

"Reaction to Attack"
Isaiah Chapters 36:1 – 37:38
Lin Sarfaraz

Memory Verse: Isaiah 37:1 - "Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple to spread it out before The Lord."

Are you enjoying this study in Isaiah? ... I am! Last week's lecture on "Joy for Zion" was awesome. Dennis did a great job as always. The week before was Dan's lecture on "Forget Egypt ... Remember God" which was also enlightening and encouraging. In my opinion each lesson has built to the next one, each one providing us with an increasing awareness of God's expectation of his people and his plans for his holy city and the remnant.

Dan reminded us of the when, who, why and what of being tested by the Lord. God's testing is designed to know our hearts, to identify our sin and to draw us closer to him. This process is essential to count us among the redeemed.

I agree with Dennis last week that studying and speaking about the center of Isaiah is just so exciting, and a great honor. (Dennis, I'm the one who gets to share about the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers! What a privilege! I hope I handle it half as well as you would.)

Isaiah 35:8 (NLT) ... "And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. ... It will be only for those who walk in God's ways."

A Highway of Holiness I cannot wait to walk on it! Amen? In fact, I can't wait to run on that highway. I've become a runner of sorts the past few years. In my imagination running on the Highway of Holiness would be like running on a long, smooth, level highway in cool, clear weather with an ocean view on one side and a mountain

view on the other. That would be such a sense of peace and pure joy.

Have you ever wondered why the God of all creation planned all this? Well, I believe it is no coincidence that the very center of the Bible and the center of the book of Isaiah provide the answer.

Psalms 117: "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord."

As Dennis shared last week, the middle chapter of the Bible is Psalms 117. It bears repeating. "*All nations and people are to praise the Lord for his merciful kindness toward us. And again, we are to praise the Lord.*"

I confess that this Old Testament book is having quite an impact on me. I find it to be an *advanced class* in living a Christian faith. That's the thing about the Holy Spirit; he seems to find you where you're at and takes you higher and deeper and more real into your walk with God. I dare say this was the challenge that King Hezekiah was confronted with in the face of attack by his adversaries.

To this point Isaiah has been teaching about the sinfulness of pride and its consequences. Through him, God speaks to the people of Judah and promises his protection from the mighty Assyrian army. Prior to this point Hezekiah was fearful in fully trusting God to deliver all he promised. He doubted that Yahweh could protect Jerusalem and his people in the face of a formidable adversary as King Sennacherib and his army.

We have all experienced times in our lives where we feel the attack of those who would try to conquer our thinking and our actions. Such adversaries may only value us for the benefit we hold for their lives and self-interest. To surrender to their cause means we must compromise or sacrifice our own beliefs and goals. To surrender means we become invisible and non-existent. It represents another form of exile and death. Such a time can bring great internal fear. We have all faced such a time in our lives. However, with great fear there are often great blessings. It comes down to a matter of trust.

In our more recent lessons, Isaiah has been urging us to trust God in even the most difficult of circumstances. Now in chapters 36-39 he answers our deepest spiritual questions.

- Does faith work right here, right now, or is faith just a remote vindication at the End Times when Christ returns?
- Is faith in God a smart policy for real life in the here and now?
- Does God really intervene in our experience?
- Is God really the King of this world we live in today?

The answer to all these questions is YES, because God is with us even today.

The truth is that tough times either separate us from God – or they bring us closer to Him. The question from Isaiah is:

- Will you go deeper with God?
- Do you have the courage to get real with God in the face of physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual attack?

Chapters 36-39 form a bridge between the first and second halves of the book of Isaiah. Chapter 36 opens with a confrontation with Assyria and next week chapter 39 will close with Babylon. Chapters 36 & 37 detail the fulfillment of Isaiah's predictions concerning the fall of Assyria. Even the language in these 4 chapters changes from poetry to prose. This interlude also includes 3 significant miracles for the Israelites.

This week's lesson is a drama among 3 kings:

- King Sennacherib of Assyria,
- King Hezekiah of Judah,
- and the King of the Universe, Yahweh himself.

