

Sermon Series: Shekels

December 1, 2013

## **Title: Mother Lode**

Text: Haggai 2:1-9

Summary: The prophet Haggai assures God's people that even though the work of building God's House seems too daunting, God promises to be with them all the way, and to be their Source. Learn how we can apply this in our time.

## **Mother Lode**

### **California, 1850:**

On January 24, 1848 the foreman at John Sutter's lumber mill noticed bits of shiny metal in the ramp that carried water away from the water wheel that ran the mill. Upon further inspection the shiny metal turned out to be little nuggets of pure gold. And so the great California Gold Rush was born.

San Francisco, a tiny village of 200 before the discovery of gold, grew to a city of 25,000 by 1850. In all, 300,000 people would make the trip to far-off California to seek their fortunes. California, still nominally a part of Mexico in 1848, would become a state in 1850.

### **Finding the gold:**

At first, prospectors simply picked gold nuggets off the ground. Then they turned to panning for gold in the streams and rivers, putting gold-rich gravel into a pan, letting the rushing water wash out the lighter gravel and sand, and leaving the gold bits behind. Then they turned to the gravel banks of the rivers, using hydraulic hoses to wash out the gravel and the gold. Entire rivers were dammed up and diverted so that they could dig up the river bottoms. In all, some 370 tons of gold were collected in this way.

But the best was yet to come.

### **Mother lode:**

Eventually the prospectors began working their way upstream to find out where all the gold had come from. Instead of sifting through mountains of gravel and dirt, they began digging into the "hard rock" to find the source. And find it they did: rich veins of gold that ran for miles and miles under the mountains. They called it the "veta madre," or "mother lode." The total amount of gold found in the Mother Lode: 3700 tons.

God is calling us to "build His House," and bring into reality His Kingdom in our lives and community. To do so requires the commitment of time, effort and financial resources. So where are these resources supposed to come from? From sifting through the busy

riverbanks of our lives, hoping to find a few flakes of gold? Or does He offer to open up for us the Mother Lode?

## **Small Beginnings**

### **Groundbreaking:**

I have a poster in my office that defines the 6 phases of a project:

- #1: Enthusiasm
- #2: Disillusionment
- #3: Panic
- #4: Search for the Guilty
- #5: Punishment of the Innocent
- #6: Praise and Honors for the Non Participants

Perhaps you've been there: you've gotten excited about a new idea or a new plan. You start off with a bang, but in a few days or weeks the excitement is gone. You look at what you've accomplished (a very little) and at what remains to be done (a whole lot). It all seems overwhelming and impossible.

### **Small Beginnings:**

The people who set out to rebuild God's House in Jerusalem after returning from decades in exile must have been feeling the same way: overwhelmed and discouraged.

That is why God sent the prophet Haggai to speak to them once again:

### **Haggai 1:15b - 2:3 NIV**

**In the second year of King Darius, on the twenty- first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?'"**

He spoke to them a little more than 3 weeks after they started the reconstruction project. Time enough to look at their meager efforts, their meager resources and realize that they could never build a Temple that would be anywhere as beautiful or impressive as the one that the Babylonians had looted and burned years before.

But God deliberately draws their attention to their *small beginning*. Why? Because just as the gold dust in the riverbed -- though tiny in and of itself -- points the way upstream

to the mother lode, so, too, when we join with God in building His House, our small beginnings and meager resources point us upstream to His infinite resources.

### **planting the seed:**

Did you ever hold a tiny seed in your hand -- say, a tomato seed or pumpkin seed -- and think about what a large plant can grow up if given the chance. Somehow, locked up inside that tiny seed is an immense and irresistible vitality: Life waiting to be unleashed. No need to lament the tininess of the seed. Just give it a chance to grow!

God says much the same thing to the Jerusalemites as they looked at their feeble efforts:

### **Haggai 2:4-5 NIV**

**"But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'"**

Be strong! Hang in there, from the greatest to the least. Why? because God is you, just like He promised long ago. He isn't going anywhere. Instead, His Spirit is breathing life into you every minute, every hour, every day. So don't be afraid! Just give the seed that God is planting in you and through you a chance to grow.

God is already doing things in your life that may look very small and insignificant. When you compare yourself to those around you you may feel like you'll never amount to anything. But God says, "Be strong and work. For I am with you and my Spirit remains -- dwells -- among you!"

The greatest enemy to success? Fear. Not trying in the first place. Giving up before the blessing comes!

### **Shaking Things Up!**

#### **Glory: before and after:**

God tells the people to look at what seems to be the lost glory of the Temple. Why? To discourage them and cause them to lower their expectations? Listen to what He says to them:

### **Haggai 2:6-7 NIV**

**"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, ' says the Lord Almighty."**

God is saying, "I'm not done! You haven't seen anything yet. You think that what happened in the past can never be equalled? My plans go way beyond anything that you ever saw or imagined in the past. I will shake things up all over the world and bring the wealth of the nations into my house. I will fill it with glory beyond the glory that some of you saw and remember."

Notice how God is talking about resources, riches, the things "desired by all nations"? And do you see how God plans to provide for the building and filling of His House? He will shake the world from top to bottom, and the nations from one end of the earth to the other. He will provide.

Our job: to dare to put our trust in Him instead of becoming overwhelmed by our needs and limitations!

### **The Mother Lode:**

And then come the two verses that bring us to the Mother Lode:

### **Haggai 2:8-9 NIV**

**"The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace, ' declares the Lord Almighty."**

We can dig around in the riverbed for a few flecks of gold, or we can go upstream to the mountain and dig into the Mother Lode. The God for Whom we build a house is no pauper, sponging off gullible humans. The whole world belongs to Him, with every ounce of silver and gold. He Himself is the Mother Lode.

What He has in store will put the former house and its glory to shame. Just follow the river upstream to the Mother Lode.

### **A place of Peace:**

God's final promise: "And in this place I will grant peace." (Haggai 2:9 NIV)

In the Old Testament "peace" meant far more than the absence of war. It meant wholeness, welfare, harmony, fulfillment and completeness. It is what happens when

God is present, living with us. Remember what Jesus said to his terrified disciples at the Last Supper?

**John 14:27 NIV**

**"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

The great cure for neediness and want isn't really more stuff. The true cure for neediness is God's peace. When He grants us His peace we become complete -- from the inside out.

And that is the reason that God commands every generation to build His House. It is so that He can create that place of peace for us in our world -- a place where we, and others, can become what we were meant to be, and a place where God can be known for Who He is.

Small beginnings are meant to point us upstream to the Mother Lode of God's goodness and provision. Our first assignment: to build His House in our lives and our community. And when we do, then He comes with His peace and fills us and our world with His love and power.

The choice is ours: scrabble around for a few flecks of this world's goodies, or leave the riverbank and dive into the mountain of God's Presence -- the Mother Lode. Put ourselves first or build His House? One simple choice makes all the difference.

Next week I will ask you to take a few moments and write down on an anonymous pledge card the amount of money that you will be trusting God to give through you on a regular basis. The goal that God gives us in His Word is 10% of our earnings, the "tithe." It is thanks to the faithful giving of many people that we are even here today as a church. So please take time this week to pray and to discuss your regular giving to the church with your spouse or family. Once we have compiled the pledges we will be able to better formulate a working plan for 2014.

And thank you for every way that you trust Him to build His House!