

17. July 2020

## “God's friendship with Hezekiah”

*Jes 38, 1-6.21-22.7-8*

*About then, Hezekiah fell ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, 'Yahweh says this, 'Put your affairs in order, for you are going to die, you will not live.' 'Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and addressed this prayer to Yahweh, 'Ah, Yahweh, remember, I beg you, that I have behaved faithfully and with sincerity of heart in your presence and done what you regard as right.' And Hezekiah shed many tears. Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah, 'Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Yahweh, the God of your ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I shall cure you: in three days' time you will go up to the Temple of Yahweh. I shall add fifteen years to your life. I shall save you and this city from the king of Assyria's clutches and defend this city for my sake and my servant David's sake.' ' 'Here', Isaiah replied, 'is the sign from Yahweh that he will do what he has said. Look, I shall make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the steps -- the steps to Ahaz's roof-room-go back ten steps.' And the sun went back the ten steps by which it had declined. 'Bring a fig poultice,' Isaiah said, 'apply it to the ulcer and he will recover.' Hezekiah said, 'What is the sign to tell me that I shall be going up to the Temple of Yahweh?'*

A characteristic of a friendship is the sharing of things that you normally do not share with other people. First of all, it requires trust and the knowledge that the friend is turned towards us. This is the way the Lord looked at his disciples - he told them his Father's instructions and took them into the loving relationship between him and the heavenly Father (*cf. Jn 15,15*). From this a familiarity arises. All the more serious the betrayal!

Obviously God was pleased with Hezekiah.

It was first word of Hezekiah, which he spoke with the announced healing of his illness: “*What is the sign to tell me that I shall be going up to the Temple of Yahweh?*”

Hezekiah wanted to go up to the house of the Lord. This is the decisive factor in a friendship with God. One seeks him, makes sure of his presence, aligns everything

with him and is aware of his presence! And even more: one knows that one is understood by the Lord even in the deepest layers of the soul.

In any case, the Lord treats Hezekiah like a friend and extends his life by fifteen years and frees him and his own from the hand of the king Assyria.

This is his very thought-provoking process. Actually, Hezekiah's life is coming to an end. But Hezekiah does not seem to be ready to die yet and the Lord changes the previous statement that he should prepare for death for the sake of love for Hezekiah and pity for his friend.

Does this not happen in secret similar things much more often?

Perhaps it is, for example, many prayers and sacrifices of believers, that is, those who are in friendship with God, who through their intercession and sacrifices delay or even prevent chastisements for the world, which the Lord grants because of their friendship with him and their prayer! God thus gives people a chance to repent.

In God's action, then, human beings are completely involved. He is not a slave who only carries out a task but is not initiated into the matter. God takes the whole person very seriously and does not simply pass over them. Especially this does not happen in a friendship.

God wants man's free consent to his plans of love, a harmony of hearts.

Therefore, if one lives in friendship with Him and seeks this friendship, one may ask God for very great matters of the heart, for example, for periods of grace for oneself and others!

When death approaches, for example, it can be that one has the impression that something could still be done, that something is still missing to complete life, that the house is not yet sufficiently ordered. Perhaps the Lord even grants an extension of life until the house is ordered. It can be so, but also differently! If we trust the Lord completely, then we know that even an unfinished work finds a home in His mercy and He completes it.

But even if death is not yet at our doorstep, we can always ask our heavenly Father to make up for lost time and give us the time to do so.

Today's text may invite us to enter into an even more intimate relationship with God and we may know that this is what God intended.