

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 • Read 2Kings 20:1–11

Questions from the Scripture text: What was happening about the same time that Sennacherib died (v1)? Who comes and tells him what from Whom? How does Hezekiah respond (v2)? What does he ask Yahweh to remember (v3)? What happens to Isaiah where (v4)? What does this Word say is God's response to what (v5)? How much longer will he live (v6)? What else will He do for that long? Why? What does Isaiah tell Hezekiah to do (v7)? With what result? For what does Hezekiah ask a sign (v8)? Whom does Yahweh's prophet give the option of which sign (v9)? How does Hezekiah "pick" (v10)? In response to what does the sign happen (v11)?

What are weak believers to do with their worries? 2Kings 20:1–11 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **when believers are worried, they should turn to God in prayer that is full of adoration, trusting that all is according to God's plan.**

God's invitations to prayer: We've recently seen in Exodus 32:7–14 how the Lord presented to Moses the situation as it was with the implication in v10 that if he prayed it would change the way the situation was. This is not a unique teaching. The Bible teaches everywhere that prayer changes things—even with the simple, "you have not because you ask not" in Jam 4:2.

Here, the Lord provokes Hezekiah to prayer by telling him the way that things stand (v1). It's a merciful message. We would all like the opportunity to set our house in order. Later, when the Lord gives him a definite time period (v6), it involves the same mercy of "knowing the times" of his life. Those who are evidently short for this world ought to set their houses in order.

And those who don't know should keep in mind that they may be summoned from this world at any moment. The Lord has shown us the mercy of teaching this to us plainly enough. It is a biblical thing to conduct our business in a way that is considerate of those whom we would leave behind if the Lord summoned us suddenly.

But Hezekiah knows God. Despite his other failings, we still remember the summary that God Himself gave us in 18:1–8. And, knowing God, he knows that knowing God makes a difference. God has ordained that godliness makes a difference. God has ordained that prayer makes a difference. And, since our own faithful working is itself the work of God's hand in our life, the godly plead those works not on the basis of merit but on the basis of grace. We plead with Him as the Creator Who made us in the first place, "Remember the work of Your hands." And when the sobbing king prays, "Remember now, O Yahweh, I pray, how I walked" (vv2–3)... he is praying now to Him as the Redeemer Who produced that walking, "Remember the work of Your hands."

The Lord teaches us the ordained effectiveness of the prayer of the righteous (cf. Jam 5:16b) even by the speediness and abruptness of His reply. The prophet hasn't been able to vacate the premises before the word of mercy returns (v4–5).

The greater mercies in every mercy. In God's answers to believers' prayers, there's always more mercy than meets the eye. We tend to see or focus on one thing at a time. Often, what we focus on is relatively small and unimportant. The mercy of Lord's answer to Hezekiah promises him is abundant: not just recovery from an illness, but fifteen years (v6a). Not just fifteen years, but deliverance from Assyria (v6b).

Yet, there is something far greater here than either the fifteen years or the military protection.

First, Hezekiah has the mercy of the Lord's personal compassion. "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you." By stating it that way in v5, the Lord communicates just how personal His intervention is in Hezekiah's and our lives. He listens to the sound of our voice. He sees when moisture leaves our eyes and wets our cheeks. He doesn't just cause healing to happen from a cosmic distance; He personally does it in a way that is literally fleshed out by many of the personal touches (literally!) in the Lord Jesus's healings. The personal compassion of God is not new in the New Testament; it is just newly visible in Christ.

Second, the Lord's mercy to Hezekiah is powerfully comprehensive. It may seem to us a small thing when v5 says "on the third day you shall go up to the house Yahweh." But this is actually the main part of the promise to which Hezekiah ends up responding in v8. What good is it to have our life extended, if it is only for this life and this world?

Even if men still had gifts of healing or even resurrection, their beneficiaries would still eventually leave this world and face the judgment. But the Lord's mercy to Hezekiah is not just healing of the body but maintenance of the soul. Yes, that was the Lord's own work in Hezekiah's life, to which the prayer in v3 had referred. And now, that spiritual work will continue. Hezekiah will continue to live as a worshiper of God.

How important this is! For, while fifteen more years is significant in earthly terms, it is exceedingly small by comparison to eternity. When believers delight in the comprehensiveness of "all things for good" (cf. Rom 8:28), let us delight that this is especially *spiritually* comprehensive. It is for the good of being conformed to the image of the Son (cf. Rom 8:29). It is for the good of moving from "justified" to "glorified" (cf. Rom 8:30). It is for the good of having Him to Whom all other things are an ancillary addition (cf. Rom 8:32).

Third, Hezekiah has the mercy of the Lord's persistent covenant. The mercy that has been so personal in his life is a part of God's eternal plan to glorify Himself ("for My own sake," v6) by the redemption that He would bring through His Son as the Son of David ("for the sake of My servant David," v6). This assures him of the certainty of this mercy, which also has the high privilege of having a place in this plan.

The great power behind every earthly mercy. Finally, we see the immense power that is at work when God responds to our prayers. The Lord had already given a sign, with the fig-poultice and the boil (v7)—a sign that itself was a reminder that God employs earthly means and our obedience in His work. But Hezekiah is still unsure.

Rather than rebuking His doubtful servant, the Lord offers him another sign, and this one is a doozy. It is not more difficult for God to suspend or accelerate time—to uphold all of existence by His naked Word, rather than all of the physical "laws" that are the normal pattern by which He does so—than it is for God to suspend the natural ways of figs and boils. This is even brought out more poignantly in the text by Hezekiah's ignorant idea that "it is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees."

And this immense power is exercised in response to prayer. The Lord does not "merely" reverse or accelerate time. He makes Hezekiah's word (v10) and Isaiah's subsequent prayer (v11) the trigger by which this occurs! Earlier, we were reminded that we personally have the ear and the eye of God (v5b). Now, we are reminded of the infinite power of Him Who responds to our lives and to our prayers (v10).

Thanks be to God Who is so personally and powerfully responding to His people's prayers and working through His people's lives, and Who rules and overrules all things for the sake of His glory and His plan to glorify the Son in redemption! How, then, ought we to live as those who have His eye, and pray as those who have His ear!

What part has prayer had in the ordinary course of your life? What part has prayer had in the intense moments of your life? When you think about the mercies that you have been desiring from God what, specifically, have you been desiring from Him? How does it compare with the greater mercies that you need from Him and should more desire? Realizing that there truly is such a thing as reward in this life and in the next—that even with Christ alone as all our worthiness, godliness makes a real difference—what changes do you hope that God's grace will work in you? To make what difference?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for being kind to us as You were to Hezekiah, and reminding us that we are short for this world and must live in a way as to honor You and do good to those whom we leave behind. Forgive us that we have not lived as those whose affairs are "set in order." We thank You and praise You that any walking before You in truth is by Your grace, any walking with a loyal heart is by Your grace, and any doing good in Your sight is by Your grace. Forgive us that we have done so little of these. Forgive us that, for what we have done, we have not given Your grace enough credit. And forgive us that we have not pleaded Your gracious work more in our prayers. We thank You that You hear our prayers and see our tears. Forgive us when we have thought of You as a God who is far off, rather than a God who is near. Forgive us when we have abused the wonderful truth of Your sovereignty to deny the wonderful truth of the usefulness of prayer and godliness. Truly, O God, You are merciful, and we are needy of that mercy. Forgive us and continue to deal with us in mercy we ask, by Your Spirit, through Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP65A "Praise Awaits You, God" or TPH520 "Whata Friend We Have in Jesus"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second kings, 20 verses 1 through 11, these are God's words. In those days, Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah, the prophet. The son of animals went to him and said to him, Thus says, yahwe set your house in order. For you shall die and not live. Then he turned his face toward the wall and prayed to Yahweh saying, Remember now.

Oh, yahai 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. And it happened before. Isaiah had gone out into the middle court. That the word of yahweh came to him saying, Return until Hezekiah the leader of my people.

Thus says y'all may god of david, your father. I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Surely, i will heal you. On the third day, you shall go up to the house of yahweh. And i will add to your days 15 years. That will deliver you in this city.

From the hand of the king of assyria. And i will defend this city. For my own sake and for the sake of my servant, david Than isaiah said. Take a lump of figs. So they took and laid it on the boil and he recovered And Hezekiah said to Isaiah.

What is the sign that yahai will heal me? And that i shall go up to the house of your day. Isaiah said, This is the sign to you from your way. That yahweh will do the thing which he has spoken. Shadow go forward, 10 degrees or backward. 10 degrees.

