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Peace, Sun Prairie

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Groundbreaking

Praise be to the Lord God, our Rock, Refuge and eternal Foundation on whom we build. Amen.

The portion of God's Word we meditate on tonight is Haggai 2:9: **"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."** The Word of the Lord.

Dear friends in Christ,

A construction project. A momentous time for God's people. Excitement that the building is finally going forward. Deep gratitude to the Lord for His blessings that have made it

possible—the hearts, hands, prayers, labors, and gifts of His faithful people. Excitement for what the new will bring.

But there are mixed feelings too. “This is such a big change.” “I liked it the way it was.” Even: “The old was better.”

As I’ve visited with many of you, I’ve heard great joy and excitement for our project. I’ve also heard from those who are indeed glad to see the ministry expand at Peace, and yet still have a heavy heart to see the for sale sign at our Windsor building. Both are valid feelings for God’s people.

Whether you only have pure joy, or you have bittersweet feelings as you consider our expansion, you’re not alone in the history of God’s people.

500 years before Jesus’ birth, when by the Spirit, Haggai first spoke the words of our

reading, the Israelites also had a building project. God had kept His promise to bring them back to Judah after decades of captivity in Babylon. Now they were tasked with building the new temple of the LORD, what our reading calls the **present house** of God to replace **the former house**, the temple built by Solomon that the Babylonians had destroyed.

Just like so many of you tonight, many of the Israelites rejoiced when they started building the new temple where God's people young and old could learn and grow in His promises.

Yet some Israelites also had tears as they thought back to the **former house**, that first temple built by King Solomon. That temple was truly a marvel of the ancient world. The **former** temple had stone blocks so cut at the quarry that **no hammer or chisel or other iron tool was heard... while it was being built** (sorry teachers and students, there will probably be a bit more noise this year than that). The first

temple was adorned with Cedar imported from Lebanon and more than *23 tons of gold*. The fact was the new temple Israel was then building just could not match Solomon's temple for wealth and splendor.

And yet God said this: **The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house. Glory** not to be found in gold or silver, bricks or mortar, but in what God would do there: **in this place I will grant peace.**

You see that new temple of Haggai's day was the same temple refurbished by Herod, the same temple where Simeon would hold baby Jesus in His arms and sing: **Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace. Peace** because the eternal God the Son had become our flesh and blood to grant **peace** to a lost world of sinners.

Peace, not an end to war this side of judgment day, or a momentary and fleeting sense of calm in a crazy world, but the only true and lasting **Peace** with God, **peace** of sins forgiven by God's mercy and the Savior's rescuing work on our behalf. **Peace** that when a believer in Christ closes their eyes to this world in death, they immediately open their eyes to peace that knows no end at God's side forever!

Peace, because that same Jesus who would walk, talk, heal and bless in the courts of that "new" temple from Haggai's day would not far from that temple give up His life because God so loved the world. As He suffered the pains of hell for all human imperfection, for all our faults, failings, guilt, all our searching for peace in the things that wear out and fade away instead of in God alone, as Jesus willingly suffered and died He let fall on himself **the punishment that brought us peace.**

And, not far from the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus held up once dead but now alive, nail scarred hands as He spoke to His disciples and still speaks to you and me: **Peace be with you.** And Jesus words give us exactly what He says! **Peace**—in every sin forgiven by Jesus, **Peace** in endless heavenly joy and our bodies rising from the dead for all who trust in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

In this place I will grant peace. God's promise in peace through the Savior comforted all who still sorrowful over the **former house** in Haggai's day.

Let God's promise still comfort and encourage His people today: **In this place I will grant peace.** That's what God will do as little ones will hear and sing "Jesus loves me this I know" in the early childhood learning center and as older children learn the greatest true stories ever told in their classrooms, and young

and old alike hear Jesus' Word of peace in Bible, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

So as we officially start the construction of this amazing building with the groundbreaking tonight, let us remember what truly will make this place glorious: Christ and His promise: **And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty.** Amen.

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. Amen.

We praise Christ, that chosen and precious Cornerstone on whom we build, using the next hymn printed in the worship folder.