

NOTES FOR SPEAKING

Meeting: Freshwaters Christian Fellowship

Date & Time: 07th March 2010

Title: Lead me on

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Introduction

As we started 2010 I spoke about the lullaby of apathy over Harlow and I challenged people to Arise and shine, to shake off Apathy and I suggested 3 specific ways we could respond. By engaging in prayer, by living in the opposite Spirit, and by increasing our dependence upon and response to the Holy Spirit.

Over the last few weeks we have been responding to the 2010 challenge presented by Dwaine White, where recognising that things we do and decisions we make in the first 4 months of this year will impact the coming decade, we were encouraged to listen for God's vision for our lives, to pray and fast – and to put into place changes in our lives that are in line with God's heart for us – in financial, physical and spiritual areas.

This morning I wanted to give a chance for feedback – would anyone like to share anything the Lord has been saying to you, or anything you have done to combat apathy in your life?

This morning I am going to speak from the book of Haggai which was written about the prophet who came to an apathetic people and pronounced God's word – rebuild the house of the Lord and as the people responded God poured out His blessing on the nation.

Hag 1:1-11

Where are your time, energy and resources focussed?

This start to the book describes the state of the people before their response to Haggai's word and how God felt about it. They were focussed on their own comfort, on building nice houses and nice lives – in the meantime God's house lay in ruins.

The ironic thing is that the more they poured their time, money and energy into their own comfort the less they benefited from it. Isn't verse 6 a perfect description of the materialism of our time? We plant much but harvest little, we eat and aren't satisfied, drink and are still thirsty, put on clothes but don't stay warm – our wages disappear as though putting them into pockets with holes.

Now we can nod sagely and say how true of our non-Christian neighbours – but God was not speaking to those without faith He was speaking to His own people – to us! How much do we invest in our own comfort, whether materially or in time or attention, compared to the Lord and His Kingdom – and are we satisfied, do we ever feel we have achieved what we are aiming for – or is there always something more to do and never enough time, money or energy to do it.

So why were the Israelites in this place – it was because God was not only withholding His blessing, but was also actively working against them, blowing away their harvest – sending drought, destroying what they has worked for.

Why? – Because they were ignoring God and His Kingdom, they were neglecting the 'House of the Lord' – the temple was in ruins.

Now today the Lord is not talking primarily about a physical temple, although I do believe that will be part of our challenge this year as the Lord releases to us a land of our own. The temple as described in the New Testament is us as individuals and the church corporately.

While we focus more on our own comfort and circumstances than on the Lord and His place in our lives and on one another then it is as if we are happy to leave the temple in ruins.

We start rebuilding the temple by investing in our own relationship with God, through prayer and a delight in His Word, and by investing in one another, and in seeing others come to faith – each of these elements builds the temple.

Now I believe it is beginning to change, but many would look at the history of the church in Harlow and would see ruins, so many divisions, so much self interest, so little growth, so little power. God is calling out at this time, don't neglect the temple any longer, love and care for one another, but also build the temple, give time, energy and resources into seeing the temple grow, and how does it grow, by seeing more and more people come to Christ.

Another point that is worth making is that Jesus on His famous visit to the temple when He became so angry was because a place that should have been a place of prayer had become a place of trade, or materialism. Now for us this is not about whether we sell books in church on a Sunday morning – it is about whether corporately and individually God is our focus in prayer and intercession and in life, or whether money and comfort and the material are.

Hag 1:12-21

The people respond!

In this next section the people respond in obedience to the Lord and the Lord says I am with you. When we respond to God's word, when we build the temple for God's presence in our own hearts and when we work with Jesus to build the church – then God is with us, He will strengthen and provide for us, He will give us the skills, the time, the energy we need.

I love **verse 14 - 'so the Lord sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel the governor, Jeshua the High Priest and of the whole remnant of God's people'**. There were the political and the faith leaders working together with all the remnant of God's people to work with enthusiasm to build the temple.

This is beginning to happen in Harlow, the Lord is being welcomed by Council officials in the town, the Church is taking it's place in responding to the need of the community – lord spark our enthusiasm.

Hag 2:1-9

The latter glory will surpass the former glory

As the people were rebuilding the temple there were those who were looking back and saying it is not as good as the old times. **Ezra 3:12-13** describes it like this **"12 Many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders remembered the first Temple, and they wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation. The others, however, were shouting for joy. 13 The joyful shouting and weeping mingled together in a loud commotion that could be heard far in the distance."**

Some of us may look back, either to our own past experience or to what we have heard about the past and begin to weep, or belittle what is happening now. O I remember when Freshwaters was bigger and better and more Godly, O well this time is nothing like the time of the Toronto or Pensacola outpouring, O this is nothing like the Welsh revival. Stop it! Don't just look back to what God has done but look at what He is doing and will do. The Lord says be strong – in just a little while I will shake the heaven's and the earth and the future glory of this temple will be greater than the past glory.

Jesus will return to a victorious church not a defeated church, we know in the Acts it records 3,000 coming to Christ in the day – we know that in the great revivals cities and even nations were transformed – but they are nothing compared to what God has planned in these last days. I really believe something extraordinary is happening here in our town of Harlow, something that will be spoken about and read about all over the World, lets embrace it, lets run into it full of faith and Zeal – thank God for the past but thank Him even more for what is to come.

Hag 2:10-19

Recognise how your sin corrupted everything and brought a curse, but now in this new day I give you a new promise!

In this next passage the people are reminded about the corrupting influence of sin and how it led to such massive effort for such little harvest. Remember the sin described in this book is of apathy to spiritual things and selfish focus on their own comfort.

Then in verse 19 the Lord gives a new promise – now this verse was given to me by Graham shortly after the beginning of the 2010 challenge and I believe it is a word for me – and for us at Freshwaters.

Before there are any outward signs of harvest the Lord says I will bless you – from this day forward. It is a new day, we need to shift from survival mode to reaping mode – we need to expect fruitfulness and blessing because that is what God has promised.

When we do things which we have tried before and seen little or no fruit we need to have the expectation that now there will be – Alpha, Outreach, prayer for healing to name but a few.