

We have a shorter sermon today, so as to have several important announcements at the Benediction. To begin place both feet on the floor, close your eyes and breathe deeply. Center yourself. Center yourself in your faith in God. Center yourself in this House of God. Center yourself as the Church in this time and place. Now open your eyes. Is the center of our world the hate and animosity spewing from ads this week? Are we centered on winning \$1.6 Billion in the Lottery. Is the Center of our Community the Mines digging into the Mountains? Is our Center the Safeway Plaza. Or is our Center here as this Church? Are we centered in our faith in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit?

Our identification of Center, of relationships, places, stages of life orient or re-orient us as to who we are. Is GOD our JUDGE, REDEEMER, COMPANION? Is Jesus, the GOOD SHEPHERD seeking lost lambs; The SON OF GOD or OUR SAVIOR WALKING ON PIERCED FEET, HOLES IN HIS HANDS & A BROKEN HEART? In our Call to Prayer, the First Nation's Version of the Bible calls GOD, The CREATOR WHO BLESSES; and rather than people being ABSOLUTES as BLUE & RED, RICH or POOR, YOUNG or OLD, there are circumstances of life we all go through: "WALKING WITH BROKEN SPIRITS, THE TRAIL OF TEARS, WALKING SOFTLY IN HUMILITY, THIRSTING FOR WRONGS TO BE RIGHTED."

We made some changes in the Church Office. The list of names we read from last Sunday for ALL SAINTS, used to be called the DEATH LIST, which being a church I changed to our RESURRECTION REFERRAL LIST. My older brother refers to the summer heat in Southern Arizona as the DEVIL'S DOORSTEP, however when a friend died recently someone commented "Well, they say Green Valley is 'HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM!'" A few weeks ago, Pastor Diane described that journeys in the Desert are at times called EXILE, but to us this is HOME. Are we embracing this time of our lives, RETIRING from who we have been, WAITING TO DIE, are we DISTANT FROM FAMILY, or GETTING INVOLVED IN THIS PLACE & TIME? When I first came here, someone named that there are those who refer to this as VPC, others that this is VALLEY, or VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN, originally we were the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREEN VALLEY, technically we are the VALLEY UNITED PREBYTERIAN CHUCRH OF GREEN VALLEY; but instead we have been making a point to name this is: OUR CHURCH. I believe the point of this morning's Scriptures is that THE CHURCH, THIS CHUURCH IS GOD'S WAITING ROOM!

We did something subtle, which was different this year. In past years the annual Stewardship Letter with Pledge card was delivered with all of the other solicitations at the end of the year, addressed to DEAR SIR or MADAM, DEAR FRIENDS, or DEAR MEMBERS. But, for the last two years, because of COVID we all wore masks that hid our identity; and as the CHURCH, YOUR CHURCH, we want to make our relationship PERSONAL, so we addressed them to you by name... Instead of Photocopying, we printed each letter individually and Pastor DIANE AND I SIGNED Each One. So that our giving to and through OUR CHURCH would not be Generic, but Personal. HOWEVER, some interpreted this as our writing to you a personal solicitation for more, when we were simply being transparent, by asking each one to give what we can.

HAGGAI is one of those Books most folk cannot find without the Table of Contents, and many ministers cannot recall the point. Different from Jeremiah who spent a lifetime as Prophet, Isaiah which covers decades as a Priest, Haggai's message came over only 4 months, 500 years before the birth of the Savior. Where the result of many invasions throughout history has been to leave Nations Destroyed, when the Persians invaded Babylon, they were among the first to pour resources into reparations, sending prisoners of war back HOME to rebuild the indigenous culture.

HAGGAI begins chapter 1 that the Israelites returned to the Promised Land 20 years ago, and people built their homes and villages, shop-keepers and businesses built their industries, but the Temple of Solomon lay in ruins.

Different from Second Samuel where God told King David he was NOT to build a House for God, through Haggai, the Lord instructs them to rebuild the Temple. Our passage comes after 2 Months of hard Labor, when the people look at what they have accomplished thus far, and those who are over 70 are the ones who remember what the Temple of Solomon looked like before the Babylonian Exile and are embarrassed by what their accomplishment looks like by comparison. We regularly compare to what we remember nostalgically don't we. I know a man who owns a Cheese Shop, who claims that before buses unload, they know that School Children want very mild Cheeses, and those of us over 60 have lived life and want something with stronger flavors and smell.

But, this is where the Prophet HAGGAI's prophecy shines. Because he inspires the people with a Calling to a Future! Instead of Isaiah's COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE, or FEAR NOT, BE UNAFRAID, HAGGAI says "BE STRONG FOR GOD IS WITH YOU!" In a Little While, GOD WILL SHAKE THE HEAVENS, the EARTH AND THE SEA AND DRY LAND, AND WHAT IS DESIRED BY ALL NATIONS WILL FILL THIS HOUSE OF GLORY!

We have a tendency to Travel to Jerusalem as Tourists, commenting "Wow, how old this is! Or What incredible craftsmanship for thousands of years ago!" But the point of Jerusalem is THIS IS THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD, THAT ALL PEOPLES: JEWISH, CHRISTIAN & MUSLIM FLOCK TO! And have for thousands of years.

Of all the Books of the Bible, when reading Thessalonians I have to smile, because they seem to have taken Paul to Literally. When Paul first visited, he so inspired the people THEY BELIEVED IN THE RESURRECTION & 2nd COMING to the extent they stopped going to work, they stopped paying their mortgages, they walked out of their families and marriages! because they thought the Resurrection was going to happen any minute!

Here in his 2nd Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul describes that we need to be patient and embrace life, centering ourselves on the future Resurrection, because before the Resurrection Comes, the MAN OF LAWLESSNESS will need to be dealt with. While it is easy to blame this person in history, or this Leader today as being "LAWLESS", DANGEROUS OR WRONG FOR ARIZONA... what Paul is describing is the part of each of us that hurts others, steps on their toes, acts without thinking and believing. Which is why in all TRANSPARENCY we need to confess when we have made changes, and why we share and serve one another the SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION.