

Sunday, November 6, 2016

Haggai 1:15-2:9

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

Lost in the Details

The war in Afghanistan claimed the lives of 158 Canadian soldiers from 2001-2014. In the Korean war 516 died and there were 1558 casualties. In World War 1 out of the 619,000 soldiers who served 61,000 died with 172,000 wounded. In World War 2 there were 45,400 Canadians who died but this number is of Canadians. To understand these numbers we need to put this in perspective. In 1940 the world's population was @2.3 billion people about 3% of this population died due to World War II. And when we listen to the news we will often hear of bombs killing, dozens of soldiers and civilians but when we name the first dozen as children, women and men caught in the crossfire we often stop to think and have a different perspective.

There seems to be war on different fronts and in different places at any given time in our world. But do we pay attention to the details or merely read and hear the headlines and move to something else? Is it because we don't want to talk about what is occurring or that we don't wish to face up to the fact that people are still dying or becoming wounded because of war acts, terrorism and aggression. Just what will cause us to notice? Is there too much information or is it because this information does not pull upon our emotional strings? Or do we now live with hardened hearts regarding the world's battles? Or are we just missing the point or purpose of war at all?

Terrorism is on a different plane than war and throughout history wars and battles have modified what it means to turn on enemies and strike those who are against us. Yet are we willing to let this happen? Or are we lost in the details?

Our reading is from the prophecy Haggai received from God about the rebuilding of the temple or synagogue. In the story two names are used—Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah; Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest and it is to these people that Haggai is to speak upon receiving instruction from God. Haggai's message from God is not about the actual rebuilding of the temple, but what he is to tell them is to enable them to carry on. They are to be strong in faith. God was not watching how elaborate the temple was as it was built but merely watched the people and sees that they are forgetting the Spirit which remains with them. Because of this God tells Haggai that God will shake the nations and will fill this house with glory: silver and gold are his so that it will be even more glorious than before. But why is this so important to God and the people. Because Haggai also received this message about the temple—"it is in this place I will grant peace." How many of us heard the purpose of this temple? Were we listening to Haggai's sharing or did we just get lost in the details?

Today we have so much information at our fingertips that information overload is highly probable. Sometimes we get tired of seeing the public faces of politics, of entertainment

escapades and even of sports figures that we get lost in who everyone is and what they have or not accomplished. Media sources want us to know more about what happened when all we need is the headline or nothing at all. How many of us are really interested in the details of another person's life when we ourselves are not clear about our life journey and even our faith?

The Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus in his teachings. They did not believe in resurrection after death and so they came to Jesus and asked about one of Moses' laws which required a man's brother to take his brother's place with the widow if there were no children born to him. This was a law set up to ensure that the wife would not be left destitute or to live on the street. IN this scenario the Sadducees share with Jesus there are 7 brothers. The first one marries and dies without children; so she marries the second brother, he dies and so she marries the third and again no children. This carries on until such time that there are no children produced and the woman has married all the brothers. She too dies. And the question the Sadducees ask is whose wife is she in the resurrection?

Jesus simply responds by saying—you don't believe in the resurrection at all and this type of question is unreasonable for you. For if you believed as I have taught, you would know that in the resurrection there will be no marriage or being given in marriage; there is no death and those who die from their earthly existence leave behind their body and become like angels neither male nor female but their spirit lives on in eternity.

This was a great answer that Jesus gave but he also continued to teach as he remembered that Moses while speaking to the burning bush, called God the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – a living God for to Moses—all were alive in God.

In response, Jesus answers the question- not as they thought he would in the details of which husband would be the wife's alone in the resurrection, but by teaching them about the resurrection and the fact that God is living and is the God of all who believe. Jesus doesn't get caught up in the words of the questioning Sadducees but uses the moment to teach what they obviously did not know. The resurrection means that all are alive in God if one believes; that God's children become like angels and they live forever with God.

Jesus is not lost in the details of what they were trying to do – trip him up again; but he answers with the words they need to hear.

What is it that we need to hear today so that we are not lost in the details, statistics, gossiping information about people we will never know, or that we have any control over? What is it that God calls us to at this time?

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians give us some insight for us today. We are do as Haggai told the people as they rebuilt the temple: stand firm in your faith. We are to always to thank God for each other as the body of Christ and to open to receive God's Spirit which leads us to truth and understanding. You have been called to do this. You have received this call to

truth and understanding of God , His Son Jesus our Saviour and you are called to share in His glory. Paul tells the believers, to stand firm in their faith and hold on to the teachings of Christ, by word of mouth or by letter.

But what does it mean to stand firm in faith, to hold on to the teachings of Christ and then tell others? Often as church members we too get lost in the details of what we are called to do. Churches are seeking to do justice and love kindness and to walk humbly with God, yes, but sometimes these actions are lost in the details of Christ's message to love and to be reconciled with God and with each other. Sometimes churches put the action before the reconciliation the commitment to Christ and the foundation of Jesus is lost in the details of what is done.

God loved us so much that he sent His Son Jesus to us, so that we might believe in him and trust him so we will not die but have the gift of eternal life through him. In our death we will live forever if we confess our faith with others and believe in Jesus. As we remember those who died in battles, wars, conflicts throughout the last century we pray that these people are living eternally with God for they paid the ultimate sacrifice by dying for the sake of others.

We are called to live out our faith in Jesus, to be reconciled with God and with each other as a family of faith and as the church. We are called to forgive others and be forgiven. This is who we are as Christians today. There is no need to get lost in the details. All we do need is to open our hearts to receive God's Spirit, accept Christ and live as He teaches in love and peace.

This is the message of Remembrance Day : honour, thank and remember. Don't get lost in the details, but strive to live in peace. Amen.

PRAYER:

God of love and mercy, we praise you because we are your faithful people called to serve you. Our faith is alive and so are we. Enable us to remember that our faith is in Jesus Christ and it is through Christ that we may live eternally. Grant us your peace we pray. Amen.