

# The Lord Saved Him and We Will Sing.

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      great good to see you and if you're in the room and if you're at home watching i'm glad you could join us my name is martin ayres i'm the rector of saint silas and it would be a great help to me if you're at home if you can keep that bible passage open isaiah chapter 38 and for us here if you could follow it on your sheet as we look at that together as nicola helpfully read for us and let's ask for god's help as we turn to his word let's bow our heads and i'll lead us in a prayer heavenly father we praise you and thank you for sustaining us this year we thank you father for the encouragement of some of us being able to gather physically again and what that means for us and the ability to join virtually with many and so wherever we are heavenly father we thank you that you are with us we thank you that your compassions are new every morning and we pray that you would speak to each one of us by your spirit align our hearts with your word that we would be willing to trust you and follow you for jesus name's sake amen well one of the uh the summer blockbusters on the small screen this year um because of uh what's happened to the cinemas but it's been hamilton um disney's uh film of the broadway musical i don't know how many of you have caught up with that yet i loved it it is terrific uh but it's um it tells the story of one of america's founding fathers alexander hamilton and one of the things that even gets hinted at in the musical but doesn't quite get fleshed out is that alexander hamilton had a remarkable journey of faith so he was raised in the caribbean with christian influence and knew about god and the gospel message but he was a very he was a deeply ambitious man and when he went to america and achieved incredibly he was a very gifted guy extraordinary abilities intelligence energy but when he succeeded and got to the top of sort of american political power he turned his back on god he forgot god and then later in life as even comes across in in the musical in the film he um he goes through um failure and suffering and he actually found faith again he came to faith in the lord jesus so um he committed adultery he was unfaithful in his marriage his wife who as i understand it was throughout their whole lives a very steadfast christian uh found the strength to forgive him and uh and in the end he he came to faith in christ and on his deathbed alexander hamilton said i have tender reliance on the mercy of the almighty through the merits of the lord jesus now it's a striking pattern in hamilton's life that when god gave him success and all the things the world values he didn't keep going trusting god and yet when he had been humbled he found that he needed jesus and he trusted him and those kinds of patterns and dangers are enormously important for us to be aware of in our lives and we actually see similar themes to that played out in the life of hezekiah who we're looking at here in in the book of isaiah he was the king of god's people around 700 bc and the tragedy in hezekiah's life is that for him and for the people that he was king over compared with hamilton the order of events in hezekiah's faith journey as we read them they're the other way around so we heard over the last two sundays isaiah chapters 36 and 37 that hezekiah

was in a national crisis in among god's people the assyrian army invaded that part of the east of the mediterranean judah where god's people were living and hezekiah led the people in trusting god and trusting god's word and god incredibly delivered them it was an incredible thing spectacular deliverance but now in chapters 38 and 39 of isaiah we read about devastating failure by hezekiah we're going to cover the story in two parts and then i've got two implications for us to think about today so just a reminder again of where we are in human history isaiah was a prophet he was a messenger from god for his people about 700 bc and god's people were living around jerusalem and they were the people of judah that was the name for god's people then that area jerusalem and its surroundings were all that was left of the promised land god had rescued the people out of slavery in egypt brought them into the promised land and this region that they're in the promise had been throughout that if they stayed faithful to god if they kept trusting god then they could stay in the land but because they're rather like us the people um over generations successively and king after king they've demonstrated an inability to keep trusting god and now we pick up the story in chapters 38 and 39 and our first point when hezekiah prays to the lord he is saved to sing when hezekiah prays to the lord he is saved to sing so the crisis comes in verse 1 of chapter 38 if you have a look in those days hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death and then it's confirmed by the prophet isaiah son of amoz went to him and said this is what the lord says put your house in order because you are going to die you will not recover and hezekiah lived a long time ago but his reaction to that news of of his death actually would fit right in with how we feel about death today we're very afraid of death we've seen that of course this year haven't we we've we've locked down our lives to protect other people and ourselves from death and hezekiah writes in this chapter about the grief he felt when he heard that he was going to die he was still in his late 30s at the time and verse 14 if you just have a look for an example there verse 14 he says i cried like a swift or thrush i mourned like a mourning dove my eyes grew weak as i looked to the heavens i am being threatened lord come to my aid there is another side to hezekiah's pain here which is that when you read what he thinks about death i think you see a man who is quite clearly living before easter sunday he trusts god but for him at that time in the unfolding revelation of god and his promises there wasn't yet the clarity that we have of actual physical bodily resurrection hope and the promises in the new testament as jesus colored in for us those promises of the new creation that he will bring clearly it's there in the old testament the promise of life beyond the grave and people like abraham and sarah trusted in those promises but when you read hezekiah i think you're seeing a man who makes me thankful for the way that we have things more vividly in the new testament we we're more sure of what comes beyond the grave because he seems in despair if you have a look at verse 18 he says the grave cannot praise you death cannot sing your praise those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness the living the living they praise you as i'm doing today and then in that despair

