

2003年6月15日讲道 读经：以赛亚书第38章 纳维尔·克拉克弟兄 亲爱的弟兄姐妹：

近一个月的读经让我们学习了很多以赛亚的预言，以赛亚在公元前750-700年间写成这本书，其中经历了乌西雅，约坦，亚哈斯，希西家作犹大王的时代。第36-39章这一部分在预言书里很特别，因为这几章还记录了犹大在公元前701年被亚述侵犯的历史。今天早上，在掰饼之前，我们就以讲道的形式来看一下以赛亚书第38章对我们的劝勉。

第一节开始就告诉我们“那时，希西家病得要死”。这里提到的“那时”是指亚述攻击犹大的日子（第六节），也就是希西家在位十四年的时候（以赛亚书36:1）。以色列北方王国在八年以前被侵占，如今，亚述人又要把他们的帝国扩展到南方的犹大王国。

希西家年仅39岁，就已经病得很重了。第21节告诉我们希西家有一块疮，看起来这块创传染的很快，是一种血液病毒，情况十分危急。他生病的时候耶路撒冷城正被西拿基立率领的强大的亚述军队围困，即使希西家想要亲自领导保卫城池的防御战，但他的死亡似乎已迫在眉睫，以赛亚告诉他“当留遗命与你的家”，就是让他先预立后继之人，因为他快死了（以赛亚书38:1）。

希西家面临的一切实在很难让他感激神。在过去十四年里，他英明的统治整个国家，净化偶像崇拜的地方，洁净圣殿，发命守逾越节，恢复供奉十分取一之物的例（历代志下第29-31章）。在如此虔诚的顺服真道以后，到了他必须与侵略的军队对抗时，他却必须独自面对死亡。希西家关心的事反映在第二节里。他转脸朝墙，向他的神祷告。

希西家的祷告被记在第三节里，他说：“耶和华啊！求你纪念我在你面前怎样存完全的心，按诚实行事，又作你眼中所看为善的。”我们看历代志下31:20-21里关于他生平的记载，就知道希西家说这些话时并不是在自夸。“希西家在犹大遍地这样办理，行耶和华他神眼中看为善为正为忠的事。凡他所行的，无论是办神殿的事，是遵律法守诫命，是寻求他的深，都是尽心去行，无不亨通。”

从希西家祷告的话语可以清楚地知道他当时不想死。让我们来看一下他所关心的事情：

1. 他对耶路撒冷百姓的挂念：他觉得百姓们比以前任何时刻都更需要他。列王纪下20:5里平行记录了神回应他的祷告时，神让以赛亚去告诉“我民的君”，会治好他。“君”只有一次被用来称呼希西家，但是很多次这样称呼大卫，大卫就是“耶和华立他做百姓的君”的那个人（撒母耳记上13:14）。希西家因为关心他的百姓，神把他视为和大卫一样的成功人士。2. 精神方面：在他死亡的那一刻，他可以清楚意识到的与神之间的关系就会终止。在第18节里，他说：“原来阴间不能称谢你，死亡不能颂扬你，下坑的人不能盼望你的诚实。”这句话时引用的诗篇6:5的诗句，这是大卫所作的诗篇之一：“因为在死地无人纪念你，在阴间有谁称谢你？”希西家在信仰上效仿大卫，甚至引用了大卫曾经说过的话，显然希西家并不认为他会有不死的灵魂。

3. 身体方面：在列王记上 3: 14 里，神对所罗门说：“你若效法你父亲大卫，遵行我的道，谨守我的律例，诫命，我必使你长寿。”希西家年仅 39 岁，并不算一个老人。他把大卫当作他生命的榜样，毫无疑问，他也期待神赐福他长寿。

4. 将来坐他王位的儿子：列王记下 2:4 里讲到那时大卫死期将近，神对他说：“你的子孙若谨慎自己的行为，尽心尽意诚实地行在我面前，就不断人做以色列的国位。”现在希西家也快要死了，他甚至没有一任妻子，也没有一个儿子可以坐他的王位。他的儿子玛拿西是在这件事发生三年以后才出生的。

