

June 11, 2023
The Second Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

PPP-Step One

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we continue with our Pentecost Sermon Series on Powerful Prayers of Pentecost, I'd like to remind you of Daniel, who we talked about last week. There was a problem. God's people have turned away from the Lord and as a result they went into exile. Why have they turned away from the Lord? Well Daniel made it very clear in his prayer that the kings, the princes, the fathers, and the people had rebelled against the Lord. And as a result, they went into exile which was discipline or discipling. And by reading the prophet Jeremiah, Daniel had ascertained that they were almost to the end of the 70 years. So he turned to the Lord in prayer and asked the Lord to have mercy and deliver them for God's sake, to fulfill His prophecy and so that His people, who bear His name, would give Him glory. Scripture showed Daniel he needed to pray, and we saw that power of prayer as it was fulfilled 70 years after they went into exile.

Today we turn to another time, the time of the kings. Second Kings chapter 17, where we read that Assyria comes in and defeats the Northern Kingdom; what was known as Samaria, or Israel-the ten northern tribes. When they defened the people, they resettled the land by bringing in foreigners from all over. And those foreigners brought with them their own gods, their own practices, and we read there in Second Kings 17, that this pagan worship even included the sacrifices of children; burning them with fire to two different gods that are mentioned. The children of Israel who were left began to practice what we called syncretism-the merging of religions. And so we read; "so these nations feared the Lord and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise and their children's, children as their fathers did, so they do to this day."

So, they began to worship the pagan gods along with the God of Israel. At the same time, down in the southern Kingdom known as Judah. Which was Judah and the smaller tribe of Benjamin together. that's when Hezekiah becomes king. He's only 24 years old. What do we read about him; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that his father David did. Now understand King David died in 907 BC. His son Solomon then took the throne after Solomon was Rehoboam. After Rehoboam was Abijah. After Abijah was Asa. After Asa was Jehoshaphat. After Jehoshaphat was Jehoram. After Jehoram was Amaziah. After Amaziah was Uzziah. After Uzziah was Jotham. After Jotham was Ahaz. After Ahaz was Hezekiah. In the year 716 B.C. 254 years had passed, and Hezekiah was doing right before the Lord as his father-great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, grandfather had done. Talk about a father passing on a lineage! Putting it into context, that was 254 years.

Today 2023, 247 years after the formation of our country, can you tell me what your fathers did at that time? Could you even know what George Washington's children were doing up to today or Thomas Jefferson's? And do they give respect to George and Thomas? This is remarkable, the lineage and what was passed down from generation to generation- from David down; it truly is a message, going again back to what was happening in Israel. As the fathers did, their children, and their children's, children did, and they followed false gods. It's a message for us all, a week early. "Hey dads, step to the plate and be a dad, and lead your children, and your children's, children in God's word!"

So, what did Hezekiah do that was right before the Lord and in keeping with King David? Well, we read that he removed the high places which were on the tops of the hills where they did all the worship. He tore down all those pagan temples. He in fact, broke down their idols. Not only that, but he also broke the bronze serpent that Moses had made out in the wilderness because the people had given it a name and began to worship it as a god. He trusted in the Lord the God of Israel, and he kept the commandments of the Lord. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him, and then in the 7th year of his reign

Israel, Samaria, the Northern Kingdom, fell. Seven years later, the king of Assyria Sennacherib, came and took all the fortified cities of Judah. And then came up against Jerusalem. Hezekiah's first response was to tell Sennacherib I quote, "I've done wrong, withdraw from me whatever you want to pose on me, I will bear." In other words, 'what kind of a tribute do you want me to give you? I'll give it to you, and I'll keep giving you a tribute, just don't kill my people. Sennacherib's request was to demand 300 talents of silver, 30 talents of gold. A talent is roughly 66 1/2 pounds. That would make this, 19,950 pounds of silver, and 1995 pounds of gold. At today's prices, that would be \$5.7 million worth of silver, \$49 million worth of gold, for a cool \$54.7 million for a very small country, Judah. It was a little smaller than San Joaquin and Sacramento counties combined. Remember that's a huge amount for this tiny country. They didn't believe in deficit spending. Where do you get all of this? From his own personal treasury, and from the temple. He took the gold off the door and the doorpost going into the temple. He had overlaid them with gold, so he took that gold, and he sent it to Sennacherib.

So that group gladly accepted that gold and that silver and then sent his army and he had his general address all the people of Jerusalem who were standing on the wall. Hezekiah had sent out some envoys, but no, Sennacherib's general Rabshakeh, he wanted everyone to hear. And so he proclaimed loudly to everyone 'hear the great king the king of Assyria, do not let Hezekiah deceive you, do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord. Look at all the other gods, of all the other peoples. I defeated them, their people are dead. Therefore, surrender and live. I will let you stay in your land and let you farm, for a couple of years. Later I'll take you away and resemble you with other lands, but I'll give you land, I'll give you homes, I'll give you a life.'