It is a triangle of confrontation that we can relate to today. We've all experienced a "King Sennacherib" in our lives, someone who is set on attacking our peace and taking our lives captive. Perhaps you relate more to King Hezekiah who felt fear and panic in the face of attack, with the impulse to seek someone or something to rescue his nation. Perhaps you too are on a journey to understand the purpose and value of a real faith in the one true God of the Universe. Perhaps you also find relevance in the drama over Jerusalem this week.

In a national and personal crisis, King Hezekiah had to choose whether to trust:

- political allies like Egypt,
- the words of the representatives of the invading Assyrian army,
- or God.

Prayer and trust in God brought deliverance from the enemy and healing from sickness.

King Hezekiah found himself in an impossible situation. Death stared him in the eye in the person of King Sennacherib. People assumed Hezekiah would have to surrender

Isa 36: ² Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. When the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Lauderer's Field,

and, in doing so, accept exile or death. Instead, Hezekiah went to the prophet Isaiah and then, at his word, to God in prayer. A transformed kingdom resulted, at least for a while.

⁴ The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah: "'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? ⁵ You say you have counsel and might for war—but you speak only empty words. **On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me?** ⁶ Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. ⁷ But if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar"?"

Lachish would have been one of the first stops on Sennacherib's tour of destruction in Judah.

The central theme of the message of the Assyrian field commander is authority. The Assyrians claimed total power in the face of King Hezekiah and his God, Yahweh.

The field commander is called "Rabshakeh" in Hebrew, apparently a transliteration of the Akkadian term that means "chief cub-bearer". The Assyrian official was a diplomat, not a military officer. The accompanying military force was to protect him and not to begin the battle against Jerusalem.

The central word of this narrative is "trust" or "faith" or "confidence" or "depend on". The key to chapter 36 is the taunt by the Rabshakeh, "Now in whom do you trust?" (verse 5) We always live on the cutting edge of faith; either faith in God or faith in something else. In whatever struggle you are now facing, in whom do you trust?

- Central Word:
- Trust
 - Faith
 - Confidence
 - Depend on

There is always some voice in life whispering to us that God is not a resource, that he is a problem. Whose voices will we believe, whose wisdom will we follow, whose hope will we cherish and live for? In whom do we trust now?

There are two worlds that exist simultaneously; one world is dominated by man and the other higher world of the Creator, the eternal world. These two worlds are in conflict. Everyone is caught up in this spiritual tension, whether they know it or not. We are told by this world that human power is the only reality that counts, that we can bank on only what we see before us. But that way of thinking kills our higher sense of purpose and quenches the Holy Spirit. It reduces mankind to mediocrity.

⁵ You say you have counsel and might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me

Christians understand there is another way to live, drawing strength from that higher world. We call it living by faith. It means living as if God really exists and really rewards those who seek him. However, sometimes Christians have vague ideas about how that kind of living works out. Sometimes Christians live by a creedal faith rather than a daring faith.

- Creedal Faith
- Daring Faith
- Audacious Faith

What do I mean by that? A **creedal faith** says "I believe in God the Father Almighty", but it is only a beginning point. A **daring faith** is what God calls

us

to live by because the world is daring us to live by faith. But through Isaiah, God is calling Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to practice an **audacious faith**, and that faith the world cannot understand.

I have an analogy that may help you understand these 3 kinds of faith. Faith is having trust or confidence in something or someone that you cannot see or touch. By profession I am a dental hygienist and I clean people's teeth for a living. Usually, I explain it with more finesse and in clinical terms, but that's it in a nutshell. Now going to the dentist to have your teeth cleaned is not something most people look forward to.

My guess is only 1 or 2 of you here will claim that you *love* to have your teeth cleaned. Most people go to the dentist because they know it's good for them and that they should. It takes some degree of trust or faith to sit in a dental chair, lie back into the lap of the hygienist and trust or have faith that she (or he) is going to treat you with care and gentleness. THAT ... is a *creedal* trust or confidence. With a creedal trust it doesn't take much for a patient to defer to any excuse to postpone their dental appointment.