希西家把自己的请求建立在神与大卫的关系的基础上，因为他知道神应许大卫会保守以色列人。

同样的道理，当我们今天相聚一堂掰饼祝酒，心中不存疑惑地献上我们的祷告时，我们会祷告第三节里的内容吗？我们会像希西家一样那么虔诚吗？弟兄姐妹们，如果我们在末世能够被拯救的话，不是因为 ourselves 自己做了什么，而是因为比大卫更加伟大的那位基督的缘故。

神对希西家的回应是迅速的。以赛亚离开希西家以后，就往耶路撒冷下面自己的家里去了，但在他还没有到中院的时候，耶和華的话临到他，叫他回到王那里去，神的话是这样的：“你回去，告诉我民的君希西家说：‘耶和華你祖大卫的神如此说：我听见了你的祷告，看见了你的眼泪，我必医治你。到第三日，你必上耶和華的殿。我必加增你十五年的寿数，并且我要救你和这城脱离亚述王的手。我为自己和我仆人大卫的缘故，必保护这城。’”（列王记下 20: 5-6）

神给了希西家两个应许：* 第一：神将会拯救这城 * 第二：神会救他 在第二个应许里面，神告诉希西家他的寿数必增加 15 年。希西家的抱怨之一就是他将命绝于中年（第 10 节）。神的这项祝福有力地，有效的双倍增加了他在位的时间，因为当时他正作王十四年。

希西家求神给他行一件奇事，让他三天后可以进到圣殿里。以赛亚带着神的回应来了。在 38: 7-8 节里，说神将移动亚哈斯（希西家的父亲）的日晷，让日影往后移 10 度。这一节圣经钦定版本的翻译（可能也包括中文的翻译）很难理解，“日晷”和“度”这两个词在希伯来语里是同一个词，都应该翻译成“阶梯”。列王记下 23: 12 节告诉我们在亚哈斯的房子的楼顶上有一个坛。当时上到楼顶的阶梯被用来像日晷一样标志一天的时间。因此，第 8 节应当理解为神会把亚哈斯楼上的阶梯的阴影向后移 10 级台阶。我们可以假设希西家在他的床榻上可以看到这些阶梯，见证了这样的奇事。这个奇事象征着神会把希西家生命的时钟往回拨，赐他长寿。

希西家痊愈以后，以一篇感恩的诗篇记录了他的经历。这就是我们在以赛亚书 38: 10-20 里所看到的。这首诗被分为两个部分：

第 10-14 节：以“我说”开始，讲述希西家的痛苦和绝望。第 15-20 节：以“我可说什么呢？”开始，讲述希西家求助于神，赞美神。下面，让我们来看一下他所表达的一些思想。

在第 10 节，希西家告诉我们他作为一个中年人面对死亡的痛苦。这些话语体现了他切身的悲痛。他因为丧失了原本期待得到的长寿的年岁而感到失望。第 11 节里，希西家为自己在地上活着与神相交的关系的完结而哀悼。然后，第 12 节里他举例说明了自己讲这话的意思。生命像牧人的帐篷一样，只是暂时的。此刻在这儿驻扎，下一刻又拔营而去，居无定所。生命就像织布的卷布一样，生命的种种经历，一丝一缕都被织在卷布里，织布者的目的是要织完布料，但是对希西家来说，布却被人从机头剪断了，还没有完成就被抛弃了。

第 13 节里希西家描述了他看到苦难像一头狮子一样折磨他，伤害他，折断他的骨头的情景。他毫无抵抗的能力，对自己的病痛无能为力。他为神如此对待他而感到失望。

希西家总结以上的事，又转向神。希西家被先知以赛亚传递的神的话语：“耶和华你祖大卫的神如此说：我听见了你的祷告，看见了你的眼泪，我必医治你...”感动了。他不知所措，无法言语。“我可说什么呢？”（以赛亚书 38：15），不可思议的，神治愈了他。神回应了他的祷告，他说：“我因心里的苦楚，在一生的年日，必悄悄而行”。他曾经控诉神对他的虐待，像一头狮子一样来到他的面前，把他从机头剪断，拆毁他的帐篷。如今，他为这些想法而懊悔，发誓余生将谦卑的服事神。

