

Thursday, November 20

Read Haggai 2:1-9. Considering the context of this scripture, this passage from Haggai is really very upbeat. In verse four tells the leadership and people of Israel to take courage and promise that God is with them. In verse five, Haggai shares a message from God that God is with them! Haggai is rallying the people to rebuild their nation, its capital city of Jerusalem and its Temple. How the people respond is really choice between fear or faith, uncertainty and hopeful logic.

Fear is a good thing in that it quickly moves us to safety, but can fear really be a way of life, a perspective from which to live our lives? How about you? From which perspective do you live your life? Fear or faith? Where do you find courage to navigate your life on a daily basis? Meditate on these questions and write your reflections here.

Friday, November 21

Think for a moment of when you were a child and afraid of something. What or who helped you emerge from your fear? Do you still hold on to that fear? Have you “grown out” of that childhood fear? Now think about a time when you were afraid as an adult. How do you deal with your fear today?

Was it a presence of another that help you overcome your fear? Is there someone in your life today that helps you not be fearful? Does it help you to envision that God is with us when we are afraid? Meditate on these questions, pray for God’s wisdom and peace and write your thoughts here.

Message Notes November 16, 2025

*Fresh Courage**

- I. Today’s Scripture from the book of the Hebrew prophet Haggai is a call to _____.
 - A. In 587 BC, the Babylonians invaded Judah, sacked the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the _____.
 - B. The Persian emperor _____ the _____ and his armies had captured and occupied Babylon.
 - C. Cyrus saw no need to continue to hold the Jewish _____ as hostages, so he _____ them.
 - D. The task before the returning exiles was immense. It was nothing less than rebuilding the nation.
 1. The task before the returning exiles was immense. It was nothing less than rebuilding the _____.
 2. At the heart of that task was a big, audacious symbolic action: rebuilding the _____.
- II. I remember writing an article stating that 2020 was going to be a _____ year and with eyes wide open to wonderful _____.
 - A. But then we were exiled to our _____ by _____-_____.
 - B. We’ve been _____ in returning and rebuilding our ministry.
 - C. The money has been _____ and our resources have been _____.
- III. The Jews who returned and the Jews who stayed in Judah during that exile worked together to rebuild their nation, capital city and Temple. And it took _____.
 - A. In verse 5 of our scripture today, Haggai writes: “My spirit _____ among you; do not _____.”
 - B. Fear is an _____, not a _____ decision.

*Haggai 2:1-9

C. What calms the minds of terrified children awaking from nightmares is the _____ of one they love and trust, not a _____ thought process.

IV. Living with our fears is no easy task because the instinct to fear is a very _____ one that is _____-_____ into our brains.

A. Fear lodges in a little structure called the amygdala, _____ within our brains.

1. Fear, in other words, has been with us for a _____.
2. Some psychiatrists have taken to calling this portion of the brain “the _____ brain.”

B. Bottom line? It’s easy for the _____ center of the brain to tell the _____ center what it should do.

1. It’s difficult to get the reasoning center to reply to the source of our fears, saying, “Take it _____.”
2. Our brains are wired to make it _____ to talk ourselves down from fear.

C. We most definitely have _____ to face and in the midst of _____ those _____ seem to loom larger than they are.

1. There is _____ in our midst friends and I know that there are _____.
2. Fresh courage comes from _____.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, November 17

What do you fear? Meditate on that simple question for a few moments. What immediately popped into your mind when you read that question? As you thought more about that question, what other ideas entered your mind? Take a moment and write

you ideas here. Pray that God give you the clarity to think through this simple but deep question.

Tuesday, November 18

Read Haggai 2:1-9. Pastor Jack explained that the context of this scripture is that the Jews of the Babylonian Exile were returning to Judah and there met other Jews who were left behind. To be faithful to their God and nation, they wanted to rebuild their beloved country with the Temple being the focus of that rebuilding project. What fears do you think the people of Israel had to face? Uncertainty? Conflict and disagreement within the nation? Fear of further attacks? What other fears do you believe they faced? Now consider the immense work that was ahead of them in rebuilding their lives together. What emotions do you think that tremendous responsibility elicited? Contemplate these questions and write your reflections here.

Wednesday, November 19

The message compared the rebuilding of Judah and Israel nearly six hundred years before Jesus’ time to our rebuilding our church and ministry in a post-Covid-19 world. Add to that the national trend of churches decreasing over the last two and a half decades and the task seems insurmountable! What do you believe needs to be done in order to rebuild and restore Central United Methodist Church? What should be our priorities? What gifts, graces and insights could you offer our Central Church family that we may go forward in a promising New Year? How can we finish strong in 2025? What are your thoughts? What are others saying within our church? Meditate on these questions and write your response here.