuild the house of the Lord. It is the second shortest book in the Old Testament. The only one shorter is the book of Obadiah. The historical occasion of the book of Haggai is that the Jews had suffered their greatest national catastrophe since being enslaved in Egypt a thousand years before. God issued a terrible judgment on the Jewish nation that at that time was composed of the nation of Judah because of Judah's gross sin. The sins are listed in graphic detail in 1st and 2nd Kings. But the people had gotten involved in child sacrifice and witchcraft and horrible idolatry, worldliness and immorality.

God allowed Jerusalem to be invaded and the temple that was the ultimate source of pride and joy for the Jewish people, he allowed the temple of Jerusalem to be destroyed and the Ark of the Covenant to be taken forever by an invasion of Babylonians in 587 BC.

So here is the national disaster. Jerusalem is burned. The temple is sacked. The mass of Jewish people are carried into captivity in Babylon. And in captivity they experience the discipline of the Lord. God humbles them in Babylon. They repent of their sins and put away their idolatry. They return in their hearts to the Lord. With the death of Nebuchadnezzar and fall of the Babylonian empire, a new empire arises on the scene—the empire of Persia under King Cyrus. Cyrus issues a decree sending the Jews back from Babylon to Jerusalem and allowing these Jewish people to rebuild their temple again.

So the Jews begin to rebuild the temple in 536 BC, but different obstacles get in the way. Their enthusiasm wanes and for 16 years the temple remains unbuilt. They started well, these Jewish people, in rebuilding their temple. But they never finished the job. And so God raises up the prophet Haggai. Haggai appears on the scene in August of 520 BC. He dates every one of his four prophetic words. August 29, 520 BC. He gives four prophetic words over the next four months, approximately one each month, until December of 520 BC. And then Haggai disappears. He is like a meteor that streaked across the sky. A comet that was in the sky for four months and then was gone.

The Lord raised Haggai up for one purpose. Unlike the prophecies of Ezekiel or Jeremiah, Haggai did not confront the people about gross sin. He didn't give them a catalogue of these horrible sins that they had committed against the Lord—idolatry, adultery. When you read Ezekiel your stomach turns because Ezekiel tells the people that God was literally forced out of their midst by their revolting practices.

Haggai was raised up for a different purpose. He was there to call the people to action, to shake off their lethargy, to end the season of apathy, to build their morale and create momentum. Haggai came on the scene for one purpose—to challenge the people to rebuild the house of God in their generation.

That is going to be the sum of my word to you today. Build the house of the Lord in this generation. Let's together get this church ready for the next century. Let's first go before the Lord and ask his grace as we pray.

So the book of Haggai begins:

“In the second year of King Darius on the first day of the 6th month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest...”

Ancient Near Eastern records show that we are talking about August 29th, 520 BC. Haggai is speaking to the leaders, to the Head of State, Zerubbabel, and to the head of the religious community, Joshua. Here is the message in verse 2:

“This is what the Lord Almighty says, “These people say the time has not yet come for the Lord’s house to be built.””

It has been lying there, half built, for 16 years, but the time has not yet come. Not now. We need just a little more time. Maybe tomorrow.

What is it that keeps the Lord’s house from being built? What is it that holds back the kingdom purpose of the Lord from being accomplished today? Is it witchcraft? Is it the power of the occult? Is it New Age thinking? Is it massive persecution in central Ohio? What holds the kingdom of God back in central Ohio today?

I think the Lord would say the same thing to us that he said through Haggai. Not some great idolatry, not some great secret occult practice that is happening in a cave somewhere,

but what inhibits the Lord's work today in most of the western world is simply the sin of procrastination. I don't know if there is anything more deadly and more inhibiting to the spread of the kingdom of God than the attitude that is in the hearts of people that simply says, "Not now. It is not the right time. Maybe tomorrow." It is such an innocuous little sin because we are not exactly saying to God, "No." It doesn't feel like disobedience. We are simply saying "later."

But it occurred to me that the sin of procrastination has probably put more people in hell and destroyed more good intentions than any other sin that I could think of. I see this sin cropping up regularly when I share my faith personally with some other individual.

A few weeks ago, several of us from this church went down to the OSU campus where I have been doing open-air preaching in the fall and spring for the last 10 years. It is a great opportunity for me to get outside the four walls of the church and to just work with college kids. I have always liked talking with and working with college kids more than any other demographic group. So, I got done speaking and I saw a woman sitting there on the grass on whom I could see conviction. It was obvious that the Holy Spirit was working in her life and drawing her to Jesus. So I sat down next to her. I said, "What did you think of what I just said?"

