

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

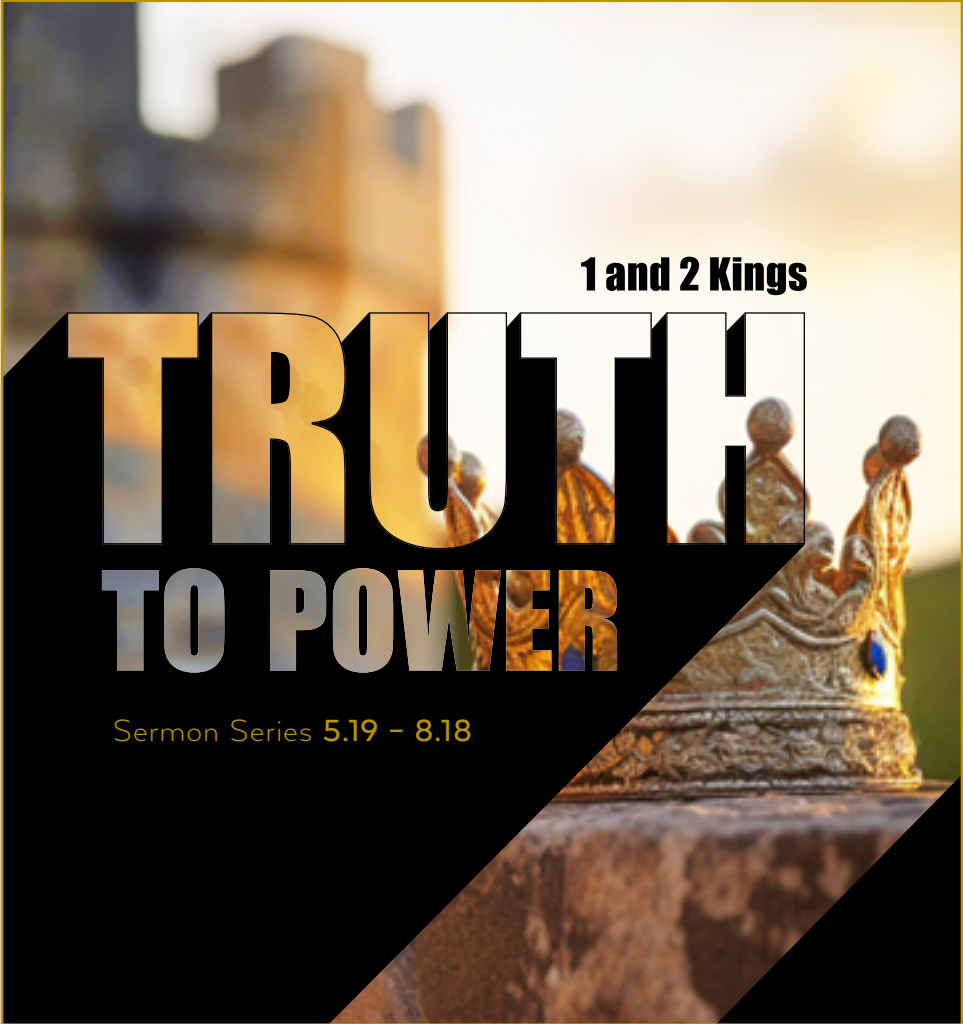
DEVO

AUGUST 5 - 9, 2024

1 and 2 Kings

TRUTH TO POWER

Sermon Series 5.19 - 8.18





MONDAY

Read **2 Kings 18:1-8; 20:1-6; 16:1-4**

Hezekiah's Context

This week's story about the healing of King Hezekiah requires familiarity with Hezekiah as a person. Hezekiah is introduced in the narrative of the kings of Judah as a 25-year-old new king who reigned in Jerusalem for 29 years. That places this week's story at a time when Hezekiah was only 39, midway through his reign. More important than Hezekiah's age, however, is the kind of king he was, especially in contrast to his father, Ahaz (2 Kings 16).

Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had become king at the age of 20 and reigned for 16 years. The narrator tells us that Ahaz "*did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God*" (16:2), behaving much more like the kings of Israel than his ancestor David. In fact, Ahaz sacrificed some of his sons and engaged in other detestable forms of worship practiced by the neighboring nations (16:3). He even instructed the high priest at the time to build an altar he had designed based on one he saw in Damascus and make daily sacrifices on it. In other words, Ahaz had little regard for following the LORD's word or worshipping Him as He had prescribed.

It is remarkable that Hezekiah, growing up under his father's influence, was his opposite. The narrator's assessment of Hezekiah was that

he "*trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel*" and "*there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him*" (18:5). Hezekiah kept God's commands and the LORD gave him success in all his endeavors. God released him from servitude to Assyria and gave him victory over the Philistines. Hezekiah was truly a man after God's heart.

