



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday, July 10th 2022 at 10:45,
meeting at Bethesda Chapel.**

Whilst some wish to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will all find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Alec has returned from Germany and is leading our service today, continuing our theme on Prayer.

Alec welcomes everyone: "Good morning everybody, and a very warm welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church here in Galligreaves this morning. We begin this morning where Paul left off last week: 1 Samuel chapter 12, v 16: 'Now then, stand still and see this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes.' The Lord Jesus Christ is with us, he is the way-maker, he is the miracle worker, he is the promise keeper, he is the light in our darkness and in the darkness of our world, the darkness of our land, the darkness of our town. He is with us and we want to praise him together, to worship his name together, to adore him together and joining together in standing or sitting for our first hymn this morning, which is well known to all of you."

Tim plays on the piano: How great thou art;

Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:

'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:

'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul....

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul....

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;
then I shall bow, in humble adoration
and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul...

Songwriter: Stuart Hine; Copyright © 1949 Sony/atv Tree Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, I Am They Publishing, Manna Music Inc. CCL no 5664

Notices for This Week



- Today – please join us for our church lunch after the service
- Take a Break Coffee Morning – Tuesday 12, 10.00
- Ladies' Bible Study – Tuesday 12, 10.45 (last before summer break)
- Informal Music Evening (Community Room) – Tuesday 12, 19.00
- Tiddlywinks Parent & Toddler Group – Wednesday 13, 09.30 – 11.30
- 'Orbit' Youth Drop-in – Thursday 14, 18.00 – 19.30
- Fellowship Meeting – Thursday 14, 19.30 – 20.30 (Prayer Meeting)
- New Life International Church: Bible Study & Prayer – Friday 15, 20.00
- Movie Morning – Saturday 16, 10.30 – 12.00
- New Life International Church: Service – Saturday 16, 17.00
- Service, Sunday 17 July, 10.45 – continuing our series on prayer

Alec invites us to lift our voices in song again, another familiar hymn (which we sang last week, as it was and is very appropriate), and which Tim again plays for us:

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge— take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Authors: Charles Crozat Converse, Joseph Medlicott Scriven CCLI SONG # 27714 Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain
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Hywel leads us in our Prayers for others, inviting us to indeed bring it to the Lord in prayer:

O God our Father, save us from all the sins into which we so easily and continually fall. Save us from demanding standards from others which we never even try to action by ourselves. Save us from making excuses for things in ourselves which in others we would condemn. Save us from being wide open-eyed to the faults of others while being blind to our own faults. Save us from taking for granted all that our loved ones do for us and for never realising how much they do and how much we demand. Give us strength to conquer every temptation which will come to us, strength to do every task that is assigned to us and strength to shoulder every responsibility which is laid upon us. Give us wisdom to know when to speak out and when to keep silent, wisdom to know when to act and when to refrain from action.

We thank you, O God our Father, for the comfort and companionship and the love we have in our homes; we thank you for the joy of being together and a family.

We thank you for those who must work today to bring us our food, our letters and our newspapers. Bless those who must be on duty to maintain the public services and those who ensure the safety and security of others. The doctors who must be able to usher new life into the world and to close the eyes for those for whom this life is passing away. Bless them as they ease the suffering pain. Bless the nurses and all who watch by the bedside of those who are ill. Bless those who are in pain of their body; all those who are in distress of their mind, Grant us that in our own happiness and our own comfort we may never forget the sorrow and the pain, the loneliness and the needs of others. Help us to try to do for others what we would wish them to do for us, and so help us to be faithful to the love of Jesus Christ.

All these things we ask in and through the love and security of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Alec invites us to share in our Offering song "I will wait for you" based on Psalm 130, a quieter reflective song from the Getty Collection,

Out of the depths I cry to You, in darkest places I will call;
incline Your ear to me anew and hear my cry for mercy, Lord

Were You to count my sinful ways how could I come before Your throne?
Yet full forgiveness meets my gaze, I stand redeemed by grace alone.

**I will wait for You, I will wait for You, on Your word, I will rely.
I will wait for You, surely wait for You, till my soul is satisfied.**

So put your hope in God alone, take courage in His power to save
completely and forever won by Christ emerging from the grave

I will wait for You...

Now He has come to make a way and God Himself has paid the price
that all who trust in Him today find healing in His sacrifice

I will wait for You, I will wait for You through the storm and through the night.

I will wait for You, surely wait for You, for Your love is my delight.