I have worked at my current dental office for nearly 20 years. In that time, I have acquired a regular case load of patients that choose or prefer to have their teeth cleanings scheduled with me. After 2-3 times of seeing the same hygienist, patients develop a feeling of comfort and trust. In fact, patients who see the same hygienist or dentist time after time become rather attached to you. They develop a sense of trust in you. THAT ... is a *daring* trust or faith. With a daring trust patients will override those fears and anxieties that would otherwise give them a reason to miss their dental appointment. I appreciate that trust.

Now ... how many of you have ever fallen asleep in the dental chair while you're being worked on? (None?) I thought so In 40 years of cleaning people's teeth, I have had only 3 patients ever fall asleep while I was working on them. How did I know they were asleep? They snored! The first time it happened, I was so shocked. I wondered what I should do. The man's mouth was open and he was comfortable. I decided that he must trust me and that I would wake him up when I was finished. It worked for me! THAT ... is an *audacious* trust!

The king of Assyria asks, "In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against

⁶ Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. ⁷ But if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar"? ⁸ "Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria:

me?" Trust and loyalty always go together. We obey whoever or whatever we trust. Trust is more creedal; it is practical. It stirs up controversy and conflict, because we yield to the One we trust. And we resist the one we don't trust. The king of Assyria ends up defining the source of daring Christian rebellion – a conviction that God is the best ally anyone can find.

King Hezekiah's reform sought to eliminate idol worship, which occurred mainly on high hills so the people worshipped only the true God. The field commander of Assyria claimed that Hezekiah had insulted God by tearing down his altars and making the people worship only in Jerusalem. In the same way Satan tries to confuse or deceive us. People

don't necessarily need to be sinful to be ineffective for God; they need only to be confused about what God wants.

Arrows of Intimidation:

- Doubt
- Half-truths
- Ridicule
- Threats
- Cajolery (persuasion by flattery or promise)

The Assyrian field commander sent arrows of intimidation meant to cause panic:

- Doubt – “Do you really think Egypt will help you?”
- Half-truths – He accused Hezekiah of tearing down the high altars so the people must worship at the temple.
- Ridicule – Assyria would supply horses, but

Judah didn't have enough men to ride them.

- Threats – Things are going to get so bad that the Jews will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine.
- Cajolery (persuasion by flattery or promise) – If Judah would surrender, they would have plenty of food and comfort in a beautiful new land.

¹¹ Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.”

Judah's soldiers sat on the city wall protecting their envoys. The envoys were in such a delicate situation that they did not want the loyal soldiers to understand the bargaining process, so they pled for the use of Aramaic, the official diplomatic language, rather than Hebrew, the local language. This encouraged Rabshakeh to shout louder, including the soldiers in their conversation.

The soldiers faced a choice:

- To trust Hezekiah and his theological promises,
- Or to trust the king of Assyria to provide food rather than starvation and a new home in the exotic and powerful land of Assyria.

Assyria's authority was asserted and Hezekiah's and Yahweh's was denied. The struggle was on over who to trust.

Next the Rabshakeh turns up the volume. The key word in this scene is "deliver", which occurs 7 times. To "deliver" means to extract, to draw out, to snatch away from danger. What Isaiah wants us to see is how the Rabshakeh parodies God's promises of deliverance. The Rabshakeh speaks in the form of a royal decree as "Thus says The Lord." Here are 2 kings and 2 decrees, both offering deliverance. The Rabshakeh is a false prophet, offering a false peace.

¹³ Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, “Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you!

God had promised his people peace and security in their own land. But a counterfeit deliverance is being dangled in front of God's people. One of the devil's tactics is to offer us what seems a lot like a blessing of God. All he asks is that we make peace with evil and surrender. When the Rabshakeh mocks The Lord as just another idol, he seals his own fate.