he turns to god to his credit so verse 2 if we just go back verse 2 hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the lord remember lord how i have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes and hezekiah wept bitter bitterly and wonderfully the lord teaches hezekiah through this to trust him so the answer comes in verse 5 from isaiah go and tell hezekiah as i was told this is what the lord the god of your father david says i have heard your prayer and seen your tears i will add 15 years to your life and then more than he's asked for i will deliver you in this city from the hand of the king of assyria i will defend this city hezekiah asks for a sign and he gets this absolutely extraordinary sign in verse 7 god says he's going to make the shadow cast by the sun go back 10 steps on the stairway of ahaz and so the sunlight goes back 10 steps on this i mean maybe it was a stairway they used as some kind of sundial or just that they were aware that the shadows moved across it and i realized that for some of us that stretches our credulity to to see that claim of of what happened but however god did that and we do trust in the god who raised jesus from the dead the god who gives life to the dead and the god who made all of this and so we trust that with him everything is possible and we don't know how he did it whether he bent the light waves so that the shadow moved or provided a different light to supplement the sun and move the shadow or whether he even moved celestial bodies around but we trust that god can do it and he did it to show that he is going to prolong hezekiah's life he's going to ensure that hezekiah recovers from this illness and can live longer and with him what that means as the king of god's people is that god's people can prosper for longer under the king and then hezekiah learns from this brush with death so look at verse 15 he says but what can i say he has spoken to me and he himself has done this i will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul see how he's learned he's humbled him he's learned from his brush with death so by the time you get to verse 20 he has this new purpose for his life verse 20 the lord will save me and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the lord you see saying i've got a new purpose now for my life my i've seen now that my life is a gift from god and i will praise him all the days of my life and we see that today don't we sometimes that sense of after a health scare or a brush with death people learning from that and saying you know i've realized now every day is a gift now and uh that recognition that perhaps we should have had all along we shouldn't need a kind of brush with death to know that that god gave us every day of our lives as a gift to praise him but sometimes you see people learning like that whether it's um that you you have a car accident that that could have been so much worse or um you waited for test results that were okay but they could you were fearful that they were going to be far worse i remember once um skiing on a and um i was skiing down a mountain and i lost control and there was a kind of ridge off the edge of the ski slope that i'd never seen over and as i turned i fell over backwards over this um slope and as i fell thinking i've got no idea what's be what's underneath me i thought this could be it you know i could hit a rock

i could just fall and as it was i just landed in powders of snow i mean it was amazing it was fine but that day just you know reflecting on that and thinking you know you don't know when it's coming do you that could have been me that i could have been uh finished then and trying to think why won't i see every day of my life as a this is a this is a day god's given me to live for him hezekiah reacts like that the lord will save me and i will sing and it's when we unlock that purpose for our lives living for god's praise and glory that we find thankfulness and joy in our lives but hezekiah discovers that it's easier to make that resolution than to keep it and so that's our second point when hezekiah is seduced by babylon he is judged with exile so now we catch up with him years later and envoys from another nation babylon pay him a visit and it starts with flattery if you have a look at verse one at that time marduk baladan he's the prince son of baladan king of babylon sent hezekiah letters and a gift because he had heard of his illness and recovery so just pause there and think what are we meant to read in verse two what kind of thing should we read next they found him in the temple of the lord praising god or hezekiah told them all that the lord had done for him or maybe we could read hezekiah summoned the prophet isaiah and inquired of the lord and then he welcomed the envoys no instead what we get is verse two hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses the silver the gold the spices the fine olive oil his entire armory and everything found among his treasures there was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that hezekiah did not show them now why does he do that he wants them to see hezekiah when they think hezekiah they should think riches prosperity there's a man who can he wants to be like them he wants to be admired by them perhaps the gift from them has seduced him to long for their admiration so he's speaking the language of gross domestic product and economic prosperity because he wants to be admired but it's a long way isn't it from singing the lord's praise in the temple and isaiah the prophet appears and his questions cut to the chase so in verse three what did those men say and where did they come from just demonstrating you've kept the prophet out of the loop here verse four what did they see in your palace did you show off hezekiah he replies they saw everything in my palace there is nothing among my treasures that i did not show them and then devastating verse five then isaiah said to hezekiah hear the word of the lord almighty the time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day will be carried off to babylon nothing will be left says the lord and some of your descendants your own flesh and blood who will be born to you will be taken away and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of babylon babylon's what you wanted hezekiah and so babylon's what you and your family will get and i think verse eight is actually as selfish as it sounds that hezekiah's response to that is the word of the lord you have spoken is good there will be peace

