

23. June 2020

“The prayer of Hezekiah”

2 Kgs 19,9-11.14-21.31-35.36

On hearing that Tirhakah king of Cush was on his way to attack him. Sennacherib again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 'Tell Hezekiah king of Judah this, 'Do not let your God on whom you are relying deceive you with the promise: Jerusalem will not fall into the king of Assyria's clutches. You have learnt by now what the kings of Assyria have done to all the other countries, devoting them to destruction. Are you likely to be saved? Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers' hands and read it; he then went up to the Temple of Yahweh and spread it out before Yahweh. Hezekiah said this prayer in the presence of Yahweh, 'Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, enthroned on the winged creatures, you alone are God of all the kingdoms of the world, you made heaven and earth. Give ear, Yahweh, and listen; open your eyes, Yahweh, and see! Hear the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to insult the living God. It is true, Yahweh, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, they have thrown their gods on the fire, for these were not gods but human artefacts -- wood and stone -- and hence they have destroyed them. But now, Yahweh our God, save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the kingdoms of the world know that you alone are God, Yahweh.' Isaiah son of Amoz then sent the following message to Hezekiah, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I have heard the prayer which you have addressed to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria." Here is the pronouncement which Yahweh has made about him: "She despises you, she scorns you, the virgin daughter of Zion; she tosses her head at you, the daughter of Jerusalem! for a remnant will issue from Jerusalem, and survivors from Mount Zion. Yahweh Sabaoth's jealous love will accomplish this. "This, then, is what Yahweh says about the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city, will shoot no arrow at it, confront it with no shield, throw up no earthwork against it. By the road by which he came, by that he will return; he will not enter this city, declares Yahweh. I shall protect this city and save it for my sake and my servant David's sake." 'That same night the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses. Sennacherib struck camp and left; he returned home and stayed in Nineveh.

How does a situation change if, as in today's text- the people of Israel is threatened, with enemies surround it - and they turn to God with full confidence. We become

witnesses how the threatening disaster is averted from Israel and how the Lord intervenes mightily on the side of his people! Hezekiah is a king who puts his trust in God and prays to him sincerely, and we see what this prayer can do: Hezekiah confesses the true God, unmasking the idols of the nations as "works of man's hand" and prays that God may prove himself to be the true God before all nations!

This shows us the way how a sincere and powerful prayer can change a hopeless situation, because God takes care of prayer and acts!

Therefore we are invited to put our whole heart into prayer and to ask for changes in even the most difficult situations! It is good not only to look at our own intentions, because in many prayers we can - especially in the superordinate ones that go beyond the personal sphere - take the glory and the will of God himself into account!

It is certainly not the case that we have to remind God of his own deeds and his own will! But such prayers, as today in this reading text, are very valuable and God will like such prayers!

"But now, Yahweh our God, save us from his clutches, I beg you, and let all the kingdoms of the world know that you alone are God, Yahweh."

We can easily understand this: if we promise something to children, for example, they will remind us of it, i.e. they take us at our word! This is exactly what the Lord loves: when we rely on His promises, when we put His own promises before His eyes, deeds that He has accomplished! Then God sees that we believe him and put our hope in his word!

The trust in God honours him greatly! Yes, one could say that in a certain sense God cannot escape this trust from the point of view of love. Trust opens the way in which God can communicate himself undividedly, in the same way that he entrusts himself to us. We notice this also in the human realm. When there is trust, there is a great freedom and relaxation in the relationship. One does not need to protect oneself and can venture on paths that one would otherwise not take because of fear.

Certainly it is true that trust in people cannot be unlimited. People are too fickle for that and can suddenly react quite differently than one expects. And it is also good that we notice this and include it in our lives. But this does not mean that we become suspicious, but that we realize the weakness of the human being. Of course, this also applies to ourselves, because it is important as long as we are still

on earth to realize our weakness: *“Everyone, no matter how firmly he thinks he is standing, must be careful he does not fall.” (1 Cor 10,12)*