

Haggai 1:15b-2:9

Psalm 145: 1-5, 17-21

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-40

These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word

We are in the middle of a photographic exhibition called “A Thousand Worlds” and that is a really helpful place for us as we consider today’s readings.

When we read, or hear, the readings week-by-week, our understanding, in fact even what we hear, will be shaped by our worldview.

If each of us went to the places where each of these photos was taken, we would each come back with a quite different exhibition.

Collectively, and in sharing our different perspectives we have an opportunity to see and understand more than we are ever capable of on our own; providing of course we are open, discerning and honouring of difference.

The same is true for our reading of the Scriptures; and yet the Church for most of its history is not at all open to new insights, rather it is defensively protective of its orthodoxy. The church does not ask us to be discerning, rather we are required to follow the creedal precepts which are designed to confine our thinking to a one lens, one camera view of the world and of God. And rather than being honouring of difference, again the Church has been on a crusade to actively dishonour difference.

Only when we own the confines and limitations within which we come to hear the Word of God can we begin to explore beyond those confines. And such exploration takes us into the ‘beyond’ with the lens of the prophets and the mystics who sought to give voice to the thousands of worlds that contribute to the singularity of one God and the oneness of creation.

We are not only confined by ‘orthodoxy’, but we are further confined by our experiential and cultural socialisation when it comes to creating the exhibition of our worldview.

For example, ‘Heaven above’ and ‘hell below’ are concepts and understandings that reflect an experience and appreciation of the world being flat; and not just a flat disc in a bigger universe, but rather a flat world that was seen as the whole universe contained under the dome of the sky and resting on a variety of foundations that kept it above the devil’s abode in hell/hades below.

We continue to echo, and give shape to our understanding of God today based on this ancient view from a simple and very short focussed lens.

Now, *“says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you”*

“Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land”

This shaking up, is the prophetic opening up of our eyes to a new worldview, an opportunity to see through a new lens that is quite different and that will therefore change our seeing and our understanding of the world.

The text from Haggai is as real and relevant today as it was when written.

Within the existing 'common' worldview, there is for many much despair and little hope when looking toward the future.

"Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?"

However, through the prophet's lens, looking beyond the short-sightedness of the every-day, there is great hope and much opportunity; *"I will fill this house with splendour, says the LORD of hosts.... The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former."*

And with our own prophetic lens we too can discern signs of the old order being shaken into a new glory:

Climate change is shaking the old order of greed and the consumption of whatever we want.

Women priests are shaking the old order of patriarchal church dominance.

Same sex marriage is shaking the old order that understood relationships as based on pro-creation rather than love.

The internet is shaking the old order power bases whereby information ruled over ignorance.

Philanthropy is shaking the old order that desired a place on the Forbes rich list.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts.... I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts."

Haggai's photo exhibition is one that will shake us from the slumber of our blinkered worldview into a new world that *"shall be greater than the former."*

Paul, in the second reading today, is addressing those who are *"shaken in mind or alarmed"*.

So we have a similar entry point, however this is quite different to the world that Haggai is addressing.

Haggai speaks to those who need courage to go forward; Paul is addressing those who 'think this is it', that *"the day of the Lord is already here."*

Both readings provide an affirmation, and both provide a shaking up into a new way of seeing; and they both support and encourage us, whatever our worldview, with a starting point: *"My spirit abides among you; do not fear."*

One of the most common lenses in the modern world is 'fear', so many have shaped their lives and so contributed to a common worldview with fear as the primary lens..

To change the world, we need only contemplate: *“My spirit abides among you; do not fear.”*

It is an affirmation and a call to active participation in bringing about “A New Creation”, a new world view and so too a new experience of life.

Haggai’s words: *“take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you”*.

Paul’s words: *“may our Lord Jesus Christ himself..... comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.”*

“so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As we seek to put together this new exhibition of life we also encounter in the gospel another one of those “think again” stories. The gospel also shakes us into a new worldview and asks us to throw away 2000 years’ worth of resurrection teaching.

If you think that resurrection is a promise, or even a possibility after you die; think again!

Life after death is another one of those old fashioned sepia coloured photos that belongs in an exhibition from a past age.

In today’s gospel we open a new lens on God: *“he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”*

This lens has a focal point of eternity and through it we can see that

God IS

Life IS

Resurrection IS

The lens of eternity is not bounded by time, and to fully appreciate the wonders that it captures we should all look more closely at developments in the field of theoretical physics.

Scientists are appreciating theoretical truths; we are and we always will be.

Before time we were one; and in the ‘big bang’, the coming of light, our oneness was diversified into the beauty of all that is and all that is to come.

Our oneness however is and always will be; and that is revealed again for us in Christ, humanity and Divinity are one, creator and creature are one..

With the help of the scientific cameras we are slowly discovering a new creation, and *The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former.”*

We all can seek to build an exhibition of splendour, and we start with knowing:

“My spirit abides among you; do not fear.”

