The Time Is Now!
Haggai 1

She was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, just an ordinary geography teacher in Calcutta. Every morning on her way to teach at St. Mary's High School, she passed the deplorable conditions of the street people. These people were homeless, diseased, and destitute. Seeing their plight every day brought her to a point where she could stand it no more. She had a divine moment and began praying about a solution. She and a few of her former students began rescuing men, women, and children who had been rejected by hospitals and who were literally dying on the streets. In 1950, she received permission from the Vatican to begin the Missionaries of Charity. The order grew to more than four thousand nuns who have devoted their lives to caring for refugees, victims of epidemics, the impoverished, and the disabled. She became known as "Mother Teresa." She didn't devote herself to this cause because of a fat paycheck every month. She served the under-resourced people in her midst because her holy discontent had her by the throat and wouldn't let her go. Human nature naturally gravitates toward comfort. We are incredibly good at adopting a mentality of "this is just how things are" when it comes to broken relationships, struggling communities, or stagnant ministries. However, God calls leaders to cultivate a healthy discontent for the way things are.

God used a man named Haggai. His name means "my festival." God used Haggai to challenge the people to rise up and build and change their misplaced priorities. God used four different men to stir them up to return to do His work:

A civic leader Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah.
A religious leader Joshua, the high priest.
Two Godly prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.

Ezra 5:1 and chapter 6:14 tell us that God used two preachers to revive the people and to encourage them to rebuild the walls and to finish the job. These are four very different kinds of men. It reminds us of how different people are used by our God today. Zechariah was the visionary. He was the dreamer who looked forward to the future and the predictions God had for the future. Haggai was the man who was interested in building. He was practical. God uses both of those kinds of prophets. But it is Haggai that God uses to tell the people, "Your priorities are out of order. Let's get back to the business at hand."

Our calling and personal vision is often birthed from a "frustration" regarding a specific broken area of the world. Instead of letting this frustration turn into hopeless apathy, God intends for us to use it as spiritual fuel to catalyze meaningful, positive change in partnership with Him.

1. **Be Captured By A Vision For What Can Be.**

Great leaders see the unseen. While some only see problems, leaders see possibilities. A vision is born in the soul of a man or woman who is consumed with the tension between "what is" and "what could be." Vision always requires someone to champion the cause. It always requires someone who has the courage to act.

What do you do when you see something that breaks your heart?

Our mission in our community is three things. We want to reach the lost, serve the least, and raise next-generation leaders. This is the mission that drives all of our decisions and focuses all of our attention.

The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed 66 years earlier and remained in ruins. The gates to the city which represented their protection were burned. Everyone they knew was now without a job and without any hope. The Babylonians took the Jewish people captive and held them in bondage for 70 years. Jerusalem's city walls were broken down, and Israel wasn't a nation anymore, as they were scattered throughout the world. Years earlier, there were two migrations back to the land of Israel led by Zerubbabel and then Ezra. They had rebuilt the temple and begun a renewal of worship. However, a great deal of work still needed to be done, as the walls of the capital city lay in ruins, leaving it an easy target for looters. The Jewish people felt demoralized and completely hopeless. They felt like their life was over. Decades later, about 50,000 Jews moved back to Jerusalem to rebuild it. They were going to rebuild the city that they loved to make a better future. They couldn't make any progress and found themselves

stalled. It seemed like everything resulted in a dead end. Change always begins in the heart of a burdened leader who sees the need for revival and has the courage to lead the necessary changes. Revitalization always requires the right leadership on board to serve as catalysts for change. God spoke to Zerubbabel and Joshua to lead the rebuilding effort (Haggai 1:1-2). The burden you feel often reveals the calling you'll embrace. The thing that tends to upset you will often drive you into a ministry to make a difference in the lives of others. Rarely do you know when you're on the front end of something really special. You rarely know when you're on the front end of making a significant difference.