She said that it really hit her hard and she thought that a lot of what I was saying was true. So I said, "You know, in the Bible, Jesus said, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat them and they will eat with me.' Can you hear Jesus right now knocking on the door of your heart?"

She said, "Yes, I can hear him knocking."

So I said to her, "Well, you know, I would be less than a Christian if I didn't urge you right now to respond to Christ's knocking on the door to your heart. The Bible says,

‘Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.’ And I would be less than a Christian if I wasn’t urgent with you that you need to open the door right now.”

And then I saw the sin of procrastination just rise up in her as I have seen it rise up in so many people who are on the edge of making an eternal decision. She said, “Well, I am not sure if this is the right time. I don’t know if I am ready for such a big step.” So we talked through some of her fears and her misconceptions and her misunderstandings. And I said, “Look, I in no way want to pressure you into a decision that is not from your heart. It must be something that God is leading you into right now.” But I told her that over the years I have literally spoken to thousands of young people just like her. And I have seen the effect of delay on people’s spirituality. I said, “Tomorrow you are not going to hear those knocks on the door of your heart as loudly as you do today. And three days from now you are going to be occupied with an exam. A month from now this is going to be a dim memory because you will be breaking up with your boyfriend and you are going to be wrapped up in your hurt and that broken relationship. You need to respond now. See, there is a massive lie that says that the grace of God is always available to the degree that it is available right now. That God’s knock will always be just as loud on your heart as it is right now.”

The picture that I get of the kingdom of God is like a child riding a horse on a merry-go-round. As the child goes around on that little horse, his daddy reaches out his hand to touch the hand of his son as his son goes by. And if the son stretches out his hand, he could touch the hand of his daddy. But if he delays, the merry-go-round pulls him farther and farther from his daddy until it completes one full revolution and gets back again to the place of his father’s outstretched hand.

Have you not seen people who are so close to the kingdom, but who procrastinate, who make no decision and who are pulled from that place and don’t come around again to the

kind of openness that they had for six months or a year or for five years? Why is the sin of procrastination so great? Because every day is not a day of grace. We don't always have the opportunity to respond. The dynamic of the kingdom of God is not always as strongly at work.

I see this not only regarding salvation; I see it regarding the conviction of sin and God's call to me sometimes to repent. Sometimes I feel prompted by the Holy Spirit to write a note of apology to someone that I might have offended. He brings a person to mind. That was insensitive, that little joke you told. Or you didn't recognize someone. The Holy Spirit may prompt me to do some act of service for my wife or the children. Get myself up off the sofa to clean up or to rise early to pray. I feel the Lord speaking. But if I delay, if I start making excuses, if I say, "No, not now. Not yet. Now is not the time" those knocks get quieter and quieter until I am completely deaf to them.

Friends, you have no idea how great a church Vineyard of Columbus could be if this one sin, the sin of procrastination, was repented of by every person, from the pastors on down to the most recent visitor. If, when the Lord spoke to you about repairing a relationship, joining or hosting a small group, giving someone a call with a word of encouragement, going down to the food pantry and handing out a bag of groceries, or beginning to regularly tithe to the church—if when the Lord spoke to all of you, and he is speaking all the time, if you simply said, "Now, I will obey. Now I will not consider, reason, debate, but now I will obey the voice of the Lord," this church would be a glorious place.

But we are wonderful at manufacturing excuses for delay. We are factories of excuses that keep us from immediate obedience. Let me share with you some of the excuses my own heart manufactures and perhaps if I could diagnose my own heart, perhaps it will apply to some of you and your own excuse making.

One of the seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church was the sin of sloth, which along with pride and covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony and envy, the church historically said disposed people to sin, the sin of sloth. Do you know what a sloth is? A sloth is a tropical mammal that lives much of its life hanging upside down from a tree. When it is obliged and has to descend to the ground, sloths crawl along on the surface at the rate of 10 feet per minute. Their top sprint is 1/9 of a mile per hour. They are almost entirely inactive from morning to night. They build no nests for their young. They sleep between 15-22 hours a day. They rise in the late afternoon to eat whatever leaves happen to be near by. Sometimes they find employment in large corporations or government offices or even on road construction crews.

John Ottberg, who is a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church says that sloth is one of the sins that our society views as unforgivable. It is almost never mentioned. When is the last time you heard someone confess to just being plain lazy. You do a job interview and you ask the interviewee, “What is your biggest fault? What do you struggle with?”

