

Lightly edited transcript of April 22, 1990 Sunday Morning Sermon on Haggai 1:1-15 by Interim Pastor Jim Andrews:

“Jim Snodgrass told me that he announced earlier this service that I had become your interim pastor. And I want to tell you that that is a privilege for me, but it's also a very, very daunting responsibility. And Olsie and I want to ask for your prayers. Many of you know that I have a full-time job already teaching at the seminary, and taking on this assignment is scary. It's scary in itself; the circumstances make it even a little more difficult. And I have nothing in myself to bring to this task that will enable me to accomplish God's work in this congregation.

So I'm going to need a great deal of grace, more than I ordinarily possess. I'm going to need more energy than ordinarily have, and I usually have a good quotient. But I'm going to really have to have something that will pull me out of bed in the morning and keep me up late at night, and will keep me patient when I'm tired and focused when I'm inclined to be distracted.

I want to be your pastor in this time that I'm serving in this role. I have to confess to you, I don't always know how best to do that. A suburban congregation like this, with a frenetic pace and lifestyle. It's not always easy to know when I'm needed and where I am needed. But we very much want to be available to you when we are. So we'll have to depend upon you to tell us about that.

I do want to introduce my wife. I thought she was in the first service, forgot that she went to Sunday school class. But for those of you who are here in this service, and she didn't really doesn't enjoy this sort of thing, but we need to do it. Olsie, where are you hon? Back there, would you stand for a minute, there is my wife Olsie. Now some of you will find that name intimidating. I had trouble with it myself when we started dating. It's spelled o-l-s-i- e. And she won't be at all put off if you pronounce it like it's spelled like it's spelled, Olsie. That's the way many do. But one way to help you remember the way that we hillbillies always can mess up a good name; we pronounced it “Aussie” like an Australian: A-U-S-S-I-E. And that might help you. Olsie has always missed the pastorate. And she's always rather than I would do that than teach.

She's reserved, but she loves people. She's got a great ear. She's a tremendous listener. And she is available to you as I am within the human limits and the job limits that that we have. This summer, I'll try to be available in the office as much as possible. In the fall, things go crazy. It almost drives me up the wall at the

seminary. There are things that I can adjust and temporarily relieve myself up there. But it will be on may act a little spacey in the fall. You might say you act spacey enough as it is, which is true. But I mean, it may get worse. That's what I'm trying to say. In the spring things might improve a little bit.

Now, another thing you'll notice, I really don't have time this morning for what I'm doing. But I'm going to explain that. There are times, it's worse in the first service, there are times when I may appear to be a little bit “racy” in a different sense of that term...going a little faster than my motor wants to go. Maybe stumbling over myself, look a little distracted. Last Sunday, I thought I looked at the clock once. One of my friends told me, “You looked over there three or four times.” Last Sunday. I couldn't even see the clock. I was looking for it. I didn't find it. So I had to look at my watch.

I want to tell you folks what the problem is it's really very simple. An old dad up here has a big adjustment to make. Now, for the last 20 years, though I've speak a lot, you know here and there and wherever, I have been a teacher and my inner clock, it is set to 45 or 50 minutes. I don't mean to terrorize you with that, though. But there is this clock inside, and there's a kind of there's a kind of automatic pacing that goes on. And I, God has taught me and enabled me to think fairly well on my feet when I'm relaxed.

But when the clock is making me spastic, I don't relax as much. And my thoughts sometimes are not quite as ordered and sequential as they ought to be. And illustrations that were supposed to be in there get dropped. And I'm up here doing a lot of mass, instant editing. And what I intended to say, well, some things go wrong. If you can tolerate that, I can stand it while I adjust my clock. So I'm trying to work within about a 30 minute time frame, which will be better for me in the long run. I'm sure you think it'll be better for you. But it'll be better for me, but I've just got to work on that. And that's what I'm doing. And eventually, that will kind of settle into place and I'll become more at home with myself. But right now, I feel like somebody's trying to accommodate myself to another person's house or another person's clothes. They don't, “David in Saul's armor,” you know, it doesn't exactly fit. So we're working on that. And I think it'll be better for everyone. Wanted you to understand that as we get started.

