**WHAT DO YOU SEE? - ‘THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT’ - ZECHARIAH 4:1-14**

**Over the next six weeks, I am going to share with you six separate stories from the Bible of six visions or pictures God gave to encourage his people while they were facing difficult times.**

**The first today comes from the book of Zechariah 4**

**Background** – **Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai** – these two were the first two prophets to speak into the nation’s lives after the return from exile in Babylon. They may well have been children who returned with their parents from exile to try and rebuild the nation. The people returned to brokenness and devastation. Their temple had been destroyed their hopes deflated.  It was likely that those who returned were not wealthy, the wealthier stayed behind to make money in Babylon rather than face the journey homewards with risk and uncertainty.  So here they were in the Promised Land, living in inhospitable terrain, with few resources trying to scrape together an existence, believing that somehow God was going to rejuvenate them.  In their hearts there resided this hope that **God would do something new** in their midst and rekindle their dream…and re-fire the glory of their days gone by.

The year was 520BC and Zechariah filled with the Spirit speaks a **message of hope and inspirational leadership where the people discover that empowered by the Spirit they themselves are the answer to their dilemma.**

What Zechariah essentially called the people to was twofold:

* **To discover their true vocation** as God’s living witnesses in the world. To leave behind the apathy, indifference, and cynicism and return to the source of where their true power and authority lay. He reminds them of their greatness because of *who they belong to*.
* **To establish spiritual priorities as a people.** God’s work must be done God’s way. Though the people felt their city had been raised to the ground and their lives treated harshly. Repentance and submission needed to take place before a breakout and outpouring of divine blessing. After living in exile they needed to learn again where the true source of their power lay.

**So here is what Zechariah saw -** A seven-branched golden lampstand which received oil from two living olive trees…and as the oil came from the two trees it fed into bowls with wicks which kept the oil supplied to the lampstand.

As I read this vision I asked this question - God what does this say to us now? And I got four things that I believe will speak to us…

1. **Unfettered Supply – God has oil and grace to meet every situation**
2. **Uninterrupted Observation – the eyes of God were watching them**
3. **Unrestricted Purpose - despite large obstacles they would triumph**
4. **Unspectacular Beginnings – It doesn’t matter how small things start, God would grow something strong from small beginnings.**

***“Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord!”***

**V6. Zerubbabel**– was a Babylonian Jew who returned to Palestine after exile and functioned as governor of Jerusalem. *The way you used to do it in Babylon is not the way it is to be done here.*These people returned to a devastated city, where once long ago the might of God's ways burned brightly and powerfully.  God was saying to them.

***Do you see the obstacles, mountains that block your path? Or do you see a Mighty God who by his power can supply you with resources to meet every moment, who watches your progress and exhorts you to believe that he will complete what he has started even though what you see is small beginnings!***

**Look at the verses here and what they speak of….**

**Mountains leveled – unsurmountable roadblocks to progress v7**

**Dreams completed – the temple – the final brick will be laid v9…job done!**

**Small Beginnings – are rejoiced over when they are measured v10**

**A watching God – searches over all the world for his people’s progress v10**

**We live in a world where might and power rules.** The most common expressions of these are **money and the control** of powerful people who dominate and subdue others. The way things get done mostly is by the power of control and authority of people knowing their place and their limitations.

**In the Kingdom it’s different**…**lasting things get done by the Spirit**.

Now right here is my dilemma. Because we look around and maybe at times we feel that if we work harder, **pray more, exhort people to give more money, if we just focus more** that God’s work will prosper. And when obstacles come or surround us, we measure our chances of overcoming them by our strength and resources.

**It is into this that God speaks and says… Zechariah 4:6**

It’s not by Might – Combined **human strength**

It’s Not by Power/Force – Wielded by those who **control and dominate/coerce**

But by my Spirit - Says the Lord of Heavens Armies…who will fight for us!

His Spirit **breaks down the obstacles** that appear as mountains if you will let him.

His Spirit **defeats those who oppress** and stand against his purposes if you will trust him.