As a kaya answered, it is an easy thing. For the shadow to go down 10 degrees. No but let the shadow go backward and degrees. And so the prophet cried out to yahai. And he brought the shadow 10 degrees backward. By which it had gone down. On the sundial of, AS

So far, the reading of gods. Inspired inherent twerk. We see here. God's mercy to provoke. Hezekiah to prayer. It's helpful to us that we were just in Exodus. 32 7 through 14, where we saw. God, describing moses the situation as it was And yet, implying to them that if Moses prays, The situation as it was will no longer be the situation.

As it is. That the lord is a lord who responds to prayer. He uses means Prayer is one of those means. And so the lord shows Hezekiah, mercy of Letting him know where he is. And giving him instruction for what you should do. If you are, Short for this world, you're about to leave.

And he tells him set your house in order.

Sometimes. People leave this world in a way. In which it was evident to them. Before. The lord took them from this world that they were about to leave. He gives them an illness or an injury. Or in some cases, a death sentence. Just or unjust. And they have the opportunity.

To say the things that they need to say and to make the arrangements that need to make Out of consideration for those whom they will leave behind. And yet the lord has told us plainly in his word. That we don't always know. He's given us. Much understanding of the fact that any of us may leave the world at any time.

And so, This mercy that he shows Hezekiah and in a much more pointed way. He does show to all of us. As he gives us biblical, instruction and wisdom. Uh, to maintain our relationships and our affairs in this world. In a way that is considerate of those whom we will leave behind.

So that we will say, The things that we will need to have set. And we will. We will have. Our house as much as can be in the midst of life. In order. And then, especially if it is playing that we are coming to the end of life. Setting it more in order.

That way. So the lord provokes, Hezekiah to prayer and Hezekiah understands that. Hezekiah understands that. The lord is the one. And he has, Produced this. Life that he describes in verse 3. Remember oh yahweh i pray how i have walked before you in truth. And with a loyal heart.

And have done. What is good in your sight. You remember that? This is the lord's own description. Of what Hezekiah as a whole was like we saw that and chapter 18 verses 1 through 8, in which for us might have been a surprising summary because there were a few failures.

If you've pretty significant failures and as a guy's life and we tend to focus on that. We forget that any actual goodness and righteousness that comes out of someone. Comes by god's grace. So when we pray, Lord, i am your creature. We are praying. Remember the work of your hands?

And when we pray, lord, remember the good that i have done. Like we saw remember nehemiah saying, In nehemiah chapter 5. In the sabbath school. This Just a couple of days ago. We're really still saying, lord. Remember the work of your hands?

Any faithfulness that has come out of possibles from him and and that's why it gives us hope. Not that we have done something, so good that we say, Why have i fasted and prayed and made myself miserable and you have seen it? Not That's not remember. Oh lord, the work of your hands.

That's rememberable lord. The work of my hands. But there is a way of saying, remember, oh, lord, all this good that i have done. Because it was done by your grace. Continue your work of redemption and that comforts us because then Where remembering that god is at work and awesome that.

If he does the specific thing that we think we're asking for in prayer, then that's also part of his work of redeemingness. And if his answer to our prayer is different, than what we the details of what we had expected and asked for in that prayer. Then we know that it's still according to The.

It's a continuation of his redemptive mercy towards us. So prayer changes things and god is ordained it to be that way. And God is ordained godliness. To change things to to have an effect. He provokes us to pray. He tells us very simply one place, even James chapter 4 verse 2.

The second part there. You have not because you ask not. The lord. Provokes us to prayer provokes us to godliness. In his mercy now, The lord's mercy to Hezekiah is great. We see Um, him communicates to us. The the quickness of the response, the abruptness of the response, isaiah doesn't even get halfway out.

He's still hasn't passed through the middle court. When the answer comes, And he returns. And he gives the answer. But God's mercy to us, is Often much

greater than just that, which we Uh, which we had in mind. Um, He doesn't just heal Hezekiah. He he promises to heal him.

He promises to give him 15 more years. They're very significant extension of his life, doesn't just promise them. 15 more years, he promises him. Deliverance from the king of Assyria. Verse 6. But he also promises. To continue to sustain him spiritually. On the third day, you should go up to the house of yahweh.

In other words, you will still be A worshiper of the lord.

And, He places this. Preservation of him spiritually, within the context of Uh, his covenant. I will defend this city for my own sake. And for the sake of my servant, david, Now, all of these things are very Very important much greater than healing from And a particular illness. That had been so severe that he was on the point of death because even though 15 years, as a long time, for someone who is just about to die, It's rather short time.

