

Sat., Dec. 10, 2011

The Rev. Karen Baughman '06, Library Technical Processor

Scripture

Haggai 2:1-9

¹In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: ²Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, ³Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? ⁴Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, ⁵according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. ⁶For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; ⁷and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. ⁹The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts.

Devotional

The people of Israel had returned from exile just a few years before. They came back to a place that was home and yet not home. They had to live alongside with the unfamiliar 'remnant' in the land. They had to rebuild homes and businesses. They suffered through drought. Most of all, they had to rebuild the Temple and reconcile the faith they kept in exile with the faith they now needed to sustain them in the future. Their lives were unsettled and uncertain, full of unease and anxiety.

In the midst of their struggle, the Lord encourages the people to be strong, to be courageous, to keep on, to move forward, to not let the past become the definition of the future. "It will be alright," says the Lord, "for I am with you."

Today, we, too, live in uncertainty and unease. Some of us wonder whether we can make it through tough economic times, or whether we will have a job tomorrow or next year. We fear the terrorist from another shore and the thief down the street. Even our familiar ways of faith are unsettled. Yet in this season, God reminds us in a most amazing way, with the birth of a child, that God is still with us and will bring us Shalom, wholeness, peace, and rest.

Prayer

Oh, God, thank you for reminding us that you are with us in all our struggles and uncertainties. We take courage from your presence in the world and with us. Help us to live in the hope of your presence always. Amen.