@6:45, I want to say that also that I'm so appreciative of many of you, I failed to mention this in the first service, we received some very kind and thoughtful notes for many of you. That is quite meaningful. One young man, and I've had this two

people offered to do this, but one young man just came out of the blue a couple Sundays ago. I'm amazed sometimes how thoughtful people are. And I'm finding there a lot of people like that in this fellowship. Said "Jim, you're going to be awful busy. Is there something we can do for you?" I don't know about you, but some of us are so cotton-pickin' independent. And it embarrasses us if someone wants to do something for us.

A friend of mine told me one time, "Don't be like that. God's people need to have a way to express their love and appreciation." So it's kind of awkward at first, but then I remembered, you remember the big windstorm we had this winter? Well, my house in West Linn, I got damaged like a lot of other people, but I haven't had time to get to it. There was a stake that went right through my garage. I mean, that job was about that big around. And it went right through and went all through the drywall, you know on the inside. I mean that far. I mean, it would have killed a moose if that thing had been out there. It went through there with such acceleration and power that believe it or not, I haven't had a leak all winter. I mean, it's like a cork in a champagne bottle. I mean, there it was, but it looked like a flagpole. And I got embarrassed about it when my neighbor said a while back, said, "Jim, when you gonna have that fixed? Come on, fella. Get with it!" you know, those kinds of little remarks.

And so I told the fella, I said, I said, Look, there is one little job. So he got ahold of a roofer and they came over yesterday and fixed it. So a lot of kind people, and I'm very, very appreciative of that kind of spirit that I find here.

@9:56 Now, let me tell you where we're going this morning. I would like for you to take your Bibles with me and turn to the Book of Haggai. "Haggai, who in in the world is that?" somebody says. The very term may be intimidating. I'm going to tell you how to find Haggai; it occupies all of about two pages in your Bible. Haggai was an ancient prophet of Israel. Go to the book of Matthew, that's the first book in your New Testament. Go to Matthew, turn left. Go back just three books, three books, and you've hit on Haggai.

Now get that in place. We're not going to read it right now. I will be reading it in the course of my exposition. If you were born between 1946 and 1964, you qualify, many of you do, as a baby boomer. I don't know whether you know it or not, but many of you business people will know it because you're very familiar with these figures; you have to be, these are things you have to know. But about 77 million Americans, that's almost 1/3 of our entire national population, qualify as baby

boomers. And the significant thing about that is that baby boomers are the most determinative generation in our entire society. When one group of babies makes up that much of the society, then believe you me, the mass media, the businesses, everything else, they've got a lock into that, and they're going to tone and they're going to shake the whole culture, they're going to shape its values, they're going to shape its mood, its outlook, its expectations, all of that.

So whatever we are as a nation right now, we can take and lay at the feet of 77 million baby boomers. Now, if you're one of those baby boomers who makes 40-plus thousands dollars per year, not all of us qualify, but if you're one of those, you have come to be known as a baby boomer subculture by the epithet, "yuppie." A yuppie as a great many of you already are aware is a young, urban, professional, young, upwardly mobile professional. Now it's a term it's fallen into a certain amount of disrepute. But it is important for us to realize that not only are probably a lot of us baby boomers, all of us are affected by that. We'll see how in a moment.

But also, in this area of town, there are a great many yuppies. I had a slip of the tongue in the first service and said yucchies, which is your classic Freudian slip. That's the way some look at it. But here is what we know about yuppies. I mean, these are among the things we know. And I have culled some of this from Mike Bellah's book on Christian baby boomers.

According to Newsweek magazine, yuppies live to buy, and their cultural national anthem is the Michelob ad, "You can have it all." US News and World Reports in reference to yuppie spending habits reports this: the name of the game with yuppies, that is, the name of the game is best...buying it, owning it, using it, wearing it, growing it, cooking it, driving it, doing whatever with it. Yuppies are sad to have insatiable appetites for designer clothes, computers, video recorders, pasta makers, home answering machines, espresso machines, pagers, and other gadgets. Oh, Volvos and BMWs are very popular. And back in Atlanta auto dealer reports that young adults fill a waiting list, and this was two or three years ago, of up to 60 days for \$32,500 Jaguars. I think the tab is a little higher now.