第 16 节里他讲到自己受到的医治。他的身体已经痊愈，这里讲的是精神上的治愈。他重新站起来，虔诚地生活。

然后，希西家认自己的罪（以赛亚书 38：17）。他曾经受大苦，现在他认为这是使自己得益处。“我受大苦，本为使我的平安”。现在他知道了自己曾经如此接近死亡其实是大有益处的。传道书 7：2 里讲到相同的观点：“往遭丧的家去，强如往宴乐的家去；因为死是众人的结局，活人也必将这事放在心上。”这些是希西家确实的感受。

他曾经直面死亡和无望的坟墓（第 18 节），因此，他一定会让以后的世代学到他所学的功课（以赛亚书 38：19）。所有明智的父亲都会像希西家一样教导自己的儿女神的真道这样美妙的事情。

第 20 节总结了希西家的祷告，回应了他最大的愿望。以赛亚告诉他说他将会在三天后进到耶和华的殿中。希西家把话题转移到这样的祝福上，希望余生在神的殿中唱诗歌，以赞美拯救他的神。那些诗歌应该包括很多希西家自己写的歌。诗篇 120-134 中有 10-15 篇是希西家写的，这些诗篇被称作“上行之诗集”。

看了发生在希西家身上的这些事以后，我们大概会奇怪神为什么要让他经历这样的磨难？希西家这样一个虔敬的人，神为什么要在他如此年轻的时候夺走他的生命？—特别是当他活下去，对以色列百姓有更大的价值的时候。答案是实际上希西家所经受的磨难对其他人有益。毫无疑问，他自己受益，同时也因为他受到这些事的冲击，立刻开始组织编纂《诗篇》和《箴言》（参看箴言 25：1），以便把自己所学到的教给后代。最好的是，希西家大概希望自己能活 70 年，但是因为这次磨难，他被记入史册，流芳百世。

今天早上我们来纪念主耶稣基督的献祭，他比希西家更伟大，他忍受所有苦难，而且拯救了他的弟兄。神定意将他压伤，将他从活人之地被剪除，拯救与他同世的人（以赛亚书 53 章）。希西家三天之后行在神的殿中，象征从坟墓里复活，这就是耶稣的喻表。所以神让他的儿子三天之后复活得到永生。尽管我们的主只活了 33 年，但他的贡献就像希西家一样，流芳百世，教育后人。让我们为神为耶稣基督，为我们，以及为过去那些像希西家一样虔敬，甘心忍受磨难的人所作的一切来感谢神。同时我们也感激对死亡真正意义的认识。让我们在生命的每一天永不停止地唱歌赞美神吧！

Exhortation for Sunday 15th June — Isaiah 38 — Bro Neville C.

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

Our readings over the last month have taken us through much of the prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah wrote between the years 750-700BC, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The small section between chapters 36-39 is unique in the prophecy because it records the history (rather than the prophecy) of the invasion of Judah by Assyria in the year 701BC. This morning, by way of exhortation, we shall consider chapter 38 as we prepare to partake of the emblems together.

Verse 1 begins by telling us that “in those days, Hezekiah was sick unto death.” The days being spoken of are the days of the Assyrian invasion (v6), which was in the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign (36:1). The northern kingdom of Israel had been taken into captivity eight years earlier. Now the Assyrians looked to expand their empire to include Judah in the south.

Hezekiah was 39 years old and had become very ill. Verse 21 tells us that Hezekiah had a single boil. It appears as though that boil had become so infected that he had contracted blood poisoning and that his condition was extremely serious. His illness occurred at the very same time that the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the massive and powerful Assyrian army, under the control of Sennacherib. Though Hezekiah would have wanted to lead the defence of the city, his own death looked imminent. Isaiah told him to “set his house in order”, that is to make provision for the succession of the throne, because he would die (v1).

