

Pastor Ben Libby  
 Sermon  
 5/22/2019

To Jesus Christ, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification, be glory forever Amen.

The Word of the Lord which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from Isaiah, chapter 38, starting at verse 9:

Isaiah 38:9-20 <sup>9</sup> This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness: <sup>10</sup> I said, "In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years." <sup>11</sup> I said, "I shall not see YAH, The LORD in the land of the living; I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world. <sup>12</sup> My life span is gone, Taken from me like a shepherd's tent; I have cut off my life like a weaver. He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night You make an end of me. <sup>13</sup> I have considered until morning -- Like a lion, So He breaks all my bones; From day until night You make an end of me. <sup>14</sup> Like a crane or a swallow, so I chattered; I mourned like a dove; My eyes fail from looking upward. O LORD, I am oppressed; Undertake for me! <sup>15</sup> " What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, And He Himself has done it. I shall walk carefully all my years In the bitterness of my soul. <sup>16</sup> O LORD, by these *things men* live; And in all these *things is* the life of my spirit; So You will restore me and make me live. <sup>17</sup> Indeed *it was* for *my own* peace *That* I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly *delivered* my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. <sup>18</sup> For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. <sup>19</sup> The living, the living man, he shall praise You, As I *do* this day; The father shall make known Your truth to the children. <sup>20</sup> "The LORD *was ready* to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the LORD."

This is the Word of God. Congregation may be seated.

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

"Well, it's about time!" Have you ever expressed this sentiment before? We are a very impatient society, and we do not enjoy having to wait for almost anything. I am just as guilty of this as anyone else. I have been known to visit a fast food drive through from time to time. I will drive to a restaurant only to leave it in a split second after seeing how long the line is. Our whole line of thinking has changed based on how long we must wait for things.

We have grown accustomed to speed passes, to next day shipping, and being able to binge an entire TV series in one sitting. This makes the process of waiting harder than ever. When we are forced to wait for anything, it is almost automatic to express this "ITS ABOUT TIME!" feeling.

It is my opinion that the mere fact that we are not accustomed to waiting makes the ability to do so more important than ever. We are truly accustomed

to instant gratification, but it is worth waiting for things. Sometimes, the timetable is just simply not in our hands. The attitude of “It’s about time” clearly reflects an impatience and unthankful nature. This is especially true when we consider what the Apostle James pointed out in our Epistle reading this morning, **James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

When we realize that it is God who gives us all things, and also that He is able to give us everything we could possibly ever need, how could we ever say to God, “It’s about time!”? And yet, this is our pathetic attitude so often. Shouldn’t we just be grateful that we are given anything at all? We do not deserve anything. The fact that God gives anyone anything good at all, despite our deep wickedness, should be more than enough evidence that our God is one of loving-kindness and mercy.

In our sermon text today from Isaiah the prophet, we are reminded of a certain king’s attitude towards God after a miraculous healing. We are given his outlook when things seemed bleakest, and we are given his perspective after God did the unthinkable for him. When it comes to our God, it is about time. He answers our prayers in His own good and gracious time, and it gets us to ask the question about ourselves, “Isn’t it about time?” And so, we pray **MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDIATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR MAKER AND REDEEMER, AMEN.**

<sup>9</sup> **This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:**

The following text that we have before us comes to us in a pretty perilous time in the history of the nation of Judah. Isaiah the prophet served God under many different kings and regimes changes.

The very first line of the prophet states **Isaiah 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.** These are 4 different kings that Isaiah prophesied during their lifetimes. For the most part, these kings were good kings who led Judah into the height of their political power since the time of King Solomon. But Ahaz, the father of king Hezekiah whose letter we have here, was not a good king. He worshipped false gods and really set the nation back.