Consider areas of brokenness in our communities:

The plight of hurting children
The plight of children who can't read
The plight of children who have special needs
The plight of children who've been bullied, neglected, or abused
The plight of those who are bound by an addiction
The plight of those living in homelessness
The plight of teenagers who are far from God
The plight of adults who do not have a relationship with God
The plight of those who've been trafficked and abused
The plight of those who don't have clean drinking water
The plight of those who don't have a simple mosquito net
The plight of those who don't have a Bible
The plight of the unborn
The plight of those who struggle with anxiety and stress
The plight of those struggling with mental health and wellness
The pressure on children being shaped by secularism
Families affected by addiction
The plight of children in the foster system
Fatherless homes and single parents and children
Children in broken and struggling marriages
The flight of grieving people and hopelessness

The recurring Old Testament journeys from bondage and brokenness to restoration and fulfillment provides one of history's most compelling case studies on leadership. In each case, God called leaders and gave them vision and passion to change the current circumstances. This is what visionary leaders do. They cultivate a clear mental picture of what could be that is fueled by the conviction that it should be. Many leaders maintain the status quo. Visionary leaders possess the unique ability to see what is not yet there and the grit to bring it into existence. They rely on God to transform a burden into a purposeful, actionable, and persistent plan. They pray for opportunities but plan carefully, knowing God will bring about the outcome. They possess the determination to complete the vision despite obstacles and opposition. They possess high integrity and are honest with themselves, which is foundational for long-term influence. They delegate tasks they are not suited for, concentrating only on what they can do to maximize impact.

Visionary leaders in the Bible focused on restoring faith and rebuilding brokenness. Visionary leaders in the Bible were from different backgrounds, but strategically placed by God. Consider the visionary leaders in the books of Haggai and Nehemiah. Haggai and Zechariah were prophets. Zerubbabel was a governor. Joshua was a high priest. Nehemiah was a cup-bearer who overcame discouragement, intimidation, and intense opposition with prayerful, strategic planning to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

2. **Real Change Begins With One Person Having Urgency.**

In Haggai 1, the change begins with one person being willing to say, "I'm willing to change. I'm willing to be inconvenienced. I'm willing to pay the price." Haggai was an old man when the Lord gave him these words of prophecy. As a boy, he was carried away from the smoky ruins of the city of Jerusalem, having seen the temple of

God being destroyed with fire. He and the people of God were carried away to Babylonian and stayed there for about 70 years. The hope of their return filled the heart of Haggai. When they were able to return, only a small group of the Jews were willing to go back and rebuild the city and the temple. For the most part, the Jewish people had grown comfortable in their captivity. They were not interested in going back and taking up the formidable task of rebuilding the city and rebuilding the temple. There was just a small remnant that was willing to return and do the work of rebuilding. It is easy to grow comfortable in this world and not be interested in doing the Lord's work.

In 536 BC, they return with great enthusiasm to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and lay the foundation for the temple. There was great opposition to what they did, and the enemies discouraged their work. For a period of time, their enthusiasm begins to wane. For 16 years, no work was done as the people became interested in their own personal interests. They begin to turn their attention away from the house of the Lord to their own houses. They got involved in rebuilding their own houses and doing the things that met their own personal needs. During this period of time, God's work lies unfinished and incomplete.

These were not bad people. They were good people. They were part of a faithful remnant. This was the faithful few who were willing to return in obedience to what God had said. They were good people, but their priorities had become rearranged. They were the right people. They were in the right place, at the right time, to do the right work, but their priorities were all out of kilter.

There are 4 messages in Haggai, and each one has a date attached to it. We are told when Haggai preached these particular messages. It is unusual that each of the messages are given a date.

In Haggai chapter 1 there is message number 1, and it is a message concerning the mood during the time when Haggai was written. The people were saying, "I really thought we would be in much different shape than we are now,"

The first message was preached September 1, 520 BC. God speaks a message to them, and God also speaks to us concerning selfishness. God's work had remained unfinished for 16 years. For 16 years they had turned their attention to their own interests, desires, personal priorities, and pleasures. He discusses the matter of priority. In verse 2, he tell us that the Lord said what the people were saying. You see, the Lord knows what you are saying in your heart. We hear what you are saying with our ears, but the Lord hears what you are saying in your heart.

Haggai 1:2 starts off with some humor, "*These people*." God says, "*These people say the time is not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house*." Haggai 1:2

Almost everywhere else in the Old Testament, when God talks about His people, He calls them "My people." In this case, He does what many wives do when the kids do something wrong. "Your kids did this," or "You're not going to believe what your kids did today."

God had provided the resources for the people to rebuild the temple, but they used them for their own selfish desires (Haggai 1:4). The prophet Haggai arrived at a moment when God's people had become comfortable with "good enough." The people claimed, "*The time has not yet come.*" Hagai 1:2

We often wait for "perfect conditions" to serve God, yet Haggai reveals that waiting for convenience is often a mask for apathy. The clear call by the prophet is to rebuild the house of God and lead the people in experiencing a revival by repeating the call to action, "*The time is now.*"

In other words, the people procrastinated. They are saying, "It's just not a good time to God's work." There is always a cost when we put off until 'Later'. The Bible is filled with stories about this:

Delayed Obedience is Disobedience: King Saul waiting too long for Samuel and taking matters into his own hands, costing him his kingdom (1 Samuel 13).

The Illusion of Time: The Parable of the Rich Fool who planned for years of ease tomorrow, unaware his soul was required that very night (Luke 12).

Missing the Moment: The Parable of the Ten Virgins, where five procrastinated buying oil and found themselves locked out of the wedding feast (Matthew 25).

I think about the day of Pentecost. It wasn't a good time to have Pentecost either. You had small minority of people who were under severe attack from the religious people of their day. They were living in a culture that was dying. It was like a rotten piece of fruit on the vine. At Pentecost, people could have said, "It's not a good time to get anybody saved," but when the Spirit of God came down, 3,000 souls got saved. It's always a good time to win people to faith in Christ. It's always a good time to do the work of the Lord. They said, "The time is not come."

Paul's timeless passage in Ephesians 5:15-16 serves as an urgent call to intentionality, urging believers to live with deliberate spiritual focus rather than drifting aimlessly. By contrasting wisdom with foolishness, the Apostle Paul emphasizes that wisdom is actively demonstrated through how we manage our time and choices. "*Making the most of every opportunity*"—or redeeming the time—requires an acute awareness that our days are finite and often surrounded by cultural distractions, moral decay, and spiritual opposition "*because the days are evil*". This scripture challenges us to fiercely protect our time, view every moment as a God-given opportunity for good, and live with an eternal purpose that counteracts the brokenness of the world around us.

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16

The Church of Laodicea became lukewarm water that is neither hot enough to heal nor cold enough to refresh, resulting in spiritual nausea (Revelation 3). It had a spiritual apathy. That's how it got lukewarm. There are always people who say, "*It's not a good time to do anything for God*." We are living in last days.

3. **Make God's Work A Priority.**

"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" Haggai 1:4

What does paneled houses mean?" According to some commentaries, this was high-end living. This was now you got granite countertops. You got the crown molding. You got the best TV in the house. You've got all this stuff, and God is not against us having nice things. He's against us putting nice things ahead of Him. He's not against us having nice things. He doesn't want nice things to have us. At this point, the people are putting their own comfort ahead of God's house and God's priority.

All great evangelistic efforts have been done by people who make that a priority. Mighty missionary movements have been done by people who make a priority of their missionary effort.

Great churches are built by people who are willing to make God's work a priority in their life.

Do you have your priorities out of order? Have you laid aside the things of the Lord? There was a time when you were serving the Lord. There was a time when you gave Him priority in your life, but now it's not a good time.

People use all kinds of excuses not to do God's work. "The weather is too bad to go to church," but it's not too bad to go to the mall. "The services are too long," but they can watch a movie for two hours or go to a ballgame for three hours, and that's not too long. It's just an excuse people use not to serve the Lord.