Despite that, the fact is that yuppies are known to have an unusually high degree of burnout. Somehow, they seem to have it all, but somehow, they don't have it. One psychiatrist I quote says this, "A lot of them, including many with Fast Track, high-tech careers, reported feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety...sound familiar?...depression, emptiness, paranoia, as well as a whole spectrum of physical complaints, headaches, backaches, stomach problems, insomnia, eating

problems. In fact, folks, the level of social disorder among baby boomers today, that 77 million, is really striking and alarming.

Landon Jones in his book *Great Expectations* said this, "If homicide provides an accurate index of the overall crime level in society, now hear this, then suicide is, in a similar way, a grim measure of social despair. And Baby Boomers, especially young baby boomers have been taking their lives more frequently than any generation in history. Bottom line, there's just a heck of a lot of misery out there. Baby Boomer country, Yuppie Land is not a happy place.

@16:48, My wife and I were taking a walk through our neighborhood yesterday. And a Mercedes whipped by, BMW whipped by, and here was a guy, and he had 18 cars in his garage, and I'm exaggerating slightly. And he was hooking up his boat, big boat ready to go out for a Sunday afternoon. "Forget God and forget it all and go have fun." I don't know where that guy is today. My wife said, "You know, a lot of people in a neighborhood like this, think they got it." I said honey, "A lot of people like that guy are in deep pain. And they're trying to suffocate. That's where he's going on Sunday. And I don't know where that cat is today, but I'd like to go tap him on the shoulder. As he runs, I'd be both patting him on the shoulder, have him turn around and say, "Having fun yet?"

I watch people. I'm a people watcher. They're miserable. They're running up and down the road. You get out on a Saturday afternoon or weekend and you just watch them, rows and rows and rows of cars. The Sunday school class has heard me say this. Sometimes I just like to take a red flag. I'd like to get out in the middle of the road. And I'd like to, I'd like to say, "Oh, stop, stop, stop." If I could, then I'd like to go carve a car and say, "Where are you going?"

Where are you going?" It would be amazing how many don't know, but they can't sit at home because they can't stand the quiet! The quiet is deafening. And they're miserable. They've got video recorders and they've got fine homes and they've got all of those cars out there. Oh, not just the cars. I looked at one guy's garage last night, I saw six expensive high tech bikes, I counted!

Yeah, there are distressed marriages, maybe some here, troubled kids, maybe some here, financial setbacks, people in paper, right up to here, jobs with fancy titles, empty promise, boredom, loneliness. People who have everything and yet have nothing. People with nothing still looking for something. Wonder what's wrong?

In that book, *Baby Boomers*, Mike Bellah, proposed an answer. I'm not going to talk about his answer; I'm going to mention. I think his answer is worth reading. I think there's a lot to it. A whole lot to it.

But I don't think it's the most common reason for the situation that we face. He says the biggest problem with baby boomers, and even Christian baby boomers and Christian yuppies, is a life of unrealistic and therefore unfulfilled expectations. We have been acculturated, we have been conditioned, to a whole lot of expectations that are just outrageously unrealistic. And the realities of life do not match up with what is, and then we become disillusioned people. And we become, as we get older, more and more desperate. And there is something to that, and that is not entirely in contradiction with what I'm going to propose.

But what I believe the scripture would more firmly support, and that is this. And I want to illustrate it from Haggai this morning.

@20:35, I believe that the most common reason, the most common reason for broken dreams, the most common reason for shattered hopes, not only in the world among that great mash, that great glob, which makes no profession of allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ, which does not even give a tip of a hat to the God who is there, but to the disillusionment that we sometimes see among Christians, the broken dreams, the shattered hopes, the despair, the overweight anxiety that hangs on our hearts.

@21:53, I think the most common reason is misplaced priorities. The most common reason is a deviation from a divine agenda that brings us into alignment with God's favor and God's blessing. And that I believe is classically illustrated in the case of Nehemiah and the people that Haggai addressed.

