*DEVOTIONAL*

November 12 - 17

*The Messiah in Isaiah*

**Monday, November 12 Isaiah 36:1-22**

*“What are you trusting in?”*

 The Assyrian commander’s speech is inconsistent. At one point he says that the Lord has sent them to attack Jerusalem, but in another that the Lord cannot protect Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian king. It appears that he is simply hammering the fearful Judeans with every possible argument that might undermine their trust – and trust is clearly what this conflict is about. His opening words make that clear: “What are you trusting in that makes you so confident?” Then he proceeds to demolish, from his point of view, each possible basis.

 He starts with military power and says that if they trust in a military alliance with Egypt it will do them no good. The commander then wrongly asserts that God is displeased with the destruction of worship sites outside Jerusalem. Then he turns back to military might and mocks the weakness of Judah. Lastly, he tells them that all the terrible things that have happened to other nations will happen to them if they continue trusting the Lord. It is clear that he is trying to turn the city away from reliance on God.

*We face threats, Lord, but we will not turn from you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 13 Isaiah 37:1-20**

*“Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech”*

 King Hezekiah tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth, the traditional signs of mourning. Having turned to God, he also sends a delegation to consult with the prophet Isaiah. He is particularly concerned about the disgrace that this situation brings on God. The Judeans have no strength with which to bring about their own deliverance. This is the point of the image of the mother who has labored to the point of exhaustion and has no strength left. The response God gives to Isaiah makes it clear he will not be mocked.

 Before leaving to face a new threat, King Sennacherib sends a message to King Hezekiah with a direct challenge of God: “Do not let the god you depend on deceive you.” The Assyrian king flatly says that he has destroyed the nations of every other god, and he will destroy the nation of Judah’s god as well. This time Hezekiah does not ask Isaiah to pray for the nation; rather, he goes directly to God himself. He asks God to deliver Judah, not because they deserve it but because he is the only true God.

*You are God – there is no other – and we rely on you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 14 Isaiah 37:21-38**

*“The Lord has spoken against him”*

 God’s response to Hezekiah’s prayer comes through Isaiah. It appears in three parts, the first of which is addressed directly to Sennacherib. The second is addressed to Hezekiah, and the third is spoken of Sennacherib. The opening phrase “the Virgin Daughter of Zion” suggests that the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem is comparable to a dominant male seeking to rape a beautiful young girl. On the surface, there is nothing to keep him from carrying out his will. But Assyria, the would-be rapist, has not taken into account the Holy One of Israel.

 Or rather, he has dismissed the Lord as being of no account. He has put himself on the level of God, lifting his eyes in pride and in the process blaspheming God by bringing him down to Sennacherib’s own level. Here we see the folly of self-exultation on the part of a human being. There is only One who is high and lifted up. For anyone else to presume to that position is to invite destruction. As a result, the Daughter of Jerusalem will be able to toss her head in mockery at the mighty man as he runs away in disgrace.

*Those who do evil against your people, Lord, will not stand. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

November 12 - 17

*The Messiah in Isaiah*

**Thursday, November 15 Isaiah 38:1-22**

*“I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!”*

 In chapters 36-37, the one who mocked God goes from life to death. Here the story of the one who trusts God goes from death to life. The reason for this is prayer. Hezekiah’s prayer in verse 3 is neither lofty nor lengthy, but it is still a model of the direction the trusting heart takes in the time of crisis. God’s word from Isaiah is unequivocal. Hezekiah is going to die. This is not a word of judgment; it is simply a fact. But the king does not accept the announcement passively. He knows something of the heart of God, that he does hear and listen to the cries of his people even if all the signs point to a fixed outcome.

 Hezekiah’s poem is largely a meditation on mortality. He speaks of the untimeliness of the announced death, for at age 39 he is still in the prime of life. It is particularly fellowship with God and with others that he hates to lose. The reality is that we are always in God’s hands. So, whether in life or in death, we belong to the Lord, and if there is to be any hope of extending life it is from the heavens; if any aid, it is from the Lord.

*I trust you, Lord, to give me a good amount of days to live my life. Amen.*

**Friday, November 16 Isaiah 39:1-8**

*“Hezekiah was delighted”*

 It is easy to understand why Hezekiah would be glad to receive the envoys. After all, here is a great world leader paying attention to little Judah. There is something immensely flattering when someone whom we consider more important than we pays attention to us. But there is also something dangerous as well, namely, that we will succumb to the temptation to convince the important person that the attention being given is justified.

 Sadly, that is the temptation into which Hezekiah falls. Here is a wonderful opportunity to declare the glory of God to the Babylonians, telling of how the sole God of the universe healed him from certain death. But instead of making God look good, Hezekiah takes the opportunity to make himself look good. As a result God will one day allow all that Hezekiah has shown the Babylonians to fall into their hands. Not only that, but some of Hezekiah’s descendants will be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. His possessions will be carried off and his family too. Nothing Hezekiah has will be left.

*My delight is in you, Lord, not in what others think of me. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 17 Isaiah 40:1-11**

*“Clear the way for the Lord”*

    The prophetic message of judgment has been given to the people of Israel and it has been a hard word.  Now, however, the message is to be one of hope.  Although the people have withered and fallen like dried grass because of their sin, God’s word as spoken by his prophet will not fail.  Just as he had said that judgment would come, and it had, so he now says restoration will come, and it will.  The idea of the Hebrew words translated “comfort” and “speak tenderly” is to “encourage with good news.”

     Isaiah sees a day when God’s servants will be crushed to the ground under the burden of their sin.  They will feel sure that all is lost and that all the promises of God have been nullified by their rebellion.  But the message to be proclaimed to them is that this is not so.  There is a highway in the desert for our God which will bring God to helpless Israel to set her free.  It will be a straight way cleared of mountains and valleys so he can come swiftly. Deliverance will come from God’s direct intervention.

*You are swift to come to my aid, Lord, and that encourages me.  Amen.*