Authors: Jordan Kauflin, Keith Getty, Matthew Merker, Stuart Townend CCLI SONG # 7118914 Copyrights © 2018 Getty Music Publishing (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.) Jordan Kauflin Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Matthew Merker Music (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Townend Songs (Admin. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org) Used by permission, CCL No 5664

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJUqY_6tqo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFRLyDIrDn4>

As Alec receives our offerings, he prays: "Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your son, who gave his life for us on the cross that we might live. We bow before you and worship you as we bring our gifts to you, and thank you and ask that you use them and multiply them for the extension of your kingdom in this place, in this town and in this land and all over the world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

Janet reads for us: 2 Kings 20: 1-11

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. 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.'

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 bitterly.

Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: 'Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, "This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.'" Then Isaiah said, 'Prepare a poultice of figs.' They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.

Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, 'What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?'

Isaiah answered, 'This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?'

'It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps,' said Hezekiah. 'Rather, let it go back ten steps.'

Then the prophet Isaiah called on the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.

(Janet admits she doesn't understand the last part!!!)

Before Alec shares his message, he invites us to sing again: once more shown on the screen at Bethesda: "Jesus' blood"

You left Heavens praise for the sake of us,
offered up your will, for the joy to come.

You embraced the cross, taking all it's pain
so I could walk away, free and unashamed.

**I owe my life to you my Saviour, I owe it all to you alone,
your sacrifice has won my freedom, I was bought by Jesus' blood.**

Risen from the grave, seated now on high,
over all you reign, all power in your hand;
Eternity will sing of your holy name,
King of all the earth, in majesty to come.

I owe my life, to you my Saviour....

When at last I stand before the throne of grace,
wonder fills my heart, your majesty reveals;
I will bow my knee, and join with angels' song.
Worthy is the lamb, all praise to You alone.

I owe my life to you my Saviour....

Author: Jonathan James CCLI SONG # 7003862 Copyright © 2013 Integrity Music Jesus' Blood lyrics © Life Worship
CCL No 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La-fMEpKZgU>

Alec then shares his Message "Prayer as an expression of a relationship with the living God"

The fourth message in our series on prayer begins in an almost open-air theatre where a production with a prologue and in two acts is ready to begin against the background of a massively built wide and very deep stage and a cast of many thousands.

Alone centre-stage at the beginning of the prologue is a simply-dressed, humble looking man, his fluorescent t-shirt bearing an imprint of the letter H. But behind this almost irrelevant appearance lies a life of commitment to God. As the prologue begins we hear how at 25 years of age he became king of Judah, reigning in Jerusalem. He tells the story of how he had done what the Lord had told him to do, just as his father David had done. I won't bore you with all the details he says, but I fixed the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them, and then brought in the priests, told them to commit themselves to the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to do a deep clean job on the temple; to remove, to take away everything that was not in order and to get it sorted.

Well that was the beginning he said. But we went further. We purified everything, not just the appearance. We sorted out the offerings, got the music fixed again with cymbals, harps and lyres like David had done and re-dedicated ourselves to the Lord. After the offerings had been given we all got down on our knees and worshipped. Then H said in a quiet voice, "we rejoiced at what God had brought about for His people, because it was done so quickly."
But there was still something missing he said, still something that wasn't sorted properly and that was what we call the celebration of the Passover, the feast our God had fixed for us to remind us of how He had delivered us from the power of Egypt. So we got on with sorting that next. I wrote a really official letter which I still have somewhere. Here it is:

"People of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like

your parents and your fellow Israelites, who were unfaithful to the Lord, the God of their ancestors, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see. Do not be stiff-necked, as your ancestors were; submit to the Lord. Come to his sanctuary, which he has made holy forever. Serve the Lord your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. If you return to the Lord, then your fellow Israelites and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will return to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.”

Then he said we sent out our newly-modernised version of what you call emails. We called them couriers. They went all over the place with this news and well to be honest not everybody liked what God had told me to write; but some guys humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. I think I can honestly say that in our land, in Judah, the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what I and my officials expected in accordance with, in line with the word of the Lord.

Can you see what God is trying to say?

Masses of people came together in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast; they cleared out all kinds of old altars of things they had worshipped and took them to the dump in the Kidron Valley. Finally they all took up their regular positions according to the Law of Moses the man of God. But many in the crowd were not right with God and ate contrary to our written teaching; so I prayed for them like this:

“May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God—the Lord, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.”