This background provides helpful context for this week's text in which Hezekiah became deathly ill at the age of 39 and the prophet Isaiah brought him a word from the LORD: "*Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover*" (20:1). This message strikes us as a word of abandonment. How could the LORD allow His faithful servant to die in the prime of his life? Where is God's faithfulness now? Essentially, this story confronts us with the age-old question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

QUESTIONS

When have you recently questioned God's faithfulness? What did you learn through that experience?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Pray with passion and compassion today for Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen, our MPs serving in Germany. For 40+ years, this couple has been offering help and hope in Jesus' name to families who've managed to escape violence and oppression in various regions of the Middle East.



TUESDAY

Read **2 Kings 20:1-6; 19:1-7, 14-20**

Hezekiah's Prayer

Throughout the narrative of Hezekiah, when he faced major challenges, he turned to the LORD. When threatened by the Assyrians, he humbled himself (i.e., tore his clothes and put on sackcloth) and went to the temple to be in the LORD's presence (19:1). He also reached out to the prophet Isaiah asking him to pray for the people. Similarly, when he received a threatening letter from the Assyrian commander, he went to the temple and asked God to deliver the people of Judah (19:14-16). On both occasions, Isaiah provided Hezekiah with messages from the LORD assuring him that He was with him and would protect him and his people.

When Hezekiah received the LORD's word from Isaiah regarding his imminent death, Hezekiah once again turned to the LORD in prayer. The text tells us that he *"turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD"* (20:2). Being at the point of death, apparently, he was unable to go to the temple to pray as was his custom. So, he simply turned toward the wall to engage in private conversation with God. His prayer was quite simple: *"Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes"* (16:3). The narrator adds that he wept bitterly.

The picture of Hezekiah presented here is one of a deeply broken man wrestling with God. He is only 39 years old and about to die. Skipping forward to the end of his story, we find that his son, Manasseh, was only 12 years old when his father died, meaning Hezekiah was also without an heir at this time. Hezekiah's illness presents not only a personal crisis, but a community crisis, for there is no heir to the throne.

This account of Hezekiah's prayer illustrates our freedom as God's children to approach Him as our loving and gracious Father and share the deep matters of our hearts. Hezekiah calls upon the LORD to remember his faithful and wholehearted devotion, with the expectation that God once again will deliver him. He is not afraid to cry—literally—to the LORD in his time of immense need. Even though the LORD has spoken, Hezekiah is bold enough to beg Him to reconsider.

QUESTIONS

What is your first response in times of crisis? Are you able to pour out your heart to the LORD? How has He answered?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Bryant and Anne ask that we pray for "Holy Spirit GPS," the Lord's "guiding people" to them and to the people who are open to receiving the life, love, and truth of Jesus Christ, people who can be trained and equipped to assist with communication, both practical and spiritual.



WEDNESDAY

Read **2 Kings 20:1-6**

Answered Prayer

When Hezekiah prayed, the LORD heard and answered. In this case, the answer was immediate, although the actual healing took place over three days. Before the prophet Isaiah had left the palace-temple complex, the LORD spoke to him: *“Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of My people, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD’”* (20:5). The LORD’s answer is immediate, compassionate, full of promise, and specific—just the type of answer to prayer we all long to receive.

The LORD’s answer to Hezekiah reveals several important truths about God. Firstly, His response to Hezekiah begins with a reminder of who He is: *“The LORD, the God of your father David.”* In making such a statement God identified Himself as the covenant-keeping God, the One who had not only made a covenant with all of Israel at Mt. Sinai, but also the One who had made a covenant with David to establish his royal house and kingdom. This is the God whom Hezekiah had faithfully served throughout his reign. The LORD affirms Hezekiah’s decision to follow Him rather than the gods of other nations.

Secondly, the LORD affirms that He has heard and seen. He was moved by Hezekiah’s pleas and tears. God is not an idol of stone or wood who is unable to see or hear. Instead, He is the living God who responds compassionately to the prayers of His people.

Thirdly, the LORD has decided to act on Hezekiah’s behalf, to heal him and extend his life. He promises that on the third day Hezekiah will be able to return to the temple, presumably to present his thank offerings to the LORD.

This story illustrates how God’s people wish God would respond every time we pray. However, we know that God does not always respond to prayers in the same way. Based on this example, whatever answer God gives us, it is good for us to remember who God is, that He hears and sees, and that His answer is always for our good. We can trust Him even when we do not like or understand His answer.

QUESTIONS

How has God answered your prayers? What answers to prayer have been difficult for you to receive?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

May the Lord grant favor to Bryant as he interacts with government officials who make crucial designs about the legal status and essential care for these displaced families and individuals. Most live in deathly fear of being sent back to the dangerous regions from which they have escaped.



THURSDAY

Read **2 Kings 20:1-6**

God's Promises

The LORD's response to Hezekiah's prayer not only resolves his immediate crisis by healing him, but also includes significant promises for his and his people's future. The LORD promises to add 15 years to Hezekiah's life. This allowed Hezekiah to be a father to Manasseh, who at the age of 12 succeeded Hezekiah as Judah's king when Hezekiah died (21:1). The promise of another 15 years was a lifeline not only for Hezekiah but for the kingdom of Judah as well.

God also promised to deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the king of Assyria who was threatening them. By this time (in the ninth year of Hezekiah's reign) Assyria had already invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel, destroyed Samaria (its capital), and deported the people to Assyria. There was a very real threat that Assyria's king would do the same to Judah. But God promised to defend the city against the Assyrian invaders. He said He did this *"for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David"* (20:6). God expressed concern to preserve the honor of His name and His covenant-keeping faithfulness. He will defend Jerusalem not only for Hezekiah's sake, but for His own sake.

The rest of the narrative explains how God kept His promises, that Hezekiah recovered from his illness and that Assyria withdrew.

Eventually, Jerusalem did succumb to an invading army, but it was the Babylonians, not the Assyrians, more than a century later. One might be tempted to ask, "Why didn't God answer the prayers of Jeremiah, Daniel, and the faithful fellow Hebrews who experienced the horrors of destruction and exile many years later?" God only knows what different purposes He had for His people at that time.

Hopefully, we see that although God answered Hezekiah's prayer in a favorable way, we should not think this text contains a formula for getting God to answer our prayers as we desire. The LORD is the covenant-keeping God, but even so He eventually allowed His people to experience the horrors of war, siege, and exile. The fact that He spared Hezekiah and the Hebrews of his day such a fate is pure grace and goodness.

QUESTIONS

Christians often take a Scriptural promise made to a specific person in a specific context and expect God to do the same for them. One truly universal promise is that He will be with us. How have you experienced God's presence in your life?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Ask the Lord to give energy and wisdom to Bryant as he mentors the men, and to Anne as she counsels and comforts the women and children. Virtually all have experienced trauma and live with the ongoing stress of uncertainty about their future, including where to live and how to survive.



FRIDAY

Read **2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38:1-8**

Isaiah's Role

Throughout the book of Isaiah and in the larger narrative of 2 Kings, the prophet Isaiah plays a pivotal role. We have seen this week how Isaiah serves as the LORD's messenger, initially delivering a message of bad news to Hezekiah and then bringing him good news from the LORD in response to Hezekiah's prayer. In Isaiah 38:1-11, Isaiah serves as a conduit of the LORD's healing power and provides a sign from the LORD to confirm His promise. Given the significance of these events, a somewhat abridged account of this story was included in the Scroll of Isaiah (Chapter 38).

This brief excerpt of Isaiah's ministry illustrates key components of the prophetic role. Firstly, prophets were those entrusted to communicate God's truths to His people. Throughout Scripture God reveals Himself as One who communicates: He speaks the world into being, reveals His laws to His people, and calls individuals to perform specific tasks. The prophet was led by the Spirit of God to be God's spokesperson, responsible to tell the people what God wanted them to know and do. The prophets' messages were not of their own making but derived from a deep conviction that *"this is what the LORD says"* (Isaiah 43:16, 45:11).

This Isaiah text also highlights that the prophet had to be willing to set aside his own ego and concern for his own wellbeing. Delivering

a message to the king, the most powerful person in the land, that he was about to die would not have been a pleasant task. Besides the power difference between the king and the prophet, there likely was also a personal relationship to consider.

Hezekiah, being a godly king, had often heard and followed the LORD's message through the prophet. The message God gave Isaiah to deliver to Hezekiah was likely one Isaiah himself did not like. Furthermore, having to go back to the king before even leaving the palace-temple complex to deliver a new message, contrary to the first, might have raised questions about how well Isaiah was hearing God's voice. Did he get the message wrong the first time? Was he too hasty in pronouncing the king's imminent demise?

These questions illustrate that Isaiah also wrestled with God, struggling at times to hear and deliver God's message to others.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever questioned your own ability to hear God speaking to you? How do you validate what you believe He is telling you?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Pray that German Christians/churches will step up to assist Bryant and Anne's ministry. Many hold back for fear of being overwhelmed. Pray also that more American Christians/churches will join in supporting the Wilhelmsens. As you may imagine, many have dropped off over the 40+ years since Bryant and Anne began this ministry.



These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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