

<sup>2</sup> *This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.’”*

<sup>3</sup> *Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”*

<sup>5</sup> *Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>6</sup> You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”*

<sup>7</sup> *This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>8</sup> Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. <sup>9</sup> “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. <sup>11</sup> I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.”*

<sup>12</sup> *Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.*

<sup>13</sup> *Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: “I am with you,” declares the LORD.*

***My friends, you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. God made you His, so that we might declare His praises to the ends of the earth,***

If you are younger than 50, chances are you’ve never seen one of these; and if you are over 50, chances are you’ve never used one of these. What is this wooden ball? It’s a mini darning ball, called a “darning egg.” Years ago Moms would put this into the sock to stitch/darn a hole in the heel or toe. It was a time-consuming task. As a child I wore mended socks. And perhaps some of you did as well.

Today no one thinks of using a darning ball or wearing mended socks. We simply throw them away and buy new ones. At best, we may use them for dusting around the house or as padding vs. a hot steering wheel in the summer months. But sooner than later worthless socks end up in the garbage – never to be seen or used again. Thankfully, God isn’t like us; and God doesn’t think and act like us – nor does He wear socks like us. Here’s why I say this.

Since birth – and even before that, we’re full of holes. By our rights, by all rights, God ought to throw us away. Due to our anger and arguing; our bullying and bickering; our greed, our gossip; our love-affairs with things; our lust, our laziness; our misused talents and misspent time; our slander; our selfishness, our worries and our woe-is-me attitudes our hearts, heads and hands are full of holes. We have so many holes – and such big holes- that human hands could never mend them. That’s why by all rights God ought to throw each of us away to a place where our woeful cries would forever be: “ouch, ouch, ouch.”

But wait a second. What is impossible for man, was made possible by God – the heart, head and hand mender. When *the time was just right, God sent His son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons.* In other words, we, who are so full of holes do not have to cry “ouch” for all eternity. *Instead, by faith in Jesus, our mender and mediator, we are privileged to say, sing and shout: “dear Daddy” now and for all eternity.* Galatians 4: 4 Wow! That’s grace! This is the undeserved love God shows us in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. We are His people! His blood-bo’t people! Yes, his mended people!

With this gospel truth tatted to our hearts and rattling around in our heads, we’re now able to boldly and confidently pray: **Lord, mend also the purses of your people.** Yes, mend them

1) By Your grace; mend them 2) To Your govern; and mend them 3) For Your glory.

Many a Christian would be hard pressed to find the book of Haggai in their Bibles; many a Christian has never read, much less studied, this book, and many a Christian pastor has never preached on this book. So what does this book, written around 520 BC, have to say to me/us in 2015 AD? Good question! Let the truth be told: it has everything to say about our walk with Jesus. In fact, it’s as if God wrote this book yesterday so that we can put our Christian faith and life into practice today. This tiny book –only 2 chapters long- is about 4 GP’s: #1 God’s prophet – by the name of Haggai; #2 God’s pastor – by the name of Pastor Rieke; 3) God’s people – by the name of you; and 4) God’s promise – namely, “I am with you.” Can you relate to this? You betcha! Let’s take a closer look.

The book begins on a low note. God noticed that His people had gotten side-tracked. After 70 years of being held hostage in Babylon, they were returning to their homeland in Jerusalem. Oh how happy they were to be home! They were free from a ruthless government; free to find a job and earn an income, free to buy, build or rent a house; free to start a family, free to plant a garden and free to come and go as they wished. All were blessings from the Lord! However, in returning to their homeland, the Lord gave them a task: *Rebuild my house!* The temple had been destroyed and lay in ruins. With their new-found freedom, they were to set aside a part of their time, talents and treasures to restore God’s temple. However, somethings, someones intercepted their task. From the first 4 verses, see if you can figure out what it was: <sup>v.2</sup> *This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.’”*<sup>3</sup> *Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”*<sup>4</sup> *Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.”*<sup>6</sup> *You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”* What was the problem? What was hampering the Lord’s work in 520 BC? Better yet, what’s our problem? What’s hampering the Lord’s work in 2015? The age-old answer remains: me, myself and I. They had developed an “I” problem. Me first, my time first, my talents first, my treasures first was the cause of their busyness. No time, no talents, no treasures for the Lord and His work. That’s why God’s prophet called them to repentance. They needed, and so do we need, to penitently pray: **Lord, mend the purses of your people.** Mend them 1) By Your grace. Let’s make sure we understand this.

