

## ***SERMON ~ BIBLE READING 2 KINGS 20***

Hezekiah's motives were mixed. So this story contains a challenge to us about our motivations. Despite Hezekiah's shortcomings we discover a God who restores and gives graciously to those who seek him.

### **A MAN OF CONTRASTS**

Hezekiah was an important king and we have three accounts of his reign. His life was a mixture of good and bad, like all of our lives. In character he was both strong and weak: he opposed idolatry and at first opposed Assyria (2 Kings 18:3–8), but he did eventually submit to Assyria (2 Kings 18:13–16). He is described as a godly man (2 Kings 18:3–8), as a man of great ability (2 Kings 20:20, 21). But he could be a fool (2 Kings 20:12–18) – perhaps showing too much pride.

### **A MAN OF PRAYER**

Hezekiah prayed according to God's will (2 Kings 19:14–19) with a real concern for the legacy that his ancestor David had bequeathed to him, and a commitment to God's glory. He also prayed simply out of self-righteousness and self-pity (2 Kings 20:1–3). The result was the loss of the kingdom to Babylon, in the reign of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh.

### **A SAD ENDING**

The biblical writer provides a gracious ending to Hezekiah's story, clearly because the main effect of his life was good and righteous. But the more important the person, the more God holds them responsible. The biblical narrative shows that even with God's graciousness and generosity, men and women still need to live holy lives. Hezekiah became vain and boastful in his later years; the 15 years of extra life granted him by God provided opportunity for him foolishly to invite potential enemies to marvel at his wealth. Instead of inspiring fear and respect, he simply provokes greed and plans to deprive him of that wealth.

God restores Hezekiah; but, like all of us, Hezekiah needed to respond appropriately to that grace.

## *ILLUSTRATIONS*

Dickon had been a vicar for 40 years or more in some tough urban places. When he retired and started to draw his pension he did not retire from serving God. Aged 82 he fell over in the middle of town. Two people helped him get up and offered to take him home. 'I can't go home!' he insisted. 'I'm due at the youth group in ten minutes!' The two rescuers were incredulous.

The Sunday after his death, the young people stood up in church to pay tribute to what this octogenarian vicar had meant to them. He kept going to the end, grateful for all that God had done for him and still wanting to serve his God. His concern, to the end, was for the generations to come!

## *GOING DEEPER*

Questions on the Bible passage, 2 Kings 20, and on the sermon for you to think about, either on your own or in a small group:

1. Is it possible to pray for the right thing but with the wrong motives? Can you think of examples?
2. Why did God answer Hezekiah's prayer? How far can we say that God changed his mind?
3. How possible is it to fritter away God's blessing? Refer to Luke 11: 5–13 as well as 2 Kings 20.