

## Sermon: Looking for Immanuel

### Text: Isaiah 36-39

#### Introduction:

Much of the first thirty-nine chapters of the book of Isaiah are a contrast between Judah's Kings Ahaz (Isaiah chapters 7-14), and Hezekiah (Isaiah chapters 13-39). Isaiah implored King Ahaz to trust in the LORD and ask for a sign of deliverance from the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser (Isa 7:10-19); he wouldn't—and since he chose not to stand firm in his faith, he didn't stand at all. Since the day of that disastrous decision, Isaiah had exhorted Judah to avoid any alliance with a foreign power, and instead cast all of their expectations on the LORD—who alone could deliver them from the Assyrian siege.

This morning we come to Isaiah chapters 36-39—and now King Hezekiah is faced with a desperate choice.

The new King of Assyria is Sennacherib. He sent some of his officers to intimidate Hezekiah in the by-then-surrounded city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36). His first question to Hezekiah is the climactic point of the entire book of Isaiah thus far: **“What are you placing your confidence on?”** (v. 4). The Assyrian king is forcing Hezekiah to choose his deliverer; would he follow his father Ahaz' example and give into the massive Assyrian military machine, or humble himself and listen to Isaiah's proclamation of God's jealousy for His people?

“When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went to the house of the LORD” (Isa 37.1). He sent an envoy to Isaiah, informing the prophet of the visiting officer's boasts and asking him to intercede for the survival of the nation. Hezekiah had already given Sennacherib “all the silver found in the LORD's temple and in the treasuries of the king's palace” (2 Kgs 18.15). Judah's king was a political leader with few political options left to his disposal; if Jerusalem were to be delivered, it would be by the grace of the LORD alone.

Isaiah replied to the king with the word of the LORD, *“Don't be afraid because of the words you have heard, which the king of Assyria's attendants have blasphemed Me with. Look! I am putting a spirit in him and he will hear a rumor and return to his own land, where I will cause him to fall by the sword”* (Isa 37.6-7). Hezekiah chose to trust in the LORD—and He responded in faithfulness (Isa 37.14-36):

1. He took Sennacherib's letter into the LORD's house and spread it out before Him (vv. 14-17)
2. He confessed that the LORD alone is God—the One who has made the earth and its kingdoms (vv. 15-16)
3. He confessed that in light of the Assyrian power, the LORD alone was able to save (vv. 18-20)
4. The LORD restated his jealousy for Hezekiah and the people of Judah (vv. 22-25)
5. The LORD foretold the Assyrian defeat at Jerusalem (vv. 28-35)

Sennacherib did in fact go back the way he came (Isa 37.29, 34), after he saw 185,000 of the Assyrian warriors fallen from the angel of the LORD (Isa 37.36-37)!

#### Examination:

- Read **Isaiah 36**
  - The year is now 701BC. Twenty-one years earlier, Assyria had completely wiped the northern nation of Israel off the map. The ten northern tribes had been taken off as prisoners of war—never to be a unified nation ever again. Assyria is now back and knocking on Jerusalem’s doorstep. According to v. 1, what success had the Assyrians had against the nation of Judah?
  - What was the purpose of the Assyrian field commanders visit to the aqueduct of the Upper Pool? Who went out to meet him?
  - According to verses 4-10, what was the message that Sennacherib had for King Hezekiah? Why do you think he was delivering this message?
  - The taunt begins with mocking Judah’s reliance upon Egypt for help. But it quickly moves to a taunt mocking Judah’s reliance on God for help. What had King Hezekiah done to show his total dependance on God?
  - What did Sennacharib offer Judah to surrender?
  - What line do the Assyrian negotiators cross in verse 10?
  - The three officers from Judah make a very interesting request in verse 11. What is the request—and why do they make it?
  - How does the mocking and threatening continue?
  - Sennacharib then makes a second offer in v. 16. What is it? How enticing was this offer?
  - Why is the question in vv. 18-20 a good question?
  - How do the people respond?
  - Why do the three men tear their clothes in the presence of the King?
  
- Read **Isaiah 37:**
  - What are all of the right things that Hezekiah does in vv. 1-4?
  - Everything that Isaiah says in vv. 5-7 is exactly the opposite of what Sennacherib and his field commanders have been saying. How difficult do you think it was for Hezekiah to actually believe Isaiah?
  - What are all of the right things that Hezekiah does in vv. 14-20?
  - There are four very powerful words in verse 21: “Because you have prayed...” How many times do you believe this is true in your own life? *“Because you have prayed—God healed. Because you have prayed—God saved. Because you have prayed—God helped.”*
  - Summarize the message that Isaiah had for King Sennacharib in vv. 22-29.
  - Why does God choose to deliver Jerusalem? (v. 35)
  - Verse 36 might be one of the most understated verses in the entire Bible. Do you believe that this really happened? What are the implications of this verse in our daily lives?
  - How does verse 38 connect to verse 7?

**Application:**

What are you up against today? Do you believe that God is able to rescue you? How much are you praying about it? What difference do you believe prayer will make?