“Oh, I struggle with perfectionism.”

“I struggle with being a workaholic.”

When is the last time you ever heard someone say, “Well, you know, I am just too darn lazy. I am totally unmotivated.”

Scott Peck, the best selling author, said, “There is one great impediment to spiritual growth and that is laziness. If we overcome laziness, all the other impediments will be overcome. If we do not overcome laziness, none of the others will be hurdled. Spiritual growth is effortful as we have been reminded again and again.”

Now here is the deal. Most of us would not consider ourselves slothful because we are busy. But sloth doesn't necessarily mean that we aren't doing anything. It means that we are not doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done. Workaholics can be slothful because they avoid the things that are needful.

God is speaking to you about giving some time to serve beyond your family. What do you do? Read a book? Work on your house? Take your kids to the zoo? Go shopping? Turn on the TV? Anything other than what you are called to do is sloth. It is the sin of procrastination. And it takes great effort, a great engagement of our wills, to choose to do what we are avoiding doing. Building the house of the Lord.

Why else do people delay and make excuses for why they are not fully engaged in building the church? Well, along with sloth, I think a lot of people live with a high degree of self-deception. I hear people say all the time, "Well, you know, now is such a crazy time in my life with the kids and the move and my husband's job. It is just such a crazy time. But when things settle down, then I will serve in the church. Then I will get involved in a group. Then I will teach a Bible study. But now is a crazy time."

I don't know if there is any greater sense of self-deception than that you are going to, at some point in the future, hit this lull time in your life where you will have time to serve God. I don't have any parentheses in my life, I don't know. But the treadmill that I am on never slows down. I never find a convenient time to serve an inconvenience. I never find it convenient to serve an inconvenient person. It is never easy to do something hard.

And, of course, there is a massive amount of self-indulgence along with self-deception which Haggai uncovers in v. 3 when he says, "Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet, 'Is it time for you, yourselves, to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?'"

We don't have time to build the house of the Lord, but we have time to work on our own homes and redecorate our own homes. We don't have time to serve the Lord, but we have time to build our careers. I have seen this with college students over and over again. College students who say, "Now is the time for me to totally devote myself to my studies, but when I am done I am going to give first place to the kingdom of God," never do. They think they can just shift gears.

"Well, now is not really a good time for me to be heavily involved in church and in evangelism and service. Now it is time for me to hit the books."

(I am not suggesting by the way that you blow off your studies. Parents, don't write me letters here. Write to Danny.) But the people who go on to life-long service of God got the principle very early in their hearts that in whatever they were doing, they were placing the kingdom of God first. They weren't looking for a more convenient time.

What an amazing change has occurred in our culture from the middle ages until now. In medieval cities, the house of the Lord was the glorious place. People spent their lives building a cathedral for the glory of God in their own homes. Many people lived in squalor, but now in the 90's in America in many churches there is a percentage of people who live in palaces on a world scale, but who regularly urge the church to economize. I wonder who is closer to the heart of God. People who lived back in the 1200's or people living in America today who say, "Church, you live on a shoe string. You cut back while I expand my waist line a little bit."

The Lord makes it very plain. He says, "The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai, 'Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house remains a ruin?' You are always to seek first the kingdom of God. That you are

always to put God's work above your own. That the building of the house of the Lord is the priority.

Let me suggest to you one last reason, by the way, that people delay in rebuilding the house of the Lord. It may be the result of a confused or distorted, I guess I would have to call it super spirituality. In Haggai's day there were a number of people who believed that the temple of the Lord was going to be rebuilt purely by God's miraculous intervention without the hands of men. And where they got this from was the prophecies of Ezekiel of a glorious new temple. Ezekiel 40-48. They just expected this temple of the Lord to come down. So they said, "Here you guys are talking about working and sweating and building and serving. But you are so unspiritual. Because God is just going to give us the temple."

There are those, in much of the church world today, who are not engaged in the hard work of evangelism, the hard work of building friendships with their neighbors, the hard work of inviting people, including people, loving people into the kingdom, because after all when revival hits, the increase is going to be so enormous that it is going to pale all of our prior efforts.

Let me be gently direct with you. And I say this with as much love and grace as I can. What is it that keeps you from the immediate obedience to God? What is the excuse that rises in your heart so that you can convince yourself that now is not a good time for full service to God's church? What justification do you have for not being urgent about the task of building the Lord's house in central Ohio?