By comparison to eternity. There's much greater mercy that he would be kept to worshiper of god. And that he would be. That the spiritual mercy, shunned to him would be Within the parameters are according to the design of being for god, sick and for david's sick. Which we know is really not so much about david, but great, david's greater thought.

The son of david, the lord jesus christ. That for his own sake. And for christ's sake. God would show us. A mercy that will last after our 15 years is up. Or whatever time we have left. You know, even if there were still Gifts of healing, and even gifts of Uh, resuscitation Those people would still eventually die.

And stand before the judgment. And if there had not been The mercy of conversion to god. Of faith and jesus christ. And A righteous standing that we get immediately in christ. Then increasingly righteous living that comes from jesus christ. Until he has made us completely righteous like jesus christ.

If you don't have that, Then all of the answers to prayers that we could get. And a temporal sense. They would have eventually. Have availed us. Not nothing. But Infinitesimal by comparison. And so when god works all things together for the good of believers, Is not talking so much.

About. Um, temporal mercies although they are reminders and they are real mercies. And the healing of Hezekiah was a real mercy and the 15 years of the real mercy and a Syria. Not, you know, succeeding over jerusalem was a real mercy. But the real mercy and all things together for good is, For the good of being conformed to the image of the sun.

For the good of getting from. Being those, he justified to those who glorified For the good of having him. Who is so great. That all other things. And all of creation are just an incillary addition. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all How are we not together with him?

Give us all things. And so we see. The true greatness of the mercy of god. Even in the manner of the reply. To Hezekiah. And finally, we see the Greatness of the power of god by which he does this mercy.

The, the Boiled fig poultice thing. On the wound. And the healing. Apparently not not a big enough sign. Uh, for Hezekiah Um this is what is the sign that yellow will hear me heel. Sorry that you always heal me that i shall go up to the house of Yahweh in the third day.

And isaiah.

Isaiah one more time. Um, Communicates to Hezekiah. The fact that prayer. Is effective and ordained to god. Ordained by god to be effective. It would have been. A powerful enough of a sign. If he had picked, if God had picked one of the two, Right. The one who can literally suspend all of the laws of physics.

You, think of all the things involved? For. The, the shadow on the sundial to be turned back. Not just talking about like, suspension of time. Uh, all of the things with light and the sun and the earth and Spinning. And Um, It's Movement on its orbit and And yet the, the lord.

Is not only the one who gives light to begin with the one who is self-existent, but he's also the one upon him. All of these things continually depend I don't just happen. Mechanically. He actively continuously sustains them all. And he is of such wisdom and power. That he can suspend.

The way that he usually sustains them. And just sustain them differently. Um, so great. This is power. But he also exercises that power. And response to prayer, he gives as Hezekiah the option. Of which way time should go. To show that. The almighty god. Bends, his infinite power. And response to the prayers of his people.

So he's not just showing. That he's going to do this because it's his plan to do this and he's able to do this. Is showing that he's going to do this. Because it's his plan to do this in response to the prayers of his people. And so he's not just able to do it.

His personally involved. Personally, merciful Then since i forgot to mention it when we were going through, it's a good. Place to point out. A little bit more of the wording and verse 5. He doesn't just say thus says y'all pay god of david, your father. Shortly, i will heal you.

It's wonderful. Shortly, i will yell you. But he says, I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Doesn't that encourage you? My dear family. That the living god, listens to the sounds. That come out of our mouth. That the live in god, who has power to suspend all of the laws of physics.

Pays attention to when moisture comes out of your eye. And what's your cheek? That he has personal. Compassion. And Personal interaction with us. He's not just Listening to Hezekiah's prayer. From some great cosmic distance. In which he, you know, to use the ancient phrase for it, upholds, the spheres.

But he who has that cosmic power. Is intimately personally involved in each one of our lives. What great mercy. Let's therefore, pray.

Father, thank you for giving us this passage at the beginning of this day. To remind us of how personally, you Observe and are involved with. Our lives. We pray that you would help us today. To remember that. We are. Eternal beings. With whom you are interacting. In our life, in this temporal world.

Grant to us to see all of the smallest mercies as real mercies of. Your powerful kindness to us. But we pray that you would. Make us mindful of eternity. And of our standing before you And of the difference that you have ordained godliness to make, And make our hearts and minds and lips quick to prayer.

Knowing that you have ordained it to something, to which you respond. Even as you so powerfully taught Hezekiah. And now by your word have taught us, And

so we pray that your spirit would persist with us. To keep us mindful of what you have taught us. For, we ask it in jesus name.

Amen.