

## Sermon 12 July

### INTRO

Two Scripture readings:

The first takes us back to an old friend – King Hezekiah. You can find the section in 2Kings18&19

When we last looked at him, it was towards the end of his life and we reflected on how he lost focus. Today we see him in his prime.

He's facing a tough threat to his leadership. King Sennacherib of the Assyrians has been attacking the surrounding nations and Hezekiah had only been king for four years when the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians.

At one point he sent his commanders to the city gates and they spoke Hebrew to the commanding officers so that all who were hanging over the wall could hear the threats of destruction and the seeds of doubt and fear they were planting...

Hezekiah's response: he and the officials tore their garments and went to the temple and prayed... Then the prophet Isaiah told them that the armies would be withdrawn and it happened the next day...

Later Sennacherib sent a letter basically saying: "Don't think your God saved you, I'm coming back and I'll destroy you because your God is no match for ours."

What is Hezekiah's response?

Once again it is to pray....

Our second reading is from the Sermon on the Mount and it is just **a part** of Jesus' teaching on prayer...

### READINGS

2Cor1:8-11 We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers.

2 KINGS 19:14-20 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the

kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

"It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria.

Matthew 6:6-13 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray:

" `Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. '

## SERMON

### Introduction

Two thoughts: Need for Prayer – and Joseph Scriven – What a friend

Two other hymn-writers:

Horatio Spafford – It is well with my Soul

Louisa Stead – Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus.

All three experienced tragedy and loss – yet all three:

- showed great devotion to helping others
- stayed close to God
- This was written by Horatio Spafford who
  - Lost his 4 year old son to Scarlett Fever
  - Lost all his businesses in the Chicago fire
  - Lost four daughters when the ship they were in sank
  - He wrote these words at the spot where the sinking happened.

Found in the ruins of Chicago fire – helping others...

Louisa Stead whose husband drowned trying to save someone else's drowning child and Louisa was left penniless. At the point of her greatest need, a basket of food and support arrived on her doorstep and she

penned the words of this beautiful hymn – we know the chorus:

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

She went on to become a Missionary here in South Africa in 1880 and died in Zimbabwe.

What gave these men and women the courage and grace to have such incredible faith and trust in God?

Where did their storm-defying faith come from?

I believe the answer lies in one word - "relationship".

A solid strong connection with God.

Joseph Scrivener put it so well - "What a Friend we have in Jesus"

We're in tough times:

Last three sermons: (Three legged chair)

- Faith and leadership in the storm
- The importance of Fellowship
- This week - Prayer

And how do we maintain this relationship?

Prayer!

Facets of Prayer.

Looking at Hezekiah...

1. Gut-response: Look at Hezekiah (it's his go to thing!)
2. Real: I just imagine Hezekiah spreading the letter before the Lord Jehoshaphat – don't know what to do but our eyes are on You Jesus: Not showy, simple, His model prayer is short and simple
3. Trusting: Come to God trusting Him to do wonderful things. Not prescriptive. Not what we ask, but that we ask.
4. Powerful: Circumstances change when we pray...  
"The warm blanket of prayer"  
Luther: God inspires prayer
5. Transforming: Sometimes changes the Pray-er rather than situation

Hymn writers were significant – their relationship in prayer led to that..

Prayer is a conversation. Not an incantation or coin in a vending machine  
It's not about WHAT we do  
but WHO we're talking too.

The God who invites us to call Him FATHER;  
Jesus who on the cross said "Forgive them"

The Spirit who, when you're in pain, GROANS inside you.

Spreading bills, headlines etc before God.

God lifts Hezekiah and sorts out Senacherib

### Jesus and Prayer

He talks of prayer as something real and honest.

Lord's prayer is simple, economical, short and revolutionary for His time in terms of brevity and simplicity.

We've memorised the fancy King James English, but original Greek and Aramaic the language makes it a simple "kitchen" prayer.

It invites us to Connection... Relationship... Comfort... Peace...

Prayer is the well from which we drink...

### Conclusion:

1. Warning: Not spells and incantations or causes.  
Concern about the "calls to prayer"
2. Walk close to God.  
Talk to Him and Listen to Him.
3. Encounter a Friend, Father, Saviour and Lord.