But when Hezekiah came, this was a man who the people could say, “Well it’s about time!” He brought about long over-due religious reforms for Judah. His great grandfather and grandfather “walked in the way of the Lord”, and yet they did not tear down the altars and high places dedicated to the foreign gods. Hezekiah did. Hezekiah even destroyed the remains of the bronze serpent, who was once a symbol of God’s mercy but had since become another material of idolatry. The book of Kings says of Hezekiah, **2 Kings 18:5-6a He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. <sup>6</sup> For he held fast to the LORD;**

But even this godly king was not without faults and errors. He trusted in God, but he also made an alliance with the nation of Egypt for political protection. Why would he do this? The nation of Assyria. They were the political world power at the time, and they were responsible for the exile and extinction of the northern nation of Israel, the brothers of Judah who separated after Solomon. It looked like Assyria would oppose and destroy Judah just like they did with Israel.

But even before this conquest happened, the King was overcome with sickness. So severe was his sickness that he was about to die. The prophet Isaiah came to him and let him know what he probably already assumed: he was going to die. Isaiah told Hezekiah **Isaiah 38:1 "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'**

" Naturally, this made the king sorrowful. He prayed to his God, Isaiah 38:3 Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what is good* in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

God answered his prayer. His answer was yes, He would heal Him, in fact, He would even add 15 years to his life. He did heal and deliver the king from his sickness, and He would also deliver the king and his nation from the hand of the Assyrians. In one night, the Angel of the Lord came and decimated the Assyrian army. 185,000 troops would be slain, crippling this nation forever and saving God's people.

Hezekiah's near-death experience gave the king some much-needed perspective. After all, who wouldn't be shaken after such a close call?

There is this popular country song by Tim McGraw titled, "Live like you were dying" that came out a while back. Perhaps you have heard of it. Basically, it describes the reaction of a younger man who had been given the news that he was dying of cancer and did not have long to live. First, he reacts by being consumed by the medical options and x-rays. But then he realizes that he had to live his life to the fullest. He does all the things that he had been putting off and doesn't take for granted the little things. His conclusion is that "sometime I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying".

Hezekiah also went through these stages as well. He understood that he was going to die. Just look at how he describes viewing the prospect of dying young. <sup>10</sup> I said, "In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years."

<sup>12</sup> My life span is gone, Taken from me like a shepherd's tent; I have cut off my life like a weaver. He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night You make an end of me

This man was terrified at the prospect of his life ending. He wept bitterly. How did he react to the

fact that his time was about to be up? He prayed to the LORD, the LORD delivered him, and He praised Him! Isaiah 38:15 <sup>15</sup> " What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, And He Himself has done *it*. I shall walk carefully all my years In the bitterness of my soul.

He could see that a truth that sometimes we forget: The Lord is in control. The LORD told him his time was up. But he prayed to the LORD, and the LORD delivered him from that experience. He gave the king 15 more years to serve. It was the LORD who said it, and it was the LORD who did it! It is all about time with the LORD. The LORD extended this king's time. He allowed this king to continue to rule. This experience no doubt also shaped the king's faith in the upcoming hard years. Soon, Jerusalem would be surrounded by the Assyrian empire. Anyone with eyes could see that this would not end well for Judah. But just like the LORD delivered Hezekiah from imminent death on his sickbed, so too did the LORD deliver Jerusalem from the imminent death by the hands of Sennacherib and the Assyrian empire.

These are the absolute facts: The LORD is in control and our days are in His hands. We like to fool ourselves into believing otherwise. That we are the captains of our own ships. That we control what happens to us. But, the reality is that there is very little that is in our control. Yes, we have modern medicine and technology that tends to extend our lives. But, the will of God trumps all these things. Hezekiah was told he was going to die. He prayed to God, and God delivered him. The Assyrians were going to destroy and conquer Jerusalem. God delivered them. God told Hezekiah that he had 15 more years. How many more years do you have? 1? 10? 50? We do not know. The one thing that we do know is that God is in control, and He is able to deliver us from any form of danger.

<sup>16</sup> O LORD, by these *things* men live; And in all these *things* is the life of my spirit; So You

will restore me and make me live. <sup>17</sup> Indeed *it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.*

The fact of the matter is that we do not know how much longer we have here on this earth. So, we should live like we are dying. Truly, we all are, aren't we? We may seem healthy, some of us may even be considered to be in the prime of life. But, youth does not grantee anything. Hezekiah was in his prime, but that did not change the fact that he was going to die. All of us have a certain time of grace. None of us know when that period will be over. The end of our earthly lives comes like a thief in the night. No one knows when their life will end.