21:29, Let me try to set the background and here's what I'd like to show you from Haggai. I want to show you from Haggai, in fact, I'm going to be talking about this **general theme for the next three Sundays the importance of a rightly placed priorities. I'm talking now about the danger of misplaced priorities.** But I'd like you to see my thesis illustrated in Haggai in three respects. I'd like for you to see the timeless, the timeless problem, I like for you to see the timeless consequence. And I'd like for you to see the timeless cure.

22:10, Let me fill in the historical background. I'll be brief about it. Many of you less familiar with your Bibles will need this. About 2500 years ago, roughly, the nation Israel had experienced the calamitous judgment of God, and it is better

known to students of the Bible as the Babylonian Captivity. And for 70 years, they were under the rule of first, the Babylonians, and when they were conquered by the Persians, then the Persians. After Cyrus the Great came to the throne, he issued a decree favoring the Jews to allow Jewish settlers throughout Persian provinces to return to their homeland, those who wanted to, and to resettle Jerusalem and Judea, to rebuild it, and to establish their native religion. Not everybody went back, but thousands did. They went back with joy. They went back with exuberance. They went back with a high degree of spiritual energy. God had moved, God had worked, what a monument! And they were charged. They were hyped, and they were about the work.

And so they went back to Jerusalem under the leadership of Ezra the priest, and immediately, immediately they set about reordering affairs. And the first thing was to reestablish their religion. Now, you could not be a Jew in Old Testament times and worship God according to the prescriptions of the Old Covenant unless you did it in the context of the Temple. And Nebuchadnezzar had razed their temple to the ground. And now there was nothing but stones and weeds and briars, and all of that, and they came back there and they looked at all that devastation, and they had to set about rebuilding the temple. And they didn't have a whole lot of resources to work with.

@24:23, But the Lord was not big on interior decoration. He just wanted them to attend to the first things first. Now, it wasn't bricks and mortar that are so important. God is not into architecture. That was not the point. The point is, you've got to worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, in accordance with reality in accordance to the way He prescribes at any given time. And in their religion at that time, there were certain rituals and certain things that were appropriate to that time until that era until Christ came. And that was the way it was to be done. And it was to be done in the Temple.

So if you were serious about worshiping and honoring God, serious about that, if that was your priority, if that was your agenda, to serve and to honor and to worship God before anything else, that first things had to be first. And the main thing was to remember the main thing, and it was to get with the program and to go build that Temple. Now today, we're not called on to go build a temple. Our expression of that may take a different form, we live in a different time with different demands. But in their day, that was symbolic. And here's what happened.

They ran into trouble. You see it in Ezra, chapter four. They ran into neighbor problems. Their neighbors did not want that to happen. Their neighbors feared them. Their neighbors were threatened by them, they felt jeopardized by them. And their neighbors first tried to compromise them, and when they couldn't compromise them, then their neighbors tried through political maneuvering and legal maneuvering, to put a stop to their building to that Temple. And they began to frustrate the people. And here's what happened.

They ran into some difficulty, and they said:

*“Oh, gee, this is too much. I'm not sure the time is right. So hey, we quit. This is a good thing to do. But hey, this ain't the best time to do it. I'm sure tomorrow, some other day, now, that will be a good time. I mean, we would like to reestablish our religion, we'd like to get things right. But there are just too many hassles and there's too much against us right now. And besides, we're victims of the tyranny of the urgent; there are other things that need to be done.”*

*“Golly, what good is it going to be to have a temple here, we don't even have our economics in order. And so we're gonna have to start working on our business and our commerce and get our economic foundations. And besides, hey, the wife and kids, they've been out there in that pup tent for how long now? Hey, we need to get a house up. If you're gonna build a house, hey, they were Yuppies, “the best.” If you're going to build a house, build a house.”*

So they decided they would build sealed houses, paneled houses, they use that kind of material in the temple. But you know what happened? As these people, as these Jewish people with all of their energy and enterprise that they have always had as they set about working and working and trying to get their fortunes in order and trying to get their civil government and their economics and all that, the Temple laid out there in the rain in the snow and all of that.