Sometimes it's because:

- Overwhelmed: Having too many tasks, which paralyzes the ability to start.
- Fatigue: Running out of physical, mental, or emotional energy.
- Lack of Clarity: Not knowing exactly what the next move should be.
- Misalignment: Working on tasks that do not match our core mission.

The Lord is saying, "It's a matter of priority." They didn't have time to do God's work and build God's house, but they had time to build their own houses. They were putting themselves first. I wonder if there are some of God's people who once put God's work first and God's house first. Now, you've begun to put your own desires, pleasures, and interests first.

God's house was in a state of disrepair. You can always tell what people think about God by looking at the buildings they used to worship God. You go into a church and the windows are cracked and broken and the carpet is all tattered and torn and the building is dilapidated and just about to run down that tells you how the people feel about God.

I want to publicly thank all of those who serve the Lord in this daily capacity of keeping God's building looking good. It's not easy to keep these buildings looking good. I want to thank them for it. God bless them. It is a priority to us as a church. We want these buildings to look good. When these young couples bring their boys and girls and babies, we want them to walk into a preschool that is absolutely sparkling and clean. We want them to know that we believe God's house ought to be the cleanest and prettiest place in all of the city.

Two different times the Lord says, "*Give careful thought to your ways*." Haggai 1:5

"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored.'" Haggai 1:7-8

Ask yourself, are you trying to make a name more than you're trying to make a difference? Are you putting your house before His house? Are you consumed with yourself instead of being consumed with God and showing His love to other people? Is there something that you're putting ahead of God? Give careful thought to your ways.

He's going to break it down into three simple steps:

"*Go up into the mountains*" - Prayer and Discernment
"*Bring down the timber*" - Find resources and get ready.
"*Build My house*" - Get started and rebuild.

He is saying that it is time to get God's business done. You are the people. You are in the right place. You are at the right time. You have the right work. God has brought us to this hour. I want to challenge you get your priorities in order. It's time to work for the Lord.

The way to get started is to quit talking and start doing. Just quit thinking about it, quit talking about it, and go up to the mountain today. Do something today. Do the next thing that God has showed you, and do it today. Be faithful to God today. Don't miss it. You had an opportunity. It was sitting right there. It was there for you if you were ready for it.

They had no idea what the blessings of God were on the other side of obedience. Scripture is filled with stories of people who experienced breakthrough and blessing because of obedience. The time is now! Whenever God gives us an assignment, we're going to be obedient. Outcome is God's responsibility. Obedience is responsibility.

He is saying, "Take a good hard look at your life and examine your priorities and see if that's not what is causing the disparities in your life."

- **Don't Put Your Comfort Above God's Calling.**

"*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*." Matthew 6:33

In the early years of your Christian life, maybe you made it a priority and God and church were first. Maybe you got interested in your own personal activities and made them priorities personal instead of spiritual priorities. You don't have time to come to worship anymore. You have other things to do, other pleasures to seek. People don't care about

coming to Bible Study on Wednesday nights. They have neglected the Word of God and as well as feeding their spiritual lives.

Psalm 106:15 says, "*The Lord gave them their request, but sent leanness to their souls*." God has prospered the people, and now they have neglected their souls and God's work.

"*You have planted much, but 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.*" Haggai 1:6-7

He says that you are working harder and harder and having less and less satisfaction. You are working harder and harder to make money, but your money doesn't go very far. You are filling your plate with food, and yet you are not satisfied. He says you drink and drink, and it never satisfies your thirst. You put on layers of clothes on top of clothes, and yet you are still cold. You earn wages and put your wages in a bag, and the bag is full of holes. You look at your money and your life, and you don't know where it's gone.

That's what happens when people get their priorities out of order. You've neglected the things of the Lord, and you've decided you will give your attention and time to some other things. You aren't satisfied, happy, or as fulfilled as you thought you would be.

A well-ordered life is a blessed life. The truth of the matter is, in your personal life you don't have joy and peace and happiness in your life anymore. You are more miserable than you've ever been before. Your life has become like a bag with holes. You look up, and you don't have anything to show for it.

I have found that when you put God first, instead of a bag full of holes, God in His mysterious, miraculous way has a way of making things go a little bit further. He has a way of helping us meet our obligations. He has a way of seeing to it that we even have a few extras in life, but it is all a matter of priority. Seek FIRST God's business and HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. When you get your priorities right, all these things will be added unto you.

I like the emphasis we had today on people volunteering to serve the Lord. We need a lot of people to serve the Lord in our fellowship. God bless all of you wonderful people who do serve!

Do you realize that taking your turn in the nursery might result in some couple coming to know Jesus as Savior in one of our services? When we get to Heaven, the fact that you were willing to spend an hour or two with a crying baby may mean that somebody will be in heaven because you were willing to serve the Lord like that. God bless you wonderful people who are willing to serve. Let me encourage all of you to make God's work a priority in your life.

"*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 your own house."* Haggai 1:9

God has a way of getting your attention and showing you that your priorities are out of balance.

- **Choose The Difficult Right Thing To Do Over The Easy Wrong Thing To Do.**

It would be both right and hard to continue building the temple. Choose the hard right over the easy wrong. When someone hurts your feelings, it would be so easy to hold a grudge, to be angry at them, but it's hard and right to forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. It's easy to continue to spend more than you have and just buy whatever you want and to go into debt. It's hard and it's right to begin to climb out of debt, live beneath your means, and live in such a way you can be massively generous with other people. It's so easy to give up. It's so easy to not make a difference, but we, as followers of Jesus, with the help of God, will choose the hard right over the easy wrong. This is what the prophet is going to help empower the people to do. He essentially tells them, "The time is now."

Ask yourself, "Is there some unfinished assignment in my life?" It could've been yesterday. It could've been a month ago. It could've been 14 years ago, where you believe God put something on your heart. "I'm supposed to reach out to this person and share my faith with them, but that would be hard." Don't choose the easy way out. "I am supposed

to really work on honoring God with my body and getting in shape." But it was hard, so you didn't do it. "I felt like I was supposed to serve somewhere in church. I was supposed to start a ministry. I was supposed to give something away to somebody. I felt like I was supposed to start writing a book. There was something that I felt like I was supposed to do." I don't know what it is. There's something on your heart that you really felt like it was a burden, most likely from God, but you didn't do it. Think about that for a moment, and if God shows you something, I want you to listen to the rest of the message through what might be that unfinished assignment.

Revival and restoration begin when we stop giving God the "leftovers" of our time and resources and put Him first. In Haggai's case, the people obeyed (Haggai 1:12). They rebuilt the house of God (Haggai 1:14). The Turning point was when the people listened. In a rare moment in prophetic history, all the people—from the leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, to the "remnant of the people"—responded with a "reverent fear." God has always done His work by using people who were willing to put Him first and use their time and effort in His work.

4. **The Right Response To God's Call**

"*Then Zerubbabel, Joshua and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai... And the people feared the LORD.*" Haggai 1:12

When God gives His Word, God looks for obedience. That's what God wants out of you and me. It may not sound spectacular. It may not be sensational, but all God asks of you and me is that we obey His Word. When God gives a command, God wants us to obey Him. "The people did fear before the Lord." They responded with humility to the message of the Lord.

In verse 13 the Lord spoke, giving them the promise of the Lord. He said, "*'I am with you,' declares the LORD.*" Haggai1:13

5. **Our Service Is A Partnership With God.**

"*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 Jozadak, 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.*" Haggai 1:13-14

When we answer the call and serve, the Lord will take our hand, and we won't stand alone. I have good news for you. God promises, "I'm with you." You've taken a job in the Lord's work here and you feel afraid and say, "I can't do it alone." The good news is, you don't have to do it alone. The Lord said, "I'm with you."

