

Sermon Mark S. Aites
BAG FULL OF HOLES
(Based on Material by Johnny Ramsey)

TEXT: HAGGAI 1:5-6

INTRODUCTION: (History, Background, Setting)

1. Time frame: after divided kingdom.
 - 1) Kingdom divided in the days of Rheboam.
 - 2) Led to establishment: Israel and Judah.
 - 3) Israel (capital--Samaria) - north; Judah, (capital--Jerusalem) - south.
2. Both the north and the south rejected God and committed sin.
3. The north (Israel) was the first to be punished (722-721 B.C.) -- Assyria.
4. Approx. 116-117 yrs. later, in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar first invaded Judah; took captives, including Daniel.
5. 8 years later he returned in his 2nd invasion.
6. 11 years later he returned again and destroyed Jerusalem.
7. Approx. 50 yrs. after Jerusalem was destroyed, Babylon fell and the first wave of captives headed back to Jerusalem to rebuild under the leadership of Zerubbabel.
8. Ezra records, **3:8**, that in the 2nd year of their return that they began to lay the foundation of the temple.
9. However the Samaritans opposed the rebuilding and Artaxerxes decreed that the building should stop (**Ezra. 4**).
10. About 15 years later, year 520 B.C., Darius began to reign; the threat of Artaxerxes was no longer a concern to the people.
11. It was the task of Haggai the prophet to encourage the people to return to the task of rebuilding the temple.
12. Several things were preventing the work from continuing:
 - 1) The walls and the city were lying in ruin.
 - 2) The foundation that had been started was not finished.
 - 3) Worship was not as it was supposed to be.
 - 4) The wealthiest of the people had built for themselves very fancy homes within site of the unfinished temple foundation.
 - 5) The gardens, crops, fields, and livestock were all affected as God showed His displeasure by bringing a drought in punishment.
13. Of interest for our lesson this, is the comments made by the prophet in **Haggai 1:5-6**.
Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.
1:6 *Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.*
14. In this lesson our focus is on the prophet's reference to "a bag with holes."

DISCUSSION:

I. LIFE WITHOUT GOD THEN.

- A. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it... (Psa. 127:1).*
- B. For 16 years God's people had dwelt in the Jerusalem area, and all they had to show for it was an unfinished foundation for the temple.

1. Certainly they could have shown you their worldly accomplishments.
2. They would have bragged about their luxurious homes, perhaps even showed you the wood used to build their homes, which should have been used in the reconstruction of the temple.
3. Sadly, these people had become indifferent and apathetic toward spiritual matters; they were selfish.
4. Whatever good that had once characterized these people in service to God, was gone.
5. It was like their goodness slipped through the holes in the bag, or as the text likens it, it was as though once they had a lot of money from wages, but now it was lost.
6. Just like loosing it through the hole in the pocket.

II. LIFE WITHOUT GOD TODAY.

- A. There are parallels that can be drawn when we consider the spiritual state of God's people in Haggai's day.
- B. Parallel regarding personal work.
 1. For some, it has been years since they conducted a Bible study; years since they campaigned for Christ; years since they talked to their friends, neighbors, co-workers about Christ.
 2. For one reason or another they drifted from doing the Lord's work.
 3. They have become apathetic and indifferent, and through selfishness have turned to worldly pursuits and interests.
 4. Their service to Christ has turned from soul saving to occupying a pew, regarding their assembling with the saints as the only duty required of them.
 5. The Revelation writer records the indictment Christ made against the church at Ephesus:
 - 1) They had been good at keeping house; defending against false teachers.
 - 2) *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love (Rev.2:4).*
 - 3) They had become so preoccupied with keeping house that they lost their love for lost souls.
 - 4) Once, like the Savior, they were given to seeking and saving the lost (**Luke 19:10**).
 - 5) But now it was keeping house and defending what had been established.
 - 6) Don't misunderstand: it is important to defend the faith (Paul--set for the defence of the gospel, **Phil. 1:17**).
 - 7) But what happened to saving souls?
- C. Parallel: what if one has never done personal work?
 1. Then they need to askm are you committed to Christ or just committed to being a part of a church?
 2. Granted, part of the fault may fall to preachers and teachers for failing to teach that Christians bring others to Christ!
 - 1) Great commission: teach, baptize, teach again! (**Matt. 28:18-20**).
 - 2) Perhaps the leadership fails to lead others in the matter of saving souls (**Hos. 4:6**).