and security in my lifetime that um rather like israel with the promises from the prophets of impending exile if they turn from god they're just not that bothered because they think well as long as it's okay in my life um i don't really mind now it's not that this one act of hezekiah here his dalliance with babylon led god's people into exile rather it's that the heart behind it absolutely typifies how god's people have treated god for generations this is this is what they've been like their heart is seduced by babylon by worldly admiration and wealth and comfort prosperity and so like their king they've given up on real active daring faith in the living god and we knew that was going to happen isaiah chapter 6 which we looked at last november we heard about isaiah going into the temple and having this first vision of the lord when he was commissioned as a prophet and the lord said to him to go and speak to the people but that the people wouldn't listen and isaiah said for how long oh lord and the response from the lord was until the cities lie ruined and desolate and the lord has sent everyone far away god said it would happen then we see why it has to happen here and then it is what happened in history so by 587 bc the great superpower in the region isn't assyria anymore it's babylon and the babylonian empire in 587 bc swept in and took the people of jerusalem into exile it was a devastating thing it was horrific and that closes our time with hezekiah in the book so i've got two implications for us today the first is success gives you new dangers success gives you new dangers when hezekiah faced a health crisis he prayed a national crisis he prayed but in normal time he floundered with hezekiah if you turn up with an army he knows he needs to pray but if you turn up with flattery he falls for it and he describes the life he enjoys in verse 8 as peace and security and it highlights the enormous danger for us sometimes persecution threatens the church but somewhere like glasgow in the 21st century is it not the gift of peace and security that might be more threatening to cause us to drift from our faith alarmingly could we be in danger of being like hezekiah under pressure he knows he needs god but in the day-to-day comfortable life his own peace and security stop him trusting god he loves the money and the power that god's given him instead of loving the god who gave those things to him and isn't isn't that possible for us that we find it easy to trust god in a crisis and maybe even we we hear about where places in the world today where the church really is very badly persecuted and people are martyred and we might even think you know i would it's awful but you know maybe i would have the courage to take a bullet for my faith i would die for my faith if i had to but then in normal time we're actually in grave danger of being seduced by the world around us the comfort that it offers so just to think think of an example to sketch it out picture a christian woman amy and she sees her dream job and she applies for it

[ 20 : 07 ] and um of course she prays it's the job she wants she prays that god would give her an interview and then she gets an interview and so of course she prays for the interview that she'd get the job and then she gets the job and on the way in for day one in the office she prays fervently but to make a good start she's got her friends praying that things would go well but 10 years later she's still in the same workplace she's been promoted several times she's admired looked up to her hard work has paid off she's able to buy the flat she wanted does she still pray on her way into work is she still as quick to to depend on god and and attribute the success that she's enjoying to god on day 1000 just as she did on day one so you know we are we are living in a time in scotland where the heat is being turned up on being a christian and we will encounter forms of persecution but for my money the danger of the spiritual danger of comfort for our church family keeps me awake at night far more than the spiritual danger of persecution and if you're someone who's aware of that danger in your heart who's aware that you have been seduced by admiration around you respect from the world then could you just bring it to god today god is gracious and you can just come to him and draw near to him if you're aware that you've fallen in love with the things god's given you but you've you've grown away from god just turn back to him just bring it to god today let's recognize the spiritual danger of the comforts we enjoy and approach god about it could you share it with a christian friend could you share it with a prayer triplet for support and encouragement so that you prompt each other to thank god for your successes and acknowledge god in them and you repent of self-reliance and of loving worldly comfort and you depend on him and you've got people to challenge you when it looks to them as though actually you're in danger of being seduced by what you can have from the world hezekiah's biggest problem ultimately is he didn't really care anymore and this was the king the king of god's people so when the king gets that wrong it's not just devastating for him it's devastating for the whole people of god and so that brings us to our second implication it's human weakness means we need a new leader isaiah didn't order these things chronologically so the health crisis came to hezekiah that we read about in chapter 38 it came chronologically earlier in his life than the military crisis we looked at last week in the earlier two chapters so why is isaiah put it round this way i think it's because these two chapters together 38 and 39 say to us every human leader is going to disappoint you no human leader can bring you the blessings that only god can bring why will every human leader fail because they will all die chapter 38 hezekiah was good but he was mortal and they will all sin chapter 39 it's been the same all across the world ever since the very best of people the very best of leaders they all die and if you live if they live long enough and you get closer enough close enough to them they will let you down because they'll sin and we see the same thing in our churches today we end up putting our hope for the advance of the gospel