And do you know what? The Lord heard me and healed the people. Wow! That was really dramatic!!

And there the prologue provisionally ends. Life context, life situation, background factors, future prospects, day-to-day life or for many people just existence; and in this situation a man who had trusted God from his youth and aimed to do everything according to His Word prays when he sees something needs to be sorted.

But his prayers were not empty words, not the despair of a lost sheep, not the cry of hunger for justice and retaliation in a cruel world; his prayers were based on the day-to-day reality of his relationship to the living God and on his willingness in practice to be obedient to the Word of the same living God.

God had made him willing to act according to and in alignment with God`s own purposes.

Do you see where we are? We make a choice, God listens. We make another choice and God listens again. He is longing for us to follow Him, but He will never ever coerce us to do that. In the rewrite of the prologue there is something else. You can read about that in 2 Chronicles 31. But that part of it didn`t get on to centre stage. But it should have done. It is a very moving and a very encouraging story. So the real prologue like with the addition of this chapter ends like this:

“This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God`s temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.”

Act 1 begins. The real drama is about to unfold.

There are big screens everywhere. Kind of like the final of the Champions League or the Eurovision Song Contest or something short-lived like that. And it is short-lived but it doesn't look like it at first. H is confronted by a big problem but he says he prefers to call it a challenge. After everything that he has done so faithfully some bighead of a king has turned up and invaded Judah.

The whole stage is filled with masses of people, military officers and warlike people and lots of big wigs and power wheels. H sees what the new problem is and responds accordingly. Seeing that his enemy who we will call S for short intends to rollover his country he consults with his own officials and military staff to block off the water supply to those outside the city preventing his enemies from having access to it. Then he fixes all the broken sections of the city wall, builds towers on it and builds an outer wall as well whilst ordering the construction of weapons and shields.

All well and good.

But H's main vision is to organise the people and encourage the workers. Then all of a sudden H's face appears on the screens and loudspeakers boom out clearly the following words of encouragement:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles."

And do you know what? The people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

This seems to have wound up S really well. So he fixed it to send his officers to Jerusalem with a really lovely message for the people of God.

"This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, 'The Lord our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,' he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god's high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it'?"

"Do you not know what I and my predecessors have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand?"

Sennacherib's officers spoke further against the Lord God and against his servant Hezekiah. The king also wrote letters ridiculing the Lord, the God of Israel, and saying this against him: "Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand." Then they called out in Hebrew, the mother tongue of the people of Jerusalem, to those who were on the wall, to terrify them and make them afraid in order to capture the city. They spoke about the God of

Jerusalem as they did about the gods of the other peoples of the world—the work of human hands.

So how does H, a man who is living in a close relationship with the Lord God, respond? How does he respond to these attacks? He prays. Not on his own this time but together with Isaiah the prophet son of Amoz.

The script says in a summary form that together they cried out in prayer to heaven about this. In a later transcript of the scene we read that H had received a letter from his messengers about S and his strategy and plans, went up to the temple of the Lord and spread this letter out on the altar before the Lord and prayed:

“Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, made by human hands. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Lord, are the only God.”

How did God respond to the prayers?

It was not shown in the drama live on the stage but in the shorter script it says the Lord sent an angel who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian leader S. who then withdrew to his own camp in disgrace being shortly afterwards killed by some of his own sons when he went into the temple of his own God.

Prayer and the response to prayer is an expression of our relationship to God; like the air that we breathe. It is a two-way process. It is private and public, confidential and open.

The drama reveals that H was saved by the Lord and was greatly rewarded, many bringing offerings on to the stage and bringing him valuable gifts. Must have looked like birthday and Christmas at one and the same time. But he also gained something else which wasn't immediately visible on the stage at first. He was gaining a proud heart.

With this episode act 1 closes. There is a short break to rebuild and re-arrange the stage and the curtain opens once again.

Act 2 commences with H lying on a bed left-side of the stage. He is ill and at the point of death. He has very possibly been affected by a bubonic plague. Janet read to us from the script of the scene earlier. This is drama of the highest quality and at the highest level.

Maybe it reminds you of the scene with Elijah after he has fought in the middle of the world stage with Queen Jezebel and the prophets of Ahab after the demonstration of God's power on Mount Carmel? Maybe it gives us the same or a similar feeling experiencing a similar plot? How long will you waver between two opinions it says in the script; if the Lord is God follow Him, but if some other “god” is God follow him. But like at that time by Elijah when the people said nothing, H lies flat out in bed on the stage alone and is threatened with death; at 39 years of age he has only been on the throne for just 14 years.

