

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **The Twenty First Sunday after Trinity 2026 The faithful God of Law and Gospel – 2 Chronicles 32:1-23**

“After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land, saying, ‘Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?’ He set to work resolutely and built up all the wall that was broken down and raised towers upon it, and outside it he built another wall, and he strengthened the Millo in the city of David. He also made weapons and shields in abundance. And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

“After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria, who was besieging Lachish with all his forces, sent his servants to Jerusalem to Hezekiah king of Judah and to all the people of Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, “On what are you trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, ‘The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria’? Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, ‘Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices’? Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!’” And his servants said still more against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah. And he wrote letters to cast contempt on the LORD, the God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, ‘Like the gods of the nations of the lands who have not delivered their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver his people from my hand.’ And they shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. And they spoke of the God of Jerusalem as they spoke of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men’s hands.

“Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of

Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side. And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ.

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Our text reads, “After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself.” (v. 1) The Assyrian army had already besieged and captured Samaria twenty years earlier. The people of Judah had witnessed the three-year siege the Assyrians carried out with their usual methodical and extremely violent methods. By the time the Assyrian army laid siege to Jerusalem, they had conquered every nation from the Persian Gulf across to the Mediterranean and then down to the upper reaches of the Nile in Egypt. They were the superpower of the ancient world. They were feared and hated by all the nations for their violence and extreme cruelty.

I

Little of this is said in 2 Chronicles or in the parallel account recorded in 2 Kings. But what is clear enough in both accounts is the arrogance of the Assyrian king, who in the well-preserved Assyrian chronicles called himself not just king of Assyria, but “king of the four corners of the earth” and “king of the universe.” This is what lies behind what Sennacherib said to the people of Jerusalem: “On what are you trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, ‘The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria’? Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, ‘Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices’? **Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of other lands?**

Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to deliver their lands out of my hand? **Who among all the gods of those nations that my fathers devoted to destruction was able to deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand?** Now, therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!”

The Assyrians knew a great deal about their enemies, even tiny Judah. They knew a lot, but they **understood little** of the God whose temple was in Jerusalem. It was true that Hezekiah removed religious high places and altars throughout Judah; Assyrian military intelligence was right about that. It was right that Hezekiah had commanded Judah and Jerusalem: “Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices.” But what the Assyrians **did not understand** was that Hezekiah and Judah were not like all the nations that had fallen to Assyrian armies. They did not understand that unlike their own arrogant king, Hezekiah’s God really was the “king of the four corners of the earth” and “king of the universe.” He was in fact its Creator.

They did not understand that what Hezekiah had commanded and done was the will of the one, true God. These were “acts of faithfulness” he had done before the army of Sennacherib appeared in Judah. The high places and altars he had destroyed were destroyed at God’s command. The only rightful altar that existed in Judah was the one within the walls of Jerusalem. The Assyrian king did not understand this. **But Hezekiah did.** We read the prayer of Hezekiah in 2 Kings: “O LORD, the God of

Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."

## II

As we said, all of Judah witnessed what happened to the northern kingdom and its capital, Samaria. Hezekiah was only a young man – and not yet king – when the Assyrians destroyed Samaria and ended the northern kingdom. He knew that their downfall was that they and their kings **had not destroyed** the high places and altars spread throughout Israel from Bethel to Dan. Their trust had not been in the God who revealed Himself to His people in the Torah of Moses, but in a god they imagined in their hearts to whom they build such altars and high places. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had **not** abandoned them. **No, they had abandoned Him.**

Let us not forget what we learned in the catechism, which is a faithful summary of all that both Moses taught in the Torah and Jesus in the gospels: That is, that God reveals Himself to us in two ways, through the law and through the gospel. In the law Moses taught Israel, "You shall have no other gods before me." The people of the northern kingdom, misled by their kings and priests, did not keep that commandment. They built altars, high places, and images, which God explicitly commanded them not to do at Mt. Sinai. Rather than being guided by legitimate and faithful priests of the temple in Jerusalem, the gracious promises and blessings God showered on them through the services of the temple, they were misled into trusting a god of their own imagination or, even worse, outright paganism. That is why the northern kingdom fell. That is the lesson of God's law that turned Hezekiah's heart toward real wisdom, as the psalms promise, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10)

But Hezekiah understood more than that. He trusted the promises of Israel's faithful God. He trusted that God would be gracious to Israel and to its king. He trusted that what Psalm 32 said, was true, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered ... I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the LORD,'" and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:1, 5) And so he repented for himself and for his nation, trusting that God would keep His promises of mercy.

Certainly, God didn't save Jerusalem and Judah because of their righteousness before Him, for they, like Israel and its kings, also sinned against Him. But He spared them the fate the Assyrian king had in mind for them, because they believed His promises, given first to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that there would come a King who would lay down His life to pay for the sins of all and rule a kingdom that is not of this world, a kingdom that would have no end.

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Dear friends, the same God has set before you, as He did before Hezekiah, the same two truths, the law and the gospel. In the one He condemns all our unrighteousness, all our misbelief, all our trust in our own wisdom. This is indeed the beginning of wisdom, for it turns us from self, and from our own foolishness, to Him and to His grace and mercy for Christ's sake. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**