So, how should that influence our lives? Well, it should really change WHO and WHAT we live for. **Romans 6:10-11** <sup>10</sup> *For the death that [Christ] died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.* <sup>11</sup> Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So much of the world lives for the world. People want to live life to the fullest. But what does that really mean? It seems each person has different definitions of what living life to the fullest means. For some, it is getting out and seeing and experiencing all the world has to offer. And yes, there are some great things that we can experience in this world. But, at the end of the day, life is more than just the experiences we have.

If you want proof that life is fleeting, just read the book of Ecclesiastes. In that book, King Solomon recounts all the different things that he did to try to be happy. He recounts all the different things he did. His work, his romantic conquests, his self-indulgence. What was his conclusion? **Ecclesiastes 1:14** <sup>14</sup> *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

The song, "live like you were dying", expresses the experiences of a person who knew they were going to die, and how they lived out the short time that they had. But living life like you were dying is not about living in this world the fullest and best way we know how. Rather live life like you were dying is an honest thing. We all are going to die someday. Therefore, we should live for the one who is going to save us from death, Jesus!

<sup>17</sup> *Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.* <sup>18</sup> *For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.* <sup>19</sup> *The living, the living man, he shall praise You, As I do this day;*

That word "bitterness" that Hezekiah uses here is not the traditional kind of bitterness that we think of. He wasn't resentful of the LORD. Rather, it is more like anguish. Truly, Hezekiah who had this near-death experience could see that anguish that was staring him down. He could see that life was short. That would be something that he would remember for the rest of his days. He could see that if not for his Savior, he was dead. But, as he puts it, God "cast all my sins behind His back."

In this Easter season, we are reminded of death. Jesus died on the cross, but then He rose from the dead. Death often seems like the end; it doesn't get more finished than that. But, Jesus reminds all of us that death is NOT the end. Jesus rose from the dead and so too shall we. Death is just something that we go through. But we also shall go through a resurrection. That is why Jesus said **John 11:25-26** *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.* <sup>26</sup> *"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*

But, we have trouble living like life is all there is. We often forget that we shall die. We are just as guilty as the rest of the world of living for the

moment. Whenever we sin, we are being impatient with God. We are saying that we know better, that

we want to do the things that are pleasing to the flesh instead of the things that are pleasing to God. But doing these so-called pleasurable things are just ensuring more death. The whole reason there is death in this world is because there is sin in this world. If all there is in this world is sinful experiences, then all there is in this world is truly DEATH. People want to live life to the fullest. But living life to the fullest by the definition of the world is to live for death itself.

But we have a higher calling. We live for Jesus. We do things that the world considers to be boring. Going to church, confessing our sins, believing and living our lives by the Bible. The world considers this to not be living at all. But we know that this is THE ONLY way to live! And yes, so often we Christians do fail to live like we should. But that is exactly why we live like we do. Don't live like this world is all there is. It's not, and we know it! Yes, we should make the most of time we have here. But there is a whole eternity we have before us. We live to serve our Savior, because what He did for us on this earth ensured that we will live with Him forever in heaven!

Well, it's about time! Sometimes, we are so impatient about the smallest and most trivial things in this world. But with God, it is truly all about time. God spent time on this earth. Jesus lived a perfect lifetime, and because He did so, He secured our future in heaven with Him. Our time on this planet is short. God gives us time here so that we can come to Him in faith. Our time here is in His hands. We should spend that time not living life "to it fullest". We don't need to live like we are going to die and that's it. Rather we should live like we are alive, and even though we will die, we will live again one day. God gives us everything we have, and He has given us the most important thing we will ever receive, faith in Jesus. There is no better reason to live life than to live life for Jesus! Why? Because He has truly saved us from sin and from eternal death! How do we live now? Hezekiah puts it beautifully: **Isaiah 38:20 "The LORD was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the LORD."** The Lord has saved us, and through Him we will live like it! AMEN