28:25, And life was headed south. And that's where Haggai comes in. Verse three, verse two, Thus says the Lord of hosts, this people says, “The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be built.” The Lord says, “I hear that. I've heard this people saying that the time has not come. Frankly, I'm not the least bit impressed with that rationalization, ‘The time has not come.’” “It seems to me,” the Lord says, that you have time for other things. For example, verse four, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses?” Do you know how the Hebrew reads?-- “Is a time for you to dwell in your houses? paneled ones?”



29:27, Now people, I don't speak profanely. I'm trying to speak graphically. So I'm speaking almost literally. If I would translate that, what He would say to some of us, now we're talking about priorities, not the things in themselves. "I don't have time to do that. Those things are nice. But I've got to get my investment portfolio in order. I mean, I've got 6 kids, understand, I mean, we've got a business, you have to take care of business, you understand that. The trouble with you creatures is you've never been. You have to take care of these things. And, well, you have to have Volvos, BMW's, and Mercedes, and you have to dress for success. You understand that? And you have to have a house. And I've got to have four, five bedroom and a three car garage. And that stuff costs money. Do you understand what I'm trying to say, Jim? I mean, I want to serve the Lord. But I have to do it on my terms so that my convenience, because life is life. I'm a victim of the tyranny of the urgent and these things have to be done."

31:07, Now do you hear the Lord's answer? The problem now, let's identify it clearly, or the problem is a timeless problem not just endemic to their day, not just a native or originating in their day but existing yesterday, but this.

They were putting their personal priority, the lust for their creature comforts, for their own financial security well ahead of the demands of the worship service.

That's flat-out what they were doing. And that problem is still with us. And when that happens, life begins to become loose at the bolts, and life starts heading south. And I'll tell you the reason I'll tell you the reasons we don't wake up to it.

The reason. I'll use the example of steroids. The reason it doesn't come through to us as clearly as it should is because we have this myth in our mind; it's a myth of cause and effect where there is a cause there will be an *immediate* effect. If this is causing it, if the Lord's against it, then boom, you know, let me know right now, **but God's judgments are subtle.**

Have you ever heard that little line? It's not an exact quote: "The mills of God's justice grind slowly but in the end they grind surely and exceeding small. In others words, in the words of R.G. Lee, "Payday Someday." Or in the words of the Old Testament, "Be sure your sins will find you out" (Numbers 32:23) eventually.

Now, my friends, 32:55, sometimes because our deviation from the divine agenda doesn't catch up with us today, we think there's no correlation. But like steroids, it catches up with us eventually. Subtle. A guy goes out and he says, "Oh, I don't think there's anything wrong with those steroids." He weighs 190 pounds, wants to be an NFL linebacker. A year later, he's pumped up to 245 pounds and coach is

impressed. He played great, he's strong, he's knocking everybody over, he's still fast. My, he wins a handsome contract; he's gonna make \$2 million a year for X number of years, the highest-paid rookie ever, all this kind of thing.

“See there, see there, see there,” he says, “see there.” At 45, he's dead in the water healthwise; up a creek without a paddle in high weeds. Heart's falling apart, liver may be falling apart. See there. **“Consider your ways (1:5b).”**

Well, that's what happened in Haggai's time. Look here at the consequences. Verse five: “Now therefore, Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways. Here's what you've done. You've sold a lot but you've harvested very little. You eat, but you know what, you're not satisfied. You drink but there is not enough to get drunk on. You put on clothing and no one is warm enough. And he who earns, earns wages to be put in a purse with holes in it. Oh my goodness, there's all this output, but so little input. Life's not measuring up. It's unsatisfying. Sometimes we get it all, but it doesn't satisfy.’”

And sometimes the way it works out in God's subtle judgments is that no matter what we do, it just all goes south. It just won't happen. We try and we try, and we try. And our marriage blows up. And our kids blow up. I don't mean it all happens to everybody. Our jobs blow up. We get dollar signs in their eyes on this one, and it goes south. And we wonder what on earth is wrong?