Does God need our money to carry on His work? Does God need Pastor Rieke to preach and teach you His Word? Does God need the people of Grace, Benson/Vail to do evangelism? Does God need the WELS to get His word out to the world? We’d like to think so, but it’s wrong to think so. The God who created this universe in 6/24 hr days; the God who told the sun

to get up this morning and will tuck it into bed tonight; and then call out the billions of stars one by one needs nothing and no one. Our money is His to begin with; Rover could preach this sermon if God chose him to and God could use His angels to do evangelism. While God doesn't need any one or anything, He lets His people in on the joy of doing His gospel work. Just like His OT people, He has freed us from slavery and freed us for service in His kingdom. We'll never be first-fruit givers, we'll never say, "Lord, here I am use me," nor will we ever experience the joy/privilege of being His people, because 'we have to.' Rather, *the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared and it teaches us to say yes, yes, yes to our Savior's gospel work.* Titus 2:11. That's why we pray: **Lord, mend the purses of your people!** Mend them 1) By Your grace.

With our purses mended by Jesus' precious blood, we can proceed. Twice Haggai writes: v. 4 & v. 7: *This is what the Lord almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."* A more literal translation would be: 'the Lord Almighty says, put your heart over your ways.' In other words, let the joy of your forgiveness, the joy of being His mended people, move you to spend and to share what's in our mended purses in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. That's why we also pray: **Lord, mend the purses of your people!** Mend them 2) To Your govern. For this one I need your help.

Do children nowadays get an allowance, or is this a thing of the past? Do adults nowadays get a paycheck, or is this a thing of the past? Do seniors nowadays get a Social Security check or a pension check, or is this a thing of the past? Would you agree that in most cases this is a now thing – not a thing of the past. So what's the easiest thing to do with this now thing? The easy thing is to blow it - not manage it. As a child, I received 25 cents/week for my allowance. I promptly went down to the corner store and purchased 5 packs of baseball cards with a piece of bubble gum in each. The baseball cards I traded, the gum I chewed. Did I manage my allowance? No! I wasted it in selfishness. I could still do the same with this now thing called my paycheck – and so can you. BUT wait, our purses have been mended. Now we have every reason to manage our purses in Savior-ness – not in selfishness. Or as *the Lord Almighty says: give careful thought to your ways.*

Putting one's heart over one's ways means we take His lead at what's important in life – and it's not baseball cards and chewing gum. His gospel work in telling others the praise-worthy deeds of our God is numero uno; our family and making sure they have what they need – not want- is numero uno; helping the less fortunate, the hurting and the hungry are numero unos. Giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and taking care of our bodies are numero unos. All are important! Is it easy to blow what's in our mended purses? Oh yes! Is it easy to manage what's in our mended purses? Oh no! But we have the Lord to guide us. That's why we pray: **Lord, mend the purses of your people.** Mend them 2) To Your govern.

And this brings us to the why? Why work and struggle to manage what the Lord has given us? Why not blow it; why not just eat, drink, party and play as many do. Why manage our purses? Because it's not about me; it's about Him. It's not about how I look and what I do; it's about how He looks and what He does; it's not about us getting credit and a tax write-off for our gifts, it's about *Him not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth.* That's why God's people – past, present & tomorrow- respond in the very same way: *And the people feared (trusted) the LORD.<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD. Lord, mend the purses of your people!* Mend them 3) For Your glory.

Very quickly let's go on a journey with some close friends. Right now hiding/camping in our mended purses/wallets are Mr. President George Washington and his compatriots. When we bring them out of hiding; place them in the offering basket, earmark them "for missions," we fly with them to 23 foreign lands so others can hear the good news of the Savior; we fly with them to over 160 neighborhoods throughout our land so that others can hear the good news of the Savior. Then we fly with them to 4 unique places in the US where young men and women are being trained for ministry – so that the next generation, those yet to be born, will hear the good news about the Savior. Why can we, why do God's people today, freely part with our George Washingtons and his compatriots? It's always been and will always be so others all around the world will learn of Him *and praise God for the obedience that accompanies our confession of the gospel*. II Cor. 9:13. **Lord, mend the purses of your people!** Mend them; 3) for the glory of your name.

And that brings us full circle – not to this – a wooden ball; but to this – a wooden cross. *You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that we through His poverty might become rich.* II Corinthians 8:9 We are rich! We are His mended people! We are His ambassadors to our fallen world. With our time, talents and treasures, let's go and give them heaven! **Lord, mend our purses to that end.** Amen!