It is difficult to appreciate what this must have meant to Hezekiah. For the last 14 years, he had guided the nation wisely, purged the land of idolatry, cleansed the temple, re-instituted the Passover and restored tithing (2Chron 29-31). After such a faithful service of the Truth, it was serious enough for him to have to contend with a military invasion, let alone have to face death through illness. Hezekiah’s concern at these events is reflected in verse 2. He turned towards the wall, and prayed to his God.

Hezekiah' s prayer is recorded in verse 3. He said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight" .

Hezekiah was not boasting when he said this for we read about his life to that point in 2 Chronicles 31:20-21: "Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" .

From the words of his prayer it is clear Hezekiah did not want to die at that time. Let us consider what concerned him right then: 1. His concern for the people in Jerusalem. He felt they needed him now more than they had any other time. When God answers his prayer in the parallel record in 2Kings 20:5, he tells Isaiah to go and tell "the captain of My people" that I will heal him. The title "captain" is used only once of Hezekiah, but numerous times of David, the man who "Yahweh commanded to be captain over his people Israel" (1Sam 13:14). Hezekiah saw himself as a successor to David in his concern for his people. 2. For himself spiritually. At the instant of death, his conscious relationship with God would end. In verse 18 he said, "For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" . This is a quotation from Psa 6:5, one of the psalms of David: "In death there is no remembrance of Thee. In the grave, who shall give Thee thanks?" Hezekiah modelled his spiritual life on that of David, even speaking words once spoken by David. Obviously Hezekiah did not think he had an immortal soul. 3. For himself physically. In 1Kings 3:14, God said to Solomon, "If thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days." Hezekiah is only 39 years old. He was not an old man. He had modelled his life on that of David and no doubt expected to be blessed with a long life. 4. For a son to sit on his throne. At the very time David himself was dying in 1Kings 2:4, God said to him, "If thy children walk before me in truth, with all their heart, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel." Now Hezekiah was about to die and he did not even have a wife, or a son to sit on his throne. Manasseh, his only son was not born for another three years.

Hezekiah made his petition on the basis of God' s relationship with David, because he knew God had made promises to David and that He would keep them.

In a similar way, we meet this morning to break bread and drink wine. We will no doubt add our prayers to that offered communally for the emblems. Will we pray the prayer of v3? Are we even as faithful as Hezekiah? Brothers

and Sisters, if we are saved in the last day, it will not be for anything we have done, but for Christ' s sake, the greater than David.

Well, the response was immediate. After leaving Hezekiah, Isaiah made his way to his house in the lower city of Jerusalem. But before he had reached the middle of the city, God spoke to him and told him to return to the king. God' s words were, "Turn again and tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people. Thus saith Yahweh, the God of David, I have heard thy prayer and seen thy tears. I will heal thee, on the third day thou shalt go up into the house of Yahweh (the temple), and will add to thy days 15 years. I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for David my servant' s sake." (2Kings 20:5-6).

Hezekiah was given two promises: • firstly that God would save the city, and • secondly that God would save him.

In the context of this second promise, he was told that his life would be extended 15 years. One of Hezekiah' s complaints was that he had been cut off in the midst of his days (v10, the word "cutting off" means "midst"). This blessing would effectively double the length of his reign, since he was presently in his 14th year.

Hezekiah asks for a sign that he could enter the temple in 3 days. The answer comes back from Isaiah in verses 7-8. God would move the shadow on the sundial of Ahaz (Hezekiah' s father) back by 10 degrees. The translation in the AV (and perhaps in the Chinese version) is difficult in this verse. The words "sundial" and "degrees" are the same word in the Hebrew, and should both be rendered "steps" . 2 Kings 23:12 tells us that there was an upper room of Ahaz with an idolatrous altar on the top of it. It appears that the flight of steps leading up to this upper chamber was used like a sundial to mark the time of the day. Therefore, verse 8 should read that God would move the shadow on the steps of Ahaz backwards by 10 steps. Hezekiah could presumably see these steps from his bedchamber and would witness the sign that very day. In symbol, God would turn the clock back for Hezekiah and give him an extension of life.