You are not needed? You are needed.

There is no room for you and your gifts? There is room.

You are too busy? Not more busy than the 90% of the people who are serving and giving.

You are a new Christian and don't know very much? There is no better way to grow than to get involved in a small group and in a ministry.

Now there is a second sin that Haggai charges the people with. And like procrastination, it is one of those small things that you don't pay a lot of attention to, but it has a tremendous effect on the work of building the temple of the Lord. Haggai 2:1, "On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: '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, '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?'"

Along with procrastination, I think there is nothing more debilitating to the ongoing work of building and preparing a church than the sin of comparisons. Haggai smokes to the surface the unspoken feelings of many of the older members of the congregation in his day. They may have been well up into their 80's. And he says to them, "Do you remember Solomon's Temple before it was destroyed and how glorious a palace it was? It had the Ark of the Covenant. It had the Ten Commandments. It had gold and cedar from Lebanon. It was one of the most magnificent buildings in the ancient world. And now you look at this present place in this impoverished situation of the people of Israel 60 years later. There is no comparison in terms of the building. Does it seem to you that the present day building is as nothing compared to what we used to have?"

We see the same kind of mixed sentiment in Ezra 3:11 when they are laying the foundation of the temple 20 years previously. It says, "They sang praising and giving thanks to the Lord saying, 'For he is good. For his loving kindness is upon Israel forever.' And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. Yet many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers'

households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes. While the others shouted aloud for joy so that the people couldn't distinguish between the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people. For the people shouted with a loud shout and the sound was heard far away.”

What is your emotional response as we speak about the future of this church? A shout of joy? A cry of weeping? Somewhat mixed emotions?

May I speak to you old-timers here, those of you who have been here for five, ten or more years? You have the power, old-timers, to bless the future of this church, to release it into glorious things in the 21st Century, or you have the power to withhold your blessing and to actually restrain the church from becoming what it could be. You know, the Bible continually calls people to remember. The book of Deuteronomy is all about remembering. But there is a positive way to remember and there is a negative, destructive way to remember the past.

I remember when the church was smaller and we all had such wonderful relationships with each other. I remember some of our great conferences in the past. I have a unique claim on the affections and the attention of the leaders because of my longevity here. I remember when we had no pastors and the pulpit revolved from week to week.

There is something in every human heart that wants to build a monument to the past and stay there. Whenever we experience something of God, we want to tabernacle in that place. Peter wanted to do that on the Mount of Transfiguration. Lord, can we build shelters here and tabernacles because I met you in this place and it was very real and very meaningful to me?

But God is never the great I Was. And Vineyard was called into existence, in part, to announce to the Christian world that God is the great I Am—the God of the Living.

Now there is a positive kind of remembering. You old-timers, you can remember the values that this church was built on – things like intimacy in worship; and non-hype, non-manipulative spiritual experiences; and authenticity. You can take responsibility to pass along some of these values to some newcomers. If every member of this church, who has been committed here for a few years or more, decided to invite someone new over for a cup of coffee, or take them out for lunch just once a month or every other month, and if every small group leader would invite and follow up on just one person, our values would be transmitted.

So Haggai goes on and says, “‘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. ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’”

The Lord can be trusted to abide among his people. Put away the “I remember when” song and listen to the new song of the Lord. “‘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. I will shake all the nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory.’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘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.’”

You say, “In what way did the glory of the temple that the people built exceed the glory of Solomon’s temple?”

It certainly wasn’t in physical grandeur. Architecturally, it was poorer. I don’t think they were talking about the future and 500 years later in Herod’s temple. Both in ancient Judaism, as well as in Christian history, Haggai 2:7 has been seen as a Messianic prophecy. The reason this temple exceeded the glory of the former temple was because the desired of all nations came, namely Jesus. This is a Messianic prophecy and what made the temple more glorious was that the Messiah came to this temple.

There is a little bit of a translation problem in v. 7 because it literally means, “and the treasures of all the nations will come, perhaps the Gentiles will come.”

There are at least three things that give the church its glory. If there has been any glory in this church, it’s always ever because Jesus has been here in a wonderful way. You know, that’s what perceptive guests have noticed about our church historically. They say things like, “We really sensed the presence of God in the worship. I felt God in this building.” Let me make this personal. I don’t know where each of you is at, spiritually. I know for me, despite all the growth around here, I was personally feeling extremely dry about a month ago, in part because of our over busyness, as I confessed to you. I’ve been trying to take some extra time in the Word and in focused attention on God. If each of you would escape the winter doldrums and give yourself back to God, you’d see what we need is personal connectedness.

Second, do you know God is glorified as the church reaches out to the nations through world missions? As this church invests more heavily in world missions over the next four to five years, the promise of the Old Testament is that nations will come to your light; that Haggai 2:7 promise will be realized in part through this church. We have been blessed to be

a blessing locally in central Ohio. We have been blessed to be a blessing internationally. Next month Stephen will be here – we’re going to take up a special offering for him to build a training center to train Indian pastors and church planters. Psalm 67:1-2 says, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us.”

Why? Psalm 67 says, “So that your way may be known upon the earth. Your saving power upon all nations.” God has blessed the Columbus Vineyard as a means of reaching the nations with the gospel, so that more people on Earth end up in heaven.

Third, this past week I spent some time with the National Board for the Vineyard churches. John Wimber said something interesting. He said that there are two basic things a consultant always asks, “What business are you in?” and “How’s business?” As I think about preparing the church for the 21st century, I think, “Ok, what business are we in? We’re in the saving business, we’re in the training business, we’re in the sending business, we’re in the worship business. How’s business? Overall, business has been pretty good. There are some areas, especially regarding training and equipping, that we want to strengthen, but if we keep our business in our minds and keep evaluating our business in very objective ways, our future can be extremely glorious.

Well, this group of people got the message. And it says, “Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord.”

You know, I have often thought it would be helpful to spend a portion of the time we spend training preachers to preach on training people to listen. Because communicating the word of the Lord is not just a one way street. It is not simply dependent upon the oratorical skills or the persuasiveness, the pyrotechnics of some great homiletician. Haggai’s Hebrew

is rather stilted and broken. His effectiveness was due to the willingness of the people to receive what he was saying as the word of God.

It says in v. 12, “The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai.” They took his words as being the word of God.

We have been blessed with solid Bible teaching throughout our history as a church. But I will tell you what will get this church ready for the 21st century. It is not simply the presence of good teaching; it is the heart of the people of the church who approach weekend services with an ear to what God is saying to us this day. Imagine if 3000 people came to Vineyard each weekend saying, “Lord, we just want to hear your voice today. Underneath the voice of Rich, what word do you have for me today?”

That was the heart of Cornelius in the book of Acts. Cornelius is speaking to the apostle Peter in Acts 10 and he says, “Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the Tanner, who lives by the sea.’ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good for you to come.”

Now listen to Cornelius’ words. Oh, if I could ask anything for this church this evening, it would be that you would have the attitude of Cornelius when you come to church next week. Cornelius said in Acts 10:33, “Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

We are here to listen to what God is speaking through you. People like that will build a church.

Now I love this next text because after the people listen to God, Haggai responds and says in v. 13, “Then Haggai the Lord’s messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the

people: 'I am with you,' declares the Lord. So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius."

We, right now, have a multi-billion dollar motivational cottage industry going on in this country. Probably every week somewhere in southern California, a major motivational speaker is hiring out a convention hall or a conference center or an arena or hotel ballroom to the tune of \$300 a ticket for people to hear platitudes about their potential success and bad social science. People pay hundreds of dollars and large corporations pay tens of thousands of dollars trying to motivate people to engage in the kind of work they ought to be engaged in.

Here Haggai has challenged the people about the sin of procrastination. He challenged the people to think about their comparisons and what brings glory. The people have listened and then Haggai gives one simple sentence that is the key to Christian motivation, to prepare us for the 21st century: I am with you.

Do you need something more for the future at Vineyard Columbus than that? The Lord simply saying to you, "I am with you. I am Emmanuel." This is what God constantly says to us to motivate us to do the work that he calls us to do. In Matthew 28, Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always to the ends of the age."

Let's make sure you get your mission straight, men. Go out and make disciples of all nations. And let's make sure you understand your provision, men. Don't try to do it on your own. I am with you.

The same thing is in Luke 24. "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and will rise again from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Make sure you get the mission straight. And don't try to do it on your own. You need the power of the Holy Spirit. I am with you.

Acts 1:8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth." Make sure you get the mission straight and don't try to do it on your own.

That is what I am saying to you today. There is a call to you today to break the power of entropy at Vineyard Columbus. A power that is at work in the world, so that over time everything deteriorates. There is a call to rebuild. To give yourself to the building of this church. Make sure you get that mission straight. Don't try to do it on your own.