

25. June 2024

The prayer of Hezekiah

2 Kgs 19:9b-11,14-21,31-35a,36

Sennacherib again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 'Tell Hezekiah king of Judah this, "Do not let your God on whom you are relying deceive you with the promise: Jerusalem will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches. You have learnt by now what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries, devoting them to destruction. Are you likely to be saved? Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers' hands and read it; he then went up to the Temple of Yahweh and spread it out before Yahweh. Hezekiah said this prayer in the presence of Yahweh, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, enthroned on the winged creatures, you alone are God of all the kingdoms of the world, you made heaven and earth. Give ear, Yahweh, and listen; open your eyes, Yahweh, and see! Hear the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to insult the living God. It is true, Yahweh, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, they have thrown their gods on the fire, for these were not gods but human artefacts - wood and stone - and hence they have destroyed them. But now, Yahweh our God, save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the kingdoms of the world know that you alone are God, Yahweh.' Isaiah son of Amoz then sent the following message to Hezekiah, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I have heard the prayer which you have addressed to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria." Here is the pronouncement which Yahweh has made about him: "She despises you, she scorns you, the virgin daughter of Zion; she tosses her head at you, the daughter of Jerusalem! For a remnant will issue from Jerusalem, and survivors from Mount Zion. Yahweh Sabaoth's jealous love will accomplish this. "This, then, is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city, will shoot no arrow at it, confront it with no shield, throw up no earthwork against it. By the road by which he came, by that he will return; he will not enter this city, declares Yahweh. I shall protect this city and save it for my sake and my servant David's sake." 'That same night the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses. Sennacherib struck camp and left; he returned home and stayed in Nineveh.

How the situation changes when the people of Israel, seeing themselves threatened and surrounded by their enemies, turn to God with confidence! In today's reading, we have witnessed how the Lord intervened powerfully on behalf of His people, delivering them from the misfortune that threatened them. Hezekiah is a king who puts his trust in God and calls on him sincerely, and we can see what this prayer achieves: Hezekiah puts his faith in the true God, unmasks the idols as the work of human hands and asks the Lord to manifest himself to all nations as the true God.

Thus, he shows us that a prayer uttered with sincerity and authority is able to change a desperate situation, for God hears that prayer and intervenes.

Therefore, we are invited to put our whole heart into prayer and to ask for change even in the most difficult situations. It is good that we do not only focus on our own intentions; but that we seek in our prayers the glory of God and His Will, in so many intentions that go beyond the personal level.

Certainly it is not that it is necessary to remind God of His own works and will. But such prayers as the one we heard in today's reading are very precious and God is no doubt pleased with them.

"Now, Yahweh our God, save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the kingdoms of the world know that you alone are God."

We can well understand what such a prayer means to God. So let us suppose, for example, that we have promised something to a child. He will remind us of our promise, because he takes our word seriously. This is precisely what the Lord loves: that we trust in His promises, that we remind Him of what He Himself has promised us and of the wonders He has worked. Then God sees that we really believe Him and that we put our hope in His Word.

Trust in God is a great honour to Him! One could even say that, in one way or another, from the point of view of love, God cannot refuse when something is asked of Him in trust. Trust opens the door for God to manifest Himself without limits, and He Himself also trusts us and entrusts Himself to us!

We can see this in our human life... When there is trust, there is a great freedom and an openness in the relationship. One does not need to protect oneself, and one can dare to take paths that one would otherwise not take out of fear.

Certainly trust in people cannot be unlimited, because we people are too changeable and can suddenly react completely differently than expected. And it is good that we are aware of this and keep it in mind in our lives. But this does not mean that we should be distrustful of other people, but simply that we should be aware of their weaknesses.

Of course, this also applies to ourselves, because it is important that, for the duration of our earthly life, we are aware of our weakness: *"Everyone, no matter how firmly he thinks he is standing, must be careful he does not fall"* (1 Cor 10:12).