God has given you some little boys and little girls to teach. You are not alone. God says, "I'm with you."
God has called you to the worship team. You are not alone. God says, "I'm with you."
God has called you to lead a home Bible Study. You are not alone. God says, "I'm with you."
God has called you to work on our tech teams. You are not alone. God says, "I'm with you."

Jesus said, "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" Matthew 28:20

He tells us in verse 15 when they did it. "*on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month (September 24).*" Haggai 1:15

In just 23 days after the message came, they did the work of the Lord. They took the time to go up into the woods as God had said and gather the materials. They get the debris out of the foundation of the temple. They organize themselves for the work. On September 24, they began to do the work of the Lord.

Could this be the day when you commit yourself to do God's work?

Galatians 6:9 says, "*Let us not become weary, in doing good because, at the proper time, we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up*." Be strong and do the work.

6. **Rest In The Promise Of God's Power To Serve Him.**

"*But now be strong, Zerubbabel,*" *declares the Lord.* "*Be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,*" *declares the Lord,* "*and do the work. For I am with you,*" *declares the Lord Almighty.* Haggai 2:4

We are to be strong and do God's work because we have the promise of His presence. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. The same God who blessed us in the 90's is the God who will bless us now. The God who blessed us in the 60's and 70's and way back beyond is the same God who moved in mighty spiritual power on the day of Pentecost. He's the God today who can move in our midst and stir and save the lost and win great victories for the Lord! Be strong. We have the promise of His presence.

"*This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt*." Haggai 2:5

God is talking about His promises, His agreements. The promises of God are still the same today. You can do something for the Lord in this day. God has promised He will be with you and will bless you.

"*I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,*" *declares the* LORD, "*and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you.*" Haggai 2:23

God says to Zerubbabel, "You be faithful, and I'll manifest my power." He reiterates again, "*I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth*" for the second time. You and I can be faithful because God's power is behind us. When you are doing God's work, you can be sure that God will provide the power to do His work.

You don't have to do the work of the Lord in your own strength. You don't have to serve the Lord in your puny power. Somebody says, "I'm just serving the Lord in my little meek way." Well, stop it! Quit serving the Lord in your little old meek way. Start serving the Lord in His mighty powerful way! Claim the power of God in your work. In verse 23, God says, "*I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you.*" In those days, most of the communication was on clay tablets. The king would have a ring. Sometimes he would wear it around his neck on a string. Many times he would wear it on his hand. When a document had been composed and written, making commitments from the king, then the king would take that signet ring and imprint his signet ring in that clay document. When a signet ring was used, the king was guaranteeing, putting his authority and power behind the commitments in the document.

The Lord says, "*I have chosen you, Zerubbabel*." This is the work I have given you to do. Zerubbabel is mentioned in the genealogy of the Lord. When you read Matthew 1:12, you will find that Zerubbabel is mentioned. Jesus was God's signet ring. When Jesus comes and puts His stamp on your life, His image will be impressed into your life. His mark on your life makes you special. God said to Zerubbabel through Haggai, "I have chosen you." I've looked the field over, and I have picked you."

- Don't Be Moved By What People Think. Be Moved By What God Thinks.

Three promises in chapter 2 to encourage your heart:

- "*I am with you*." Haggai 2:4

Claim the promise that the Lord is with you.

In verse 19 is the second promise:

- "*From this day will I bless you*." Haggai 2:19

The third promise in verse 23:

- "*I have chosen you*." Haggai 2:23

There is nobody else in the whole world exactly like you. You are an original. You are brand new. You are unique. There is something you can do for the Lord nobody else can do. God says just be faithful. Keep on working for the Lord. Great leaders are persistent. They don't give up. They have great courage. Haggai was going to experience a lot of opposition, but he will stand strong in the face of that opposition. The people will get discouraged and doubt if God is with them. They will be exhausted and feel like failures, again and again.

"*Don't grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time, you will reap a harvest if you do not give up.*" Galatians 6:9