

Homily for July 20, 2018

Father and son are very different—For the most part, Hezekiah was a good king and a faithful Jew. Hezekiah was far better than his father Ahaz, who was an evil king.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, like his father David, but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made molten images for the Baals, and he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the sons of Israel (2 Chronicles 28:1–3).

Moreover, Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign, even after the prophet Isaiah had instructed him to do so (Isaiah 7:12). Ahaz’ idolatry and disobedience to God brought disaster upon himself and on Judah. In contrast, his son Hezekiah, by his own initiative, pleaded with God for a sign, when he was in distress and dying. Hezekiah was a man of prayer.¹

Assuming the kingship when he was only twenty-five years old, Hezekiah made sweeping reforms in the land. He dealt seriously with idolatry and apostasy. He did not wait for a “needs assessment” or check the public opinion polls. He started to clean the temple and restore temple worship. Hezekiah worked diligently to get the people right with God. Hezekiah cleaned house.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, and assembled them in the square on the east, and said to them, “Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the holy place. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God; they have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs”²

Sickness is common to all people, the commoner as well as the king. No one gets out of this life without experiencing some pain and suffering. Although some people will die suddenly in accidents, many others will experience a terminal illness. Hezekiah now experiences a life-threatening illness. Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he ascended the throne and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 29:1). So, he would have been fifty-four years old at the time of his death. Since the Lord added fifteen years to Hezekiah’s life after this disease, he must have been about thirty-nine years old, in the prime of his life, when he encountered this serious malady.

God reveals to the prophet Isaiah that Hezekiah is about to die. And Isaiah has the unhappy task of delivering this bad news to the king.

¹ Kosanke, C. G., & Manhardt, L. W. (2011). [*Isaiah*](#) (p. 95). Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.

² Kosanke, C. G., & Manhardt, L. W. (2011). [*Isaiah*](#) (p. 95). Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.

“Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover” (Isaiah 38:1).

Hezekiah’s responds to Isaiah’s bad news in heartfelt prayer and supplication to God. He turns to the only One who can change his situation. He prays to God.

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD, and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight” (Isaiah 38:2–3).

An amazing thing happens to Hezekiah. God changes His mind! God has mercy! Prayer really can and does change things. Miracles do happen! God speaks again to Isaiah and gives him good news to share with Hezekiah. God hears the prayer of Hezekiah and restores his health and extends his life for another fifteen years. Prayer can change things.

Hezekiah’s illness parallels the crisis in Jerusalem. When death seems imminent, God gives Hezekiah a reprieve because of his heartfelt prayer and sincere piety. When Jerusalem is threatened, God also grants a reprieve for a time. Perhaps God spares Jerusalem because of the repentance and prayer of the king and the people. God reveals to Hezekiah that He will not only heal him, for a time, but God will also defend the city of Jerusalem against the Assyrians. God hears and answers prayer.³

³ Kosanke, C. G., & Manhardt, L. W. (2011). [Isaiah](#) (pp. 96–97). Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing.