

What if you were interviewing for a job and it was a job you really wanted, and they asked you “Who are you?” what would you say? How would you identify yourself? What would you talk about?

The way we identify ourselves has a lot to do with where we put our confidence...where we put our faith and trust. And if we misplace our faith and our trust, then we end up placing our confidence in things that are false things that will never come through for us.

Today at noon, I meet with our Confirmation class, and we’re going to start off by reviewing the major themes in the Old Testament, everything we’ve covered so far in *The Story*. And one of the things we see over and over again, is a theme that is foundational for all people at all times.

And that theme is faith.

In your life and mine, it makes all the difference in the world, what we put our faith in.

This Sunday, we meet King Hezekiah, and the prophet Isaiah, and they remind us of these questions: “Who are you?” and “Where do you put your confidence and your trust?”

Hezekiah, is a name from the Old Testament that most people aren’t familiar with.

It’s not a name like Abraham, or Moses, or David.

But Hezekiah’s story deserves some attention.

What had been a united kingdom under David and Solomon was now divided in two; Israel to the north, and Judah to the south: ten tribes to the north and two to the south

As I mentioned last week, over a 208 year period, there were 38 kings who ruled Israel and Judah, and only five of them were faithful to God, and the rest were evil.

They did whatever they thought was right in their own eyes.

Israel grows so weak, that they fall, in 722 B.C. to the Assyrian Empire.

Assyria was the big bully in the neighborhood to the NE, and within 100 years the Babylonian empire gains strength to the SE of Assyria.

And of course there is Egypt, to contend with in the SW.

So by the time Hezekiah comes along, Judah is surrounded and they don’t have Israel as a buffer to the north anymore. And out of the people living in Judah, only a few are still faithful to God, but Hezekiah is one.

He ascends to the throne as a young man. He's only twenty-five years old and he starts this massive excavation project.

In 2 Kings, chapter 18 we find out what Hezekiah did.

Let's read it together: "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord...he removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles."

He took down the high places, which were shrines to false gods like Baal and Asherah. The sacred stones were used for practicing witchcraft and sorcery, which shows where they were putting their confidence and their trust.

Instead of trusting God, for the harvest, and for blessing their families they were making alliances with other gods.

Just like Adam and Eve, they were wanted to control their own lives through these things that they could touch and see. Instead of trusting in the Lord, with their whole heart, they had abandoned God.

And so young King Hezekiah comes along, to challenge their idolatry.

Because he is a man of faith, not perfect, but because he is a man of faith, he starts to tear down these shrines.

In our own lives, we each have things that we are tempted to put in a higher place than God. Sometimes it's one of the gifts God has given us, like our own intellect.

Do you know how many people have a hard time trusting God because somebody has sold them the lie, that faith and reason are incompatible?

Other people have other God-given talents, talents in athletics or the arts, and instead of seeing those gifts as platform for serving God, they let their own pride get in the way and they end up putting those gifts in the highest place.

Some people are very successful at making money with their gift but instead of being thankful, they get caught up in the trappings of possessions and the pride that goes with that.

But God says, don't let anything else take my place.

Hezekiah remembered that. And so he had wild confidence that was grounded in faith. Though the world's eyes, he had no reason for that kind of confidence.

Sennacherib, is the king of Assyria.

He's an emperor. He has immense power. He's conquered a huge swath of the Middle East and everyone bows down to him. On the way down to Judah, he's conquered Israel and dragged them off into exile. He's got power to move the world around.

And Judah's next.

So he knocks on their door with a threat.

And his messengers tell Hezekiah, “bow down, don’t resist. If you want to end up like Israel to the north, go ahead and fight us, but if you want to be smart, negotiate with us, and become Assyrian, and join our armies, and reject your God.”

Hezekiah said “no”.

“Where does your confidence come from?” the messengers said to Hezekiah.

“Are you confident because you have an alliance with Egypt, because they are going down too. They’re next.”

“Is your confidence in your God? The God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

“Well, if you haven’t gotten the message, your friends to the north we wiped them out.

“Didn’t they worship your God, too?”

Why do you put your faith in a god, we’re the Assyrian empire

We are the power in this world. We are the highest place.”

And so Isaiah comes on the scene.

God calls Isaiah to be a prophet and Isaiah brings the word of the Lord to Hezekiah:

“Don’t be afraid of these people, they’re not going to defeat you in fact, they’re going to run away.”

And that’s exactly what happened.

You see God is bigger than all of those things we’re tempted to put in a higher place

So let’s just think this through logically.

If God is bigger, and more powerful, and holy, and almighty than anything else in this world that I can put my faith in, why would I put anything else in the highest place?

Why would I ignore God, and put my trust, and my hope and my confidence in anything less? than the one who created me and this whole world? Does that make any sense?

That we would put our faith in anything less, than the God who meets us in the lowest places, but resides in the highest places?

Which is why Isaiah addressed the messengers from the Assyrian King and said, “Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride?

Who do you think you are?”

“Let me remind you who I am. I’m the God who created you.
I’m the God who put breath into your lungs.
I’m the giver of life and every blessing. Remember that.

Because as soon as you step outside the boundaries I have given for your protection.
You will surely experience death. And that’s not just a message for the Assyrian king.

There is a passage in Romans, that’s addressed to us. It’s a prophetic word of warning to anyone who would disregard God and God’s wisdom for our lives.

In chapter one, Paul writes:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.¹

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God (they didn’t give God the highest place) nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity ...²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised.

Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.

They are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;³¹ they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

And then Paul concludes:

Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.²

But the story doesn't end there.

Yes, we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
Yes, we are deserving of death.

But as we heard so poignantly this week from Isaiah,
God had another plan. A plan that would be revealed in God's time.

Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
²For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
³He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering^[a] and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces^[b]
he was despised, and we held him of no account.
⁴Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
⁶All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

That is the Gospel.
That is where our true confidence comes from.

God, so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son,
so that whoever believes in Him.
Whoever puts their confidence in him.
Will not perish, but will experience eternal life; now and forever. Amen.

¹ Romans 1:18-20

² Romans 1: 21-25,28-32