But God isn't finished yet; He's not finished with H yet either. The drama is just beginning to

get really exciting, really spine-chilling, soul-searching, almost threatening. You sit in the back of your seats and you want to cover your eyes it's that moving and scary. What will happen to H? What is God doing with the King of Judah?

From stage right the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz appears. He's a kind of spokesman for God known in stage jargon as a prophet so you know you need to listen to him to benefit from his being there whenever he shows up, well depending on what he says of course. Well Isaiah is not the kind of guy who looks like he might win Britain's Got Talent or be used for advertising photo-shoots or indeed for anything; most people have probably cut him off their reading list decades ago. His messages are not exactly going to sell water or ice cream even on a hot day, not even on a Sunday. So he says like to H "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."

So what does H do again? He turns towards the side of the stage and he prays to the Lord. According to the programme note for the evening production it was common knowledge that there were contemporary Assyrian and Babylonian prayers to the gods "for the lengthening of my days and the multiplying of my years". Lying on his bed H prays: "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." Then H wept tears of bitterness.

Suddenly the prophet Isaiah, who had just left the part of the stage where H lay which was designed and pictured to look like a king's palace, and was apparently in the middle court off-stage on his way to the temple noticed he had received a new text message from God so he took his mobile out of his pocket straightaway even though he was near the temple; and read the message. After all you have to take note of what God is saying to you even in religious buildings. Isaiah responded to God's call.

God said to Isaiah," Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.'"

Still on the stage making God's Word audible to everybody the prophet Isaiah turns healer so to speak and orders helpers to prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boils and H recovers.

In response to his prayer God has granted H fifteen more years. Because of H's faithfulness to Him? Because of H's wholehearted devotion? Because H had done what God thought was good? We will have to come back to this because suddenly the lights fail and the theatre has to be evacuated. In the hope of the performance being resumed the audience wait more or less patiently in the park across the road and find themselves talking together about what they have been experiencing in the drama production.

They all seemed to have read the theatre programme before the presentation had begun and their conversations turned naturally first to S's strategy and H's active and prayerful response. Let's listen in to what they are saying.

Somebody said that Sennacherib had invaded Judah and he had come as a very well informed invader.

Another person said that somebody had studied the Judeans for Sennacherib and had given him very good information as to what kind of people they were, what their culture was, and what their religion was. He had heard that they had this strange monotheistic religion. So Sennacherib went into Judah and said "Jehovah sent me."

One person then commented that his spies must have told him that this might be meaningful to the people and so he comes, pretending and presuming to come in the name of the Lord.

Somebody then said that he appears to have been informed that the God of Israel was the God that had promised to his people a land flowing with milk: and honey, a land of peace and prosperity.

Another person summed up the plot like this-Sennacherib comes saying, "I will give you peace. I will give you prosperity. I will give the fruit of your figs and vines or if I don't let you stay in this land with your figs and vines, I will take you to a land just like yours, just as good as yours. You will have peace and you will have prosperity there." Sennacherib says, "Don't go to war with me. Don't choose death. Choose life. I'm the one who can give you life. Don't put any trust in those promises of Hezekiah that the Lord will deliver you for none of the gods of the nations can stand before me." So Sennacherib comes as if he were God. Sennacherib comes as if he were Messiah, as if he were the Christ bearing these promises of life and peace and prosperity. He claims to come in the name of the Lord to the people of God. In reality he exalts himself against the Lord and against his word and against his promises. Sennacherib claims to be able to stand and conquer all the peoples and all the gods including Jehovah. He comes as the proud abuser pretending to be the Lord's Messiah.

Somebody else said, against that pride and abuse Hezekiah had prayed: "Now, O Lord, display before the nations your glory. Now, O Lord, show that you are the true and living God, the only true and living God and cast down this abuser before the nations that all men may see that his pride is brought to nothing and that you are exalted." And that, of course, is exactly what the Lord does. The Lord does strike down the abuser in the most dramatic way. His troops are decimated in one night. Sennacherib is forced to retreat to his capital, and even there he is not safe. Even in his temple and surrounded by his family, he is not safe. His own sons rise up against him and strike him down in the temple of his god and he is destroyed.