@36:49, Now, friends, I've got to qualify, it's very important. **I don't want you to hear me say that when we get our agenda right, we get our priorities rightly placed, that's the end of the problem. I don't want you to hear me saying that if you have any of those kinds of problems, it is because of misplaced priorities.** In fact, sometimes that is emphatically not the case. Because what often happens when people start to do right, when they start the designs, when they do get their agenda in order, some things can go very, very wrong, because there is an Enemy out there. We call it, I hesitate to use this terminology because of some who use it and what they mean by it, but the Bible does talk about spiritual warfare.

And the other night, I was at the hospital with a man who is very, very rich. God has blessed him immensely. He is as devoted to Jesus Christ as anybody I have come across. One time, one time he was bringing in a well, an oil well, and that's when prices were way up. And this was about a million-dollar-a-day Gusher. And he's known to make \$1 today. And this is a man that you've read about in Newsweek, Wall Street Journal, and things like that. He owns a farm and ranch out in Eastern Oregon, and his son was just almost killed the other day. In fact, at this

very hour they're taking all his leg off. And I went in there and he said, "Jim, he says, "What a friend we have in Jesus. This morning, I was wondering where is my friend? Because I cannot tell you some of the troubles he's had. We all know, you can have trouble. But I'll tell you, God will bring him through those troubles. And those troubles will have a pot of gold at the end of that. There's going to be a silver lining to all of that. God is working through that. And there's going to be tremendous blessings. God does that to His people.

But there are other things that will come together. There are other things that will not come together, they will not work out. Because we're working on a collision course with God, we're treating God as if he's not there. And we claim Christ as our Savior, but we're ignoring him as the Lord of our priorities. And it doesn't work, it can't work. And that's what he told me. He says, "things are just falling short." And they always will. And my dear people I say to you, I say to everyone, "It's not going to work any other way. Life only comes together when we do it God's way.

38:49 And I'm asking you to do what the prophet Haggai said, "consider your ways. Evaluate, and if necessary, it's not necessary in every case, but if necessary, evaluate, those priorities.

39:09, A lady in this church this week, she gave me permission to tell this. She said that years ago, they were raising five children. They were tithing. And one day they sat down, things were pretty tight, and her husband was sitting right there with her, and he said, "This is getting a little scary." I think maybe doing their income tax thing, "so we got to cut back on this year until we get some of these kids out of the nest."

39:48 She said we did. I said what happened? She rolled her eyes like that. She said it all fell apart. She said then I went back, I don't know what the timeframe was, and I said, "Honey, we gotta go back to plan A." He said, Okay, I said, what happened? Again, she threw her hands up in the air. And he said, Oh, it was wonderful. What God did."

40:22

I can tell you story after story like that. God will honor those who will honor him. But when we treat him as if he is not. 1 Samuel 2:30. And we try to live life on our own agenda, and ignore him. To you know what he does? Here's a word for that. He **sabotages**. Literally, that's what he did to these people. He absolutely sabotages.

So what's the answer? The answer, the cure. It's simple. God is a gracious God. We're an erring people. We're a people who are weak, and we are falling, and he understands our fallenness. Our heavenly Father does not desire to beat up on us. He desires merely to correct and to bless us. And what he calls for us to do is to sit down and to consider our ways. And considering our ways, if necessary, evaluate, and to say to ourselves, "Heavenly Father, first things first, a lot of secondary things have begun to rule my life. I'm not going to let that happen anymore by the grace of God. I see this and this and this. I'm in business, but I'm going to put you first. 43:00

I remember Charles Stanley speaking in our chapel a while back, was talking about prayer, but it has a wider application. You know what he said? He said, some people, some ministers do not pray as they should because they're afraid they don't have time of all things. He said, I want to tell you something. My ministry has taught me that the greatest time saver in the world is prayer. Because when you pray, you become more efficient. My friends when we put God first we become more efficient. We don't get worse at our job we get better. We think better I find that on my job. See, I can let the same thing happened to me. What I think better, I work better. I've got more energy, I'm sharper. When I'm in touch with God. And what I get out of touch, I'm discombobulated and not the person I met. And I don't do anything. Let's get those priorities in order. There's a great danger in this life. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day and for this time. Thank you for this people. And we pray that You would help us to order our priorities according to our needs, and your your will in Jesus name. And for his sake we pray. Amen.

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