Hezekiah's response was to tear his clothes. It was a sign of grief. He replaced those torn clothes with sackcloth, and he went to the temple to pray. He also sent an envoy to the prophet Isaiah sharing what was happening, and Isaiah told him don't be afraid. This Sennacherib, number one-he's going to be distracted, taken away from you for a little while. But number two, he will be defeated. And number three, he'll be

killed by the sword, by his own family. And sure enough, just as Isaiah had said; he was distracted. A little town about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem, Libnah rose up against the Assyrian occupiers. So, Sennacherib was distracted putting down this little rebellion in Libnah. But then he's back and what does he do? He sends a letter to Hezekiah and in that letter, he says, 'I'm back and I'm going to overrun you.' Hezekiah again, goes straight to the temple. He takes that letter with him, lays it out before the Lord, and he begins his prayer. Much like Daniel, addressing God, by blessing God, giving God the good word, by adoring God. He begins, "Oh Lord, (that is Yahweh) the I am, the God of Israel. There's no other. Enthroned above the cherubim, You're the highest. You are the God. You alone, God of all kingdoms, You have made heaven and earth. Oh Lord incline Your ear. Oh Lord, incline your eye here and see what Sennacherib says about You."

So now, here comes the seventh name of God, the number of perfection, Oh Lord Our God, save us, please from his hand. Why? I kind of think maybe he read Daniel, "so that all the nations of the earth may know that You are God alone." It's to God's glory. Deliver us so that everyone knows you are God. God answered that prayer that night. He sent an angel that night, struck down 185,000 trained Assyrian soldiers. We read that Israel rose early the next morning and quote "these were all dead bodies." They looked down from the walls and 185,000 deaths soldiers on the ground, all killed in battle.

Fast forward 735 years to our gospel this morning. It was a hard time for disciples, it was the night that Jesus was going to be betrayed. He was on the Mount of Olives. In less than an hour, He would be arrested and in less than 24 hours He'd be dead on a cross. And what does He do on the Mount of Olives? You got it, He prayed. He prayed that you may not enter into temptation, because those disciples were sure facing some difficult times.

But now fast forward another 2000 years to today and our Lords disciples, His church, we are facing some very trying times today. And what do we need to do? We need to pray. We need to pray to the real God, and start on extoling His name, giving Him the credit for who He is,

and then asking for deliverance from a world gone astray. A world that has gone to worshipping itself, mankind, instead of God. Pray that we, you and me, God's people, His church will not fall into temptation; we will not give in to the pressure that is put on us to adopt all the pagan gods and ideas that are being foisted on society. And do this, pray this to the glory of His Name and His Spirit, who can empower us to follow through on that prayer. Frankly in the most desperate of situations like Hezekiah, pray.

I know it's what I'm going to do. Why? No, not only because it's the right thing to do, but it's also what my dad taught me to do. He didn't just teach that he showed me, and John, and Liz, but not so much Phil. Why? Because I brought my bag with me. What is in that bag? A picture. You might not be able to see it on the video. It's this picture of my brother-in-law who is five years younger than me. It's a picture of my little brother, and a picture of me after we had gone fishing up at North Lake one day. One thing that you can see is that my little brother isn't little, He is about my size.

It wasn't always like that. When he was born, they found that he was born with a diaphragmatic hernia. A hernia in his diaphragm which his whole intestinal track was pushed up on this side of his body crushing his left lung and pushing on his heart. He was not expected to live. They were going to try to do surgery, but no one had ever really done it on a baby before and had the baby live. I remember this. Mom and Dad coming home from the hospital, getting my sister Liz, my brother John, and myself together David prayed. He prayed that if it was God's will, then He would heal my little brother and give him life. But if not take him to heaven. Then 16 years later, Margie and I went to the movies and had to take my little brother with me. So, I was not too happy about that but then he was not feeling good and asked if he could walk home, which in Bishop, we were across town two blocks away. And I started worrying about him and Margie said, 'do you wanna go check on him?' And I said yeah. Phil had to go to the hospital last night. The scar tissue from that surgery when he was a child totally backed up his entire intestinal tract he had massive infection. They did not expect him to live. They were

taking him in for emergency surgery. My dad's first reaction was super calm, "let's pray." I don't remember the exact words, but I do remember him calling on God to see and to hear our prayer, and if it was God's will do another miracle to keep Phil alive.

It's something that has stuck with me my whole life. That when things got bad, really bad, you're going to lose a child; dad stepped to the plate. He didn't just pray, he brought us all into prayer. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our Lord taught us to pray the Lord's Prayer. The prophet Daniel in exile went in to pray. Hezekiah the king, facing certain disaster prayed. The Lord raised our Savior from the dead. The Lord delivered His people out of Babylon and the Lord wiped out the Assyrian army. And by the way Isaiah was right when Sennacherib got back to the Assyria, two of the sons killed him with the sword.

We face difficult times in the Church. It's time to get on our knees and pray. To address God as who He is to let Him know what we're facing and ask Him to hear it and to see it. And then ask Him to act and deliver us, but to do it to the glory of His name. In our saviors Name, Amen.