and the health of the church in leaders human leaders and then they die lots of us have been deeply encouraged by tim keller the pastor of redeemer church in new york he's retired now he's been wonderfully used in his ministry in his preaching his writing he retired well but now having chemotherapy for cancer and you know he may bounce back from that God may heal him for a time but eventually he will die he is going to die we look at the global church today Archbishop Ben Quashie when St Silas a couple of years ago we were in a very challenging time with the denomination we're in and the global Anglican communion have helped us and Ben Quashie is the head of that movement globally of Gafcon he's the Archbishop of Joss in Nigeria and you meet him I met him last September and he is a phenomenally encouraging man him and his wife Gloria are incredible they're extraordinary men and women of God and you meet them and you think you know the church is going to be okay because Ben Quashie is around but like Hezekiah he will die eventually and in chapter 39 of Isaiah we see that even the best human leaders fall and that's even more discouraging isn't it we've seen that in the news over the past couple of years depressingly often just last week actually in the newspapers yet another senior evangelical leader in America in the news for an embarrassing seedy scandal last year a senior evangelical leader in England who I'd greatly admired and I'd had come and speak at events I'd run before he was exposed for patterns of unacceptable sinful behavior in his life and I remember after a similar scandal a few years ago an older Christian friend saying to me which helped me because he was a guy who'd been a Christian a lot longer he said it just gets so predictably boring in the end that what happens is these guys with big personalities get huge crowds around them everyone's talking about their church everyone's trying to get a piece of their ministry they've got the silver bullet over there we've all got to follow what they've said what they've done and then typically they run off with a young woman or they take the money or they become a bully it's money sex and power and it's predictably boring that's what this guy said to me and unfortunately at times that's what we find so it's not wrong to find a good

Christian mentor or role model I mean I've been enormously helped in my life by that and I'm sure that I'm sure you all have actually to have had a Christian you've looked up to who you've been able to kind of try and grab onto their cocktails a bit and aspire to sort of learn from them that's really helpful but let's not lose heart let's not be in a situation where we would so pin our hopes on one particular Christian leader that if they were to fall or if they were to die our faith would be destabilized in chapters 38 and 39 of Isaiah we see that if the people then had been thinking Hezekiah is the one they had to learn he's not the one he's not going to be he's not going to be the leader we need now why do they need to see that at this moment in Isaiah it's so that in chapters 40 to 55 of Isaiah

God can say through the prophet a new message and it's let me tell you about another leader another king one whom I will send one whom you can really put your trust in and prophecy after prophecy comes in the rest of Isaiah speaking of a righteous king who will also be a servant a suffering servant who will come and die on a cross chapter 53 and whom God will then vindicate and raise to bring righteousness to the world and unlike every other leader you ever admire in your workplace in politics in the church Jesus Christ is the one man who will never ever let you down he'll never die he'll never die on us because he smashed death to bits so that he can live forever and he'll never discourage you when you trust him and you pin all your hopes on him and you build your life on him he'll never let you down because he never sinned and when the devil said all of this can be yours if you worship me the flattery did nothing to him he kept trusting God he is always true and always wise and always good and he's the he's the leader we need let's pray together heavenly father we are sorry for the ways that we take the peace and comfort and security that you have graciously given us and then it turns our hearts away from depending on you for when we fail to acknowledge you in our successes gracious father guard us we pray from the spiritual dangers of success and comfort and peace help us not to forget you as the good giver of all the things we enjoy and we thank you that in Jesus Christ you have given us the leader we need the king we need thank you that he is so magnificent that he is the one who will never die the resurrection and the life and he is the one who will never sin the one whose righteousness has given us eternal hope by your spirit would you help us to sing faithfully of him every day of our lives knowing that he will save us would we be people who live for his praise we ask in Jesus name

Amen God forgive us again me and to God bless you Abraham whereas if Him just need to for you and by your■ and