

Coach House Church

BEACONS

NEVER ENOUGH

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Do you ever feel that you're working really hard and yet you also feel that you aren't getting anywhere. Things you want always seem to be just out of reach. It might not be money related, it might be an achievement you want reach or a social action. I know that for myself, no matter how much I exercise I still can't break that 4 minute mark for running a mile.

There have been many surveys done asking people "How much would you need to earn to make you happier?" The results show a remarkable degree of consistency. No matter how much people earn the answer, on average, always turns out to be about 20 percent more than at present.

For example, someone earning £20,000 pounds per year would think that £24,000 would be enough to improve their happiness, someone earning £50,000 would want £60,000. It turns out that the same thing happens for our perception of our social circle. When asked, most people said that they would like to have more friends. It seems that as people we are never quite satisfied with our situation, we have something in us that always drives us to want more.

Of itself, of course, there is nothing wrong with desiring more or better, as long as it is done in accordance with God's plans. And this is where the problem comes in. You see we can easily become distracted, even in good times we can find ourselves concentrating on our own wants and desires. In hard times we can find ourselves retreating into our own world of worries and concerns, thinking only about ourselves and not about God.

This is what happened to Gods special people, the Israelites.

I'll explain the situation to you in a moment but first of all let us read from the book of Haggai Ch1v5-10 . You can find this book towards the end of the Old Testament.

“Now this is what the Lord Almighty says, “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much but have harvested little. You eat but never have enough. You drink but never have your fill. You put on clothes but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” This is what the Lord Almighty says “Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured” says the Lord. “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. Therefore because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops”

These words were spoken on 29th August 520 BC and were intended to spark Gods people into action. The back story here is about what happened to Gods chosen people, the Israelites, you see after all that Moses and the Red sea stuff they settled down in the land that God had wanted to give to them. As time went on they slowly forgot about God. You see Gods blessing had made them comfortable with life and they and they started to prefer the things that they had made for themselves, rather than worshipping God. It got so bad that God had to allow a foreign nation, the Babylonians, to conquer Israel, and to take its people into captivity far away from their homes around Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where the special temple to God was located, his earthly dwelling and a symbol of His glory.

The Babylonians had destroyed the temple during their conquest and reduced it to rubble along with most of the rest of Jerusalem. 70 years later and the exiles, as the Israelites were now called, those who were still living in Babylon were now sorry and had remembered God. God in his mercy decided to allow them to return home. This return started in the year 538 BC, some 18 years before our passage was written. You can read more about the return of the exiles in the Old Testament books of Ezra and

Nehemiah. Now there was only one reason why God allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem, and that was to re-build his temple. So, back to the story and what the exiles found, when they got back, was a city in almost total ruin. Many families that returned had ancestral land either in Jerusalem itself or in the surrounding villages. In some cases they found that other people had moved in. For most of them they needed to make a complete fresh start. Well that is OK for a while but 18 years on and God is pointing out a few home truths.

The exiles have spent 18 years working on their own homes and none on Gods house. Of course they had faced quite a lot of opposition from those local people who had occupied the land in the mean time. This pressure was especially felt by their leader, a man with the wonderful name of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the grandson of the last king of Judah (Judah was the southern part of Israel) before the exile started.

Zerubbabel was seen as the saviour of the people, the man to restore the fortunes of the nation. Haggai Ch2,v 23 writes this:

“On that day” declares the Lord Almighty “I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel, and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you”

The prophet Zechariah, writing just a few months later also writes about Zerubbabel “What are you mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of “God bless it. God bless it”” Strong words from God himself, no wonder the Israelites of the day thought Zerubbabel was the one they called Messiah. The Messiah was someone predicted in all their previous writings and someone who they expected to come to free the Israelites from all foreign powers, worries, illnesses, drought and famine.

We now know that Zerubbabel was not this person but he was an example of the true Messiah who was, at that time, yet to come. We now know that the true messiah is Jesus Christ and interestingly, in two of the books about Jesus, called Gospels, the writers Matthew and Luke both tell us that Zerubbabel was an antecedent of the messiah. That means Jesus was directly descended from Zerubbabel.

Back to our story again and we find it closes with Zerubbabel completing the re-building of the temple and also securing Israel's borders ushering in a new time of peace and prosperity. This was only possible because people heard, and responded to, the word that Haggai had spoken. The question "why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?" had struck home. The people realised that they needed to put God first.

If you feel that you want something more in your life, if you can't quite put your finger on why you aren't satisfied with life, the answer probably lies in your relationship with God. We don't need to build a physical temple as Zerubbabel did, we just need to build Gods kingdom with our lives. Zerubbabel allowed God to use him for a specific purpose and received the blessing for his willingness to put Gods purposes before his own. Let us put Jesus before our own plans and desires, and allow him to work through us to the glory of his name.

Lets Pray – Lord, help me to remember to put you first. Help me to do your work before my own. Thank-you for all that you have done and will do in my life. Amen.



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