Evil eventually overplays its hand. The human arrogance blindly challenging God may appear powerful, but it cannot succeed here in God's world. The Lord is not one more idol. He is not even the greatest of this world's gods, He is of another order entirely. Yahweh is from beyond this world, and he will have the whole world know it. Our part is to honor him by trusting him as the true God that he is. And he enters in with real deliverance through our bold faith.

²¹ But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him."

The Israelites, to their credit and in obedience to Hezekiah, remained silent. What a great comeback to intimidation - SILENCE!

Now here is where this lesson had an *ah-ha* moment for me. My dad had a saying that he often told me. It was, "Silence is golden." I have shared that I grew up in a volatile home environment. My parents divorced when I was young and the relationship between them was always contentious. My father had a quiet, peaceful, and passive temperament, but my mother was the driven and never-satisfied type. In her mind all of her troubles were my father's fault.

I always found it amazing that in spite of many court appearances, some police involvement and lots of arguing my father's standard explanation to us kids was "Silence is golden." I never understood why Dad could be so passive and complacent in the face of such anger and personal attack. It seemed cowardly in fact. Why Dad never seemed to defend himself. He never spoke in anger against our mother. He would just visibly pray and depend on God.

Now ... I understand the audacious faith of my dad. What appeared to be weakness and passivity actually took great strength and fortitude to depend on God when there was nothing else ... literally. I see now how silence in obedience to God is truly golden. A golden silence is stepping back, using that moment to pray and allowing God to take control, according to His plan.

This is one of the turning points in the history of God's people. They are at their end, surrounded by an overwhelmingly superior force. The enemy is gloating over royal Jerusalem, saying "Checkmate!" Wonder what move Judah will make next? All they have left is God. Will they try to rescue their pride and negotiate their own way out of

37 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD.

this? Or, for the first time in a long time, will they stop faking it and go deeper with God?

To his lasting credit, Hezekiah gets real with God, unlike his father Ahaz. He goes into the house of The Lord. He understands that what really matters is not his relationship with the king of Assyria, but his relationship with the King of Heaven. He can see that nothing will suffice but what is directly and immediately of God. His faith is no superficial optimism. We know that because he tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth. He is soberly realistic about what is happening. He disregards his appearance and turns to God in deep need.

Hezekiah's first concern is the honor of God in the world. The king of Assyria is "mocking the living God." And Judah is the reason for it. Hezekiah's heart is breaking for the right reason.

Hezekiah is saying, "Lord, this isn't about me. This is a direct attack on you. You can't let this letter go unanswered ... That is why I am asking you to save us - 'that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are The Lord.'"

That's a different way of praying. What inspired Hezekiah to do that? He finally understands the meaning of his life. His existence is a platform for the display of God's glory in the world. He is not treating God as a means to his own ends, but as the worthy end of all things. He has become a God-centered man, and he is courageously undaunted because of it.

We need to pray this way. We need to see our lives this way and be the living proof that God saves sinners. Why is God there? Not to service our convenience and our selfish dreams, but to display his glory in our salvation. And when his glory becomes our passion, we are not robbed and we are not diminished. Rather, we are dignified because we overcome evil. Evil is secondary, derivative, parasitic and temporary. Only God is ultimate. Let his ultimacy change the whole agenda of your life.

Hezekiah finally sees what Isaiah has been saying all along. It is not this world with whom we have to deal with primarily; it is always God. It is not human power that we need; what we need is God. He has allied himself with us, not to serve our will, but to defend his own glory as we serve his will.

Have you come to realize how the God-centeredness of God is good news for you? It means that your unworthiness is irrelevant to God's readiness to save you. He is not responding to what you deserve; he is proving what a good Savior he is. This opens up a new definition of happiness for us. Happiness is God being God to you. Stop praying for God to make your life better, or to make my husband or wife better, or to make my children make better choices, or to give me the ideal job. When you pray that way, you can only end up frustrated because God will not subordinate himself to any

human agenda. Start praying for God just to be God to you and for your life, with all its problems, to show the world that He saves sinners.

How does God handle the king of Assyria? Not by meeting his force with force. God is subtle. He flies in under man's radar, enters into his psyche and changes his mood. God sends Sennacherib a rumor, a mere whisper, which gets him worried. Sennacherib picks up, goes home, and is eventually killed in his own place of safety. The people of Judah don't go out and whip the Assyrians by their own force of arms. God does it for

⁶ Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. ⁷ Listen! When he hears a certain report, I will make him want to return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.'"

them with a spiritual, irresistible strategy. That is how God dispatches the blasphemer who had boasted, "Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?" The "mere words" of a rumor did him in!

Now why is this story in the Bible? Because unbelief still sneers at faith in God, we still lose our nerve, and God is still there to deliver us ... if we'll get real with him. He only wants us to trust him with a daring faith, and even with an audacious faith.

We are often weak. But to get fresh courage, we don't have to look inside ourselves and ask, "How much faith do I have?" We should look to God and ask, "What new step of audacious obedience do you want me to take now? How can my life be a prophetic statement to those in my life that you are a reliable Savior, as you've promised?" Thinking in terms of God first, we will find new courage. Remember that testing by God that Dan talked about 2 weeks ago, this is where that applies.

If God were to show us in one instant the full meaning of living by faith, we might all gasp and say, "Nobody can live that way, not in this world." That's why he keeps throwing our lives into upheaval. He wants us to experience what it's like for him to come through when the only thing that will suffice is what is directly and immediately of God. He wants us to be living proof that he is real, as we dare to treat him as the greatest ally in the universe.

Whatever your challenge is today, it is a gift of God. He wants you to see his deliverance for his glory. Realize the drama you're a part of. Realize the full meaning of what's happening to you. God is in your crisis.

The triumphal procession of Sennacherib drew nearer, 6 miles north of Lachish to Libnah. Sennacherib tried to hurry the bargaining process. The Assyrian king claimed the evidence of history that the other gods could not protect their holy cities. The question again rested on the element of trust: should one rely on God's history or on Sennacherib's history?

The king of Assyria is brash enough to identify exactly what's at stake in all this maneuvering: "Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you." God had assured Hezekiah that he would get rid of the king of Assyria. "I will make him fall by the sword in his own land." But now the Assyrian king is saying to not believe any messages you're getting from God.

In his own perverse way, Sennacherib is being helpful. He objectifies the question at the heart of our struggles: *Will we stake our lives on the truthfulness of God?* After all it's his integrity that's on the line in what becomes of us if we're living for him. Do we believe that God will defend himself by defending us? Are we so allied with God that we know he is allied with us?

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

Hezekiah prayed to the "Lord Almighty" who was enthroned between the cherubim, a description of God based on the ark of the covenant where God met his people.

He claimed that Yahweh alone was God over all the kingdoms of the earth. He made such a brash statement against Sennacherib in what appeared to be the darkest moment of Israel's history when the world's leading military power stood before their gates and threatened

⁹ Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the king of Cush, was marching out to fight against him. When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word: ¹⁰ "Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, 'Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.' ¹¹ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? ¹² Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessor deliver them ...

to wipe them out. Victory itself has a theological purpose. Sennacherib's words were an insult to God himself. God responded because Hezekiah prayed about the decision he faced.

Trusting in God gives us the courage to overcome the world. And faith gives us a sense of God, such a sense of God that he becomes more important than life itself. It's when we die to our plans and our claims and our comfort and our control, and come alive to God that his power enters in. He is not the most important thing in your life; he IS your life. When faith awakens in your heart a sense of his glory, greater than itself, that you become unstoppable.

The impulse of self-preservation kills courage. But when your personal fate is no longer what you're living for, when your own ideal life scenario of perfect health and a perfect marriage and perfect children and a perfect job and a perfect church and perfect control - when that's no longer what you're clinging to and demanding of life, when all you want is the glory of God to be put on display through your existence, that's ... when God fills you with overcoming courage.

The crucible you find yourself in right now is where God is deepening your faith. What he is accomplishing in you is more significant than any passing mood of your own. So look beyond yourself. God is giving you a sense of his glory. He is setting you apart to himself. He is awakening your faith, making you living proof that his salvation is worth anything.

²¹ Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, ²² this is the word the LORD has spoken against him:

Sennacherib has no idea whom he picked a fight with. What most offends the Holy One is the pride with which Sennacherib strutted from one victory to the next. That pride is the sin of sins. Pride is the perfect blasphemy because it denies the perfect God.

The Bible unites human initiative with divine sovereignty. God says to Hezekiah, "Because you have prayed to me ..." What if Hezekiah had not prayed to God? Human responsibility is real. What we do and don't do matters.

Divine sovereignty is also real. The purpose of God is what explains the twists and turns of history. We see in Isaiah's prophetic reasoning that both human responsibility and divine sovereignty are real and compatible. From his position of sovereignty, God opposes the human pride scarring the face of human history. Isaiah comes close to explaining the mystery of God's sovereignty interfacing with human responsibility.

³⁰ "This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: ...

³² For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Hezekiah has turned to God in absolute trust, and God never lets faith go unmet. Hezekiah turns back to God on God's terms, and God honors his faith. God promises to sustain a remnant through the Assyrian invasion and its aftermath. It will be a "sign" revealing that what gets us through is not our zeal for God, but his zeal for us. Even when we lose sight of him, God remains eager for us.

More importantly is what motivates God in all his ways for us. "I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." Why does God defend us? Not because of anything in us, but for his own sake and for the sake of the ultimate David, Jesus Christ. He is committed to us not because of us, but because of our Substitute, also Jesus Christ. That is our strong position with God.

³⁴ By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city," declares the LORD.

³⁵ "I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!"

³⁶ Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! ³⁷ So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Isaiah tells us how it all turned out. The angel of The Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrian troops - one against 185,000 and the victory was absolute. The shocking scene is depicted in only 3 verses with little detail. Why? The real drama was back in the earlier verses, when Hezekiah and God were doing serious business together.

So there goes Sennacherib, slinking off to his home in Ninevah. The perfect irony is this: just as Hezekiah went into the house of his God and got help, Sennacherib goes into the house of his god

and gets killed. The final blow fell in 681 B.C., 20 years later, no time at all for the King of the Universe. But God kept all his promises. He brought together an unlikely turn of events.

The Assyrians bragged about their exploits, but their national archives do not record their defeats. Sennacherib wrote the story of his siege on Jerusalem as, "Hezekiah, I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage." But he passed over in silence the rest of the story. However, the Old Testament tells us the truth. It puts in the open Israel's slowness to believe and Assyria's humiliating defeat. Why? Because the Bible is not about man's glory. It's about God's glory. So is your life.

There are 2 ways you can live. You can hide the ugly details of your life and try to get God to collude with you in assembling a little personal world of make-believe for

your own reputation and comfort. Or you can let God tell his story in your life. You can bow to his will and promote his glory, whatever adjustments that may require, because his glory is your salvation.

If you choose the first way, you will be endlessly frustrated. God will always seem to be against you, and you will have no fortitude. But if you choose God's way, he will draw near with empowering mercies, and you will become living proof, against the odds, that God is the true Savior.

Your decision at such a pivotal moment depends on your definition of happiness. The world says happiness is when everything is going your way. If you embrace that ideal, your happiness will be forever brittle and insecure. You will have no courage to risk anything. But there is another happiness. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Do you see how he arranges things both for his glory and your joy? Will you trust him with an audacious faith and life for his glory? If you will, then your happiness will be as secure as his glory.

Let's pray ...

Oh loving Father ... We praise you for your merciful and great kindness toward us. I pray for my brothers and sisters in faith, and for myself. I pray for our trials and tests. Let them be for your glory. Give them joy in adversity and captivity, and the fortitude to stand firm in your faith.

Thank you for this study into Isaiah and the faith lessons you have brought through them. Be with us in the coming weeks. Again, we praise your holy name because your truth endures forever. Amen