3. But much of the fault must lie with the individual for being a slothful or lazy servant.
- D. In the parable of the talents (**Matt. 25:14-30**), 3 servants were entrusted with talents.
 1. 1 - 5 talents, 1 2 talents, 1 - 1 talent.
 2. The servants that possessed the two talents and the 5 talents were industrious workers and as such they doubled what they had been given.
 3. The silver talent was probably in the range of \$1500 -1800 by our standards.
 4. Two servants were hard-working; but one instead hid his talent in the ground.
 5. When called to give an account; the servants with the 2 and 5 talents were well-spoken of; having received the pronouncement of a reward.
 6. But the man with one talent received a stern rebuke.
 7. When questioned he said that the Lord was a hard man and he buried the talent out of fear.
 8. In an effort to hide and excuse his laziness, he even went so far as to blame the Lord for his lack of effort.
 9. His service to his Lord was like a man with a money bag, full of holes; worthless and empty.
- D. Application: if a Christian is not using his talents in working for the Lord, then he is like the servant who buried his talent.
 1. One might say, but I don't have any talents.
 2. I would challenge you: the text in Matthew clearly indicates that each servant received at least one talent.
 3. Everyone has talent.
- E. Point: We must work for Christ or we are simply deceiving ourselves.
 1. Be like the young man who thought he had something in his pocket, but didn't.
 2. **Jas. 1:22** *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

III. LIFE TODAY - IN REGARD TO COMMITMENT AND DEVOTION.

- A. When people are being called out of the world by the gospel souls will be saved; but when they are called to simply be part of a church, they will not truly be converted to Christ.
 1. The Bible plainly teaches that it is the gospel which saves (**Rom. 1:16**).
 2. Paul--church at Thessalonica: *Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14).*
- B. When a person chooses to become a Christian then the heart must change.
 1. *And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness..." (Joel 2:13).*
 2. If the heart is not changed, then that person's commitment and devotion to Christ is like a bag full of holes, empty.
- C. We are a society that loves to be entertained.
 1. We have been spoiled by cable television and satellite dishes with a great abundance of channels, hoping before long to make available as many as 500 channels; movie theatres, etc.
 2. Some are so accustomed to seeking entertainment that they come to the worship of the church expecting to be entertained.
 - 1) The preacher proves to be a disappointment; his talk is live and unedited.

- 2) The congregation may not know the songs very well or some may be singing off key; so that too is disappointing.
- 3) Sometimes a person has been heard to say: "I didn't get much out of the worship service today."
3. What is the reason for being present?
 - 1) Are you here expecting to receive something?
 - 2) Are you here to be entertained? If so, you will be disappointed.
4. We assemble to worship the Almighty God. We are here not to receive, but to give!
5. Song: "Give of your best to the Master."
- D. Christianity involves giving and service to others.
 1. Jesus taught this to His disciples on the occasion that He washed their feet (**John 13:1ff**).
 2. They had already finished eating supper, and still no one had washed their feet.
 3. Usually the custom was to assign a servant to the task of washing one's feet when the people would enter the door.
 4. No one was willing to volunteer, so Jesus, after supper, arose and performed the task, to teach the disciples that greatness comes through service.
 5. *And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:27-28).*
 6. *...he that is greatest among you shall be your servant (Matt. 23:11).*
- E. Our interest in Christianity is working and serving others.
 1. *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).*
 2. Judgment scene--blessed ones: *For I was hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me (Matt. 25:35-36).*
- F. If we are not willing to do service in the Lord's name, and we lack the devotion and commitment that motivates us to do that service; then our religion has been put in a bag full of holes.

CONCLUSION:

1. How devoted and committed are you to Christ?
2. Are you the Christian you profess to be, or are you deceiving yourself?