His Spirit **empowers the people of God** to fulfill their vocations if you will invite him to do so.

1. **Unfettered Supply – oil and grace to meet every moment (SUPPLIES)**
2. **Uninterrupted Observation – eyes of God were watching (OBSERVES)**
3. **Unrestricted Purpose - despite large obstacles (COMPLETES)**
4. **Unspectacular Beginnings – the power of ‘little’ (GROWS)**

**It doesn’t matter how small things start I can see your small beginnings** – don’t despise them, see what I can do with a widow mite, with few jars of water, with a few fish and loaves of bread, with just 12 disciples, a diminishing jar of oil, a donkeys jawbone, with five stones, some paste made of dirt from the ground, with a mustard seed, … see what I can do by my Spirit….**So what does this mean for us and for you?**

**What do I see?**

* I see a Church that needs to open up and develop again a hunger for the presence of the power of God in our midst….in our worship and our prayer lives.
* I see a church that needs to desire God, more than its reputation.
* I see a church that needs to declare and speak out where our trust really lies.
* I see a church that cannot cut it if it uses the same tactics as the World.
* I see a God who waits with unfettered supply, of oil to heal us, and fill us.
* I see a God who passionately wants to empower us and move some mountains.
* I see a God who like the prodigal Father waits, and watches for us to return to him.
* I see a God who specializes in growing something from a tiny seed of faith.
* I see a God who wants to complete what he has started, until the last brick!

**I’ve told you what I see - So what do you see? What is God putting on your heart?**

**Separate Worlds are not the answer -** Here is the challenge. All around us during the week we live with one culture of power, control, and might, where money and personalities and authority by position call the shots. And then we have this foreign kingdom culture which cuts right across it…where *‘up is down and down is up and wrong is right and Jesus reigns’.*We are people who are being pressed every moment by the World’s way of power and control. One of the ways to cope with this dualism is to compartmentalise our lives into spiritual and natural…and they don’t meet. We separate off these two opposing cultures which seem to have no place among each other, like oil and water they don’t mix. We treat our faith like a coat we put on when it suits us to wear it, but most of the time we live in a world where raw power, coercion, and control dominate.

**What do I see?** I see a new day coming where every person will ask God to empower them with his MIGHT… to be an over-comer. So don’t despise the day of small beginnings. So don’t feel beaten up by the World's me first’ culture. Today hear the word of the Lord to your life. I am the Lord who **SUPPLIES** day by day what you need...oil. I am the Lord who **COMPLETES** what I started…in your life. I am the Lord who **WATCHES** your progress

I am the Lord who **GROWS** things from small beginnings.

When we do stuff using the World's ways of control, dominance, and coercion…it’s like we say to God…I don’t need you really, and a little bit of the light of God dies in us.When we think that working harder is the answer…if it’s going to happen it’s up to me!…and something dies in us**.**When we try to resist God in our lives…because of our prejudice or fear….we close down the power of God and the light of God is not seen in us…it is like we are just putting out the flame of God in our lives…

Until someone or better still a community of people says – Enough! Let me burn up…and let God prove to me that he can give me an unfettered supply. Let God demonstrate that what he started to do he can complete. Let God grow something in my life from my small mustard seed faith and small obedience. Because I know that he is watching…searching for people and churches who will say to him – ‘We hunger after your might and your Spirit.’

**Macular Degeneration** of the eye – is an eye disease that particularly affects the elderly, there are two types wet and dry and one generally precedes the other. When it is chronic a person sees clearly only around the edges but in the center is a blur and a distorted image. Injections can slow down this degeneration but it is difficult once the damage is done to repair.

And today the Word of the Lord to you is…to recalibrate the way you are thinking about what you see around your life, your home and your city.

The vision of the candlestick is God’s Word to you today:

I can supply your daily needs – an **Unfettered supply.**

I can finish what I started - an **Unrestricted purpose.**

You feel small weak and little? – I grow things starting from **Unexpected beginnings.**

I’m watching you with **Uninterrupted observation.**