After his recovery Hezekiah then set about recording his experience in a psalm of thanksgiving. This is what we read in Isa 38:10-20. The psalm breaks into two sections: v10-14 which begins with the words "I said" , speaking of his suffering and despair v15-20 which begins with the words "What shall I say?" , recording his deliverance and praise to God.

Let us look at some of the thoughts he expresses.

In Verse 10 Hezekiah tells us of his anguish at facing death as a young man. There is a certain bitterness in these words. He felt upset that he was being robbed of years which he might reasonably have expected to have received.

In Verse 11 he laments the fact that his relationship with God in the land of the living would terminate. He then illustrates what he means in Verse 12. Life is as temporary as a nomadic shepherd's tent. Here one minute, gone the next. Again, life is like the fabric in the loom of the weaver. The textures of life's experiences are threaded into the weave. The objective of the weaver is to finish the cloth, but in Hezekiah's case, the cloth is cut off from the loom, unfinished and discarded.

In Verse 13 Hezekiah describes how he saw the agony of suffering as a lion, mauling him and breaking his bones. He was powerless to resist the ravages of his disease. And it upset him that God could treat him like this.

He concludes his prayer looking to his God. Then in walks the prophet Isaiah. "Thus saith Yahweh the God of David, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears. I will heal thee ..." Hezekiah is overcome. He is at a loss for words. "What shall I say?" v 15. He has been healed miraculously. His prayer has been answered. He says "I will go softly or humbly all my years in or because of the bitterness of my soul". He had accused God of mistreating him, coming upon him like a lion, tearing him off the loom, collapsing his tent. He regrets these feelings now and vows to serve God in humility for the rest of his life.

In verse 16 he speaks of the healing he is undergoing. He has already been physically healed. This is the record of his spiritual healing. He has been recovered and made to live spiritually.

And now the confession (verse 17). He had been in great bitterness. He sees now that it was for his own benefit. "For my peace (welfare), I had been in great bitterness". He now understands the benefit to life of having come so close to death. Ecclesiastes 7:2 comments on the same point: "It is better to go into the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better". These are the very feelings of Hezekiah.

He had been brought face to face with death and the hopelessness of the grave (v18). Therefore he will ensure that following generations learn the same lesson he has learnt (v19). All wise fathers will do as Hezekiah did and teach their children the wonders of God's truth.

Verse 20 concludes his prayer and answers his greatest wish. He had been told by Isaiah that he would go up into the house of Yahweh in three days. He reflects upon this blessing and looks forward to spending the rest of his life in the house of God singing songs of praise to the God who saved him. Those songs would include many which Hezekiah wrote himself. Hezekiah wrote 10 of the 15 psalms between Psalm 120–134. These Psalms are called the “Songs of Degrees” .

Having considered these events that came upon Hezekiah, we might wonder why God required him to undergo such a trial. Why, given that Hezekiah was such a godly man, was God going to take his life at such a young age - especially when it would appear that he was much more valuable to the nation of Israel if he remained alive. The answer is that Hezekiah’ s trial was substantially for the benefit of other people. No doubt he benefited himself, but because of the shock these events gave him, he immediately set about organising the books of Psalms and Proverbs (see Prov 25:1) in order that he might teach the lessons he had learnt to subsequent generations. At best, Hezekiah might have hoped to have lived 70 years, but because of this trial, he made a contribution to scripture that has endured for thousands of years.

We come this morning to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater than Hezekiah, the man who endured all these things, and more, that he might save his brethren. It pleased God to bruise him and to cut him off from the land of the living with no one to declare his generation (Isa 53) but as Hezekiah, in a typical resurrection from the grave, walked again in the house of God after three days, so after three days God raised His Son to life for evermore. Although our Lord only lived 33 years, his contribution to scripture, like Hezekiah’ s, has endured for thousands, and has abundantly instructed subsequent generations. Let us continually thank God for him and his work on our behalf, and for other faithful men like Hezekiah who have gone before and suffered that we might appreciate the real issues of life and death. And let us therefore never cease to sing the praises of God all the days of our lives.

N. C.