

## 32<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY AFTER

### PENTECOST

November 10, 2019

#### Year C, Revised Common Lectionary

**Haggai 1:15b-2:9** In the second year of King Darius, in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts.

#### **Psalms 145:1-5, 17-21**

- ✘ I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.
- ✘ Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever.
- ✘ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.
- ✘ One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.
- ✘ On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- ✘ The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.
- ✘ The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.
- ✘ He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.
- ✘ The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.
- ✘ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17** As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?

But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose, he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

**Luke 20:27-38** Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally, the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her." Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive."

## Reflection

*“Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.” –Luke 20.38*

Artist, writer, and United Methodist Minister, Jan L. Richardson, reflects on today’s passage from Luke:

*Jesus knows the question the religious leaders have posed to him is a political one, wrapped in theological trappings. As ever, he responds to what lies beneath the trappings, exploding some assumptions along the way. Following on the heels of celebrating the Feast of All Saints last week, it’s an especially potent point that Jesus makes here: that in the eyes of God, there is no question of the dead versus the living, “for to [God],” Jesus says, “all of them are alive.”*

*On this side of the veil, we feel the distinction keenly, and Jesus does not dismiss or disparage this. Bent as he is on breaking down the walls of division, however, he cannot resist pressing against this one, the wall we perceive between the living and the dead. With his own death and resurrection almost upon him, Jesus pushes against that wall, shows it for what it is, challenges us to enter anew into our living and into our world that is so much larger, so much more mysterious than we dreamed.*

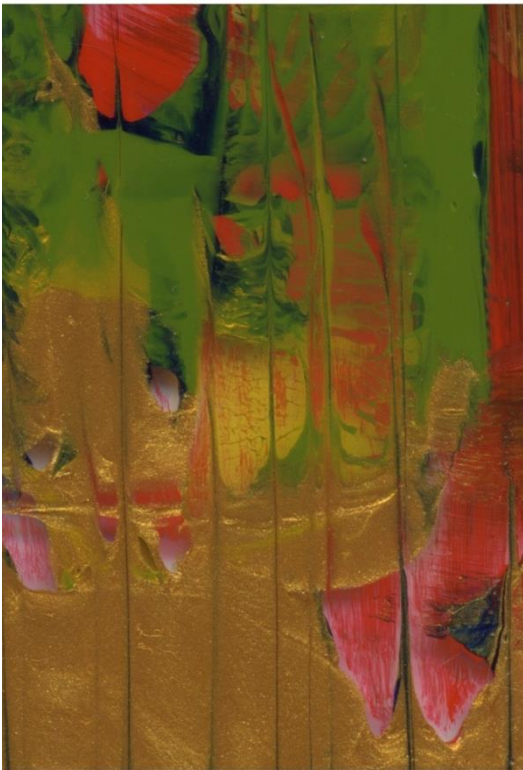


Image: *Into This Living* © Jan L. Richardson

Both of today's passages from Haggai and Luke speak to the community of faith.

The prophet **Haggai** speaks to God’s people in 520 BCE, in Jerusalem, about nine years after King Cyrus of Persia announced that the peoples who had earlier been exiled by the Babylonians could return to their homelands. They could settle in, rebuild, and worship as they wished. So, the exiled Judeans—mostly their descendants—returned to Jerusalem and set about the difficult work of rebuilding a city. As expected, there was some conflict. They remember how grand the first temple was, and the new one isn’t measuring up yet. There has been conflict over who has the right to participate in the building project, while adversaries have sought to stop construction altogether. The community is trying to find a new equilibrium under the watchful eye of the Persian Empire. The leadership is in need of a word of hope, some assurance from God that God accompanies them in all their efforts. Haggai brings such a word: *Take courage...for I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts* (Haggai 2:4). At the heart of this text is an account of a faith community wrestling with change in the midst of culture and political upheaval. Haggai reminds them that serving God in this perpetually tumultuous world has never been an easy task. Conflict and uncertainty have always been part of the communal life of faith, and God has always promised to be present in it with us.

In **Luke 20**, Jesus spars with religious leaders at the same temple that, five hundred years earlier, Haggai helped to rebuild. The chief priests and scribes are again trying to navigate life faithfully in Judah—now Judea—under imperial domination. Persian rule has shifted to Greek rule and then to Roman rule; but the stressors are largely the same. The religious leadership in Jerusalem has found a new, delicate equilibrium, and maybe even a measure of power, but then, here comes Jesus. The Sadducees, turn to Scripture and theology as a litmus test to see how Jesus fits—or doesn’t fit—into their carefully negotiated webs of authority. They pose Jesus a question, but it’s a question designed to set up Jesus to speak to a doctrine that they explicitly reject—resurrection. They don’t want to learn from Jesus, they want to show him to be a fraud and give themselves a platform to speak to their own issues. But Jesus sees beyond their intent and speaks to the issues behind the issue presented. He gets to the heart of the matter. Jesus tells them that what we obsess over in this age does not take center stage in the age to come. He cites Scripture and he grants hope. Those who are vulnerable in this age—like the hypothetical woman in the Sadducees’ question, are children of God, children of the resurrection (the very thing the Sadducees reject). God is the God of the living. God cares about those tossed back and forth by circumstances beyond their control. Jesus deals in the present, painful, challenging realities here and now. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob works through complex families, faith communities, and sinful people on earth and not just in heaven. Whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord. Even when we come to Jesus in an attempt to show off our righteousness, event to test the Lord our out our fellow human beings on one side or the other of a deeply contested line, Jesus responds, pointing us to what truly matters, revealing the heart of the matter and what matters to God. Thanks be to God!