Another person thought that as Hezekiah reflects on the destruction of Sennacherib, he is thinking, "Lord, if it is right that the faithless Sennacherib be struck down and die so that your glory might be revealed among the nations, then it cannot be right that I should die in my youth when I have been good and faithful."

Somebody from the waiting crowd of audience members in the park said, "That is a massive, an intense problem for Hezekiah. It is not right to him that the good and faithful anointed king of God's people should suffer the same fate as Sennacherib, the evil monster who has raised himself against God and his people. How can the glory of God be displayed in that? How can the Name of God be honoured in that?"

Someone said. "It is not just his sickness that worries Hezekiah and drives him to prayer. At a deeper level, he is worried about what this sickness says about the faithfulness and reliability of God and his promises."

One of the things we see as we look at this story of Hezekiah is that he was a man who knew the Bible and its promises intimately. His mind and heart were filled with the Scriptures and as

he meditated on the Scriptures, he knew that the Lord had made certain promises to Israel. He knew that the Lord had made promises to his people, in Deuteronomy 4:39, 40 for example:

“Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, he is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. So you shall keep his statutes and his commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may prolong your days on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time.”

As if these were not enough problems, there appears to be one more. A further member of the audience had given this even more thought and said, “It seems that Hezekiah at this point in his life has no son, no heir. We read that when the Lord healed Hezekiah, his life was extended by 15 years. Then we read that when Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh came to the throne at age 12. So it appears that at this point where Hezekiah is threatened with death, he has no son to sit on David's throne. There is no son to continue David's line. Therefore, the very line of Messiah is threatened in this illness and this sentence of death that has come upon Hezekiah. So out of all that, he turns to the Lord in prayer. We have to keep the depth and complexity of Hezekiah's problems in mind if we are to understand his prayer.

So H is not praying selfishly. He is not praying self-centredly. He is praying for God's glory, for God's purpose to be fulfilled, for God's kingdom to come. Many in the audience got sent text messages encouraging them to read Psalm 34 to understand H `s situation better. I wonder who was behind that?

As suddenly as the lights had gone out, they now went back on again. But it was too late for the theatre drama to proceed. But to avoid you being disappointed I have a short, true, personal story with which I choose to conclude the message this morning.

Not that many years ago on a Monday February afternoon shortly before Sibylle`s birthday I took the opportunity offered by dry and sunny if very cold weather to cut some branches from one of the trees in our small garden, which Sibylle had been wanting me to do for ages or longer. This all went very well.

Maybe 2 days later I had swellings and pain in my left hand and realised that probably not wearing gloves had led to one or more splinters entering my skin. My daughter Jana says I should say that I was so thick-headed that I refused to go to see a doctor. Three days later though I visited the doctor and the following day was admitted for emergency treatment for acute and threatening inflammation of the hand. I informed the medical staff that I played piano which they noted.

Following an apparently successful operation I recovered in a spacious standard one bed room with double doses of two related painkillers. From the time I started taking the painkillers the staff noticed many of my medical parameters; especially but not only liver data were skewed up and they began being concerned. After 3 days I was in even worse shape. On a Saturday evening the ward doctor told me that things were not looking good at all; everything was really in a bad mess.

During these days of increasing threats to my life condition I was grateful for the single room to read the Bible and to pray. I was reading the story of Hezekiah of which the Lord had reminded me. An elder of one church who came to room said the Lord`s presence was just there. I remember reading Isaiah 38:1 and aimed to ensure that everything in my life, in my

relationship with the Lord and with everybody on earth was in order and asked also for a longer life.

The net Sunday morning I collapsed in the presence of the medical team visiting me in the hospital.

The Lord heard my prayers and the prayers of many others. One consultant, Annette, knew what the problem was, transferred me to a different ward not to the intensive care ward which was considered but fortunately into a double room where I could share who the Lord was and what I was experiencing to my fellow patient in a way which he described to his wife as straightforward and natural.

I am completely allergic to Ibuprofen. It would have completely destroyed me if I had continued to be dosed with it. But God used this and other experiences in that hospital to draw me closer to Him and to be able to share Him once again with others.

So I think Hezekiah's prayer at a time of illness really became mine too which is why I have been so glad to share his experience with you this morning as well.

That's why once again I chose the song we sang previously. I owe my life to the Lord Jesus; I owe it all to Him alone.

Amen.

We join in our closing song, led by Tim as he plays the piano: Amazing grace,

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;

how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come:

'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;

he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease:

I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,

we've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we've first begun.

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And finally we say together:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

