

Behold Our God
Facing Death Reveals a Lot
October 9th, 2011
Text - Isaiah 22:1-14
Scripture Reading - Isaiah 22:1-14

In today's passage, we see the people of Judah responding to the very real possibility of death in a manner that was completely inconsistent with their supposed belief system.

- Whatever the historic situation might have been, it is clear that Judah was on death's doorstep.
 - Though we know Isaiah spoke this oracle during the time of Hezekiah, it is difficult to determine the exact time and the exact historic situation he is describing. It is also difficult to determine whether Isaiah is speaking of past, present, or future events, or some combination of both. What is clear, however, is that Judah is under siege from an enemy army and that their destruction is imminent.
 - **Isaiah 22:5-9 (ESV)**
⁵ For the Lord God of hosts has a day of *tumult* and *trampling* and *confusion* in the valley of vision, a *battering down of walls* and a *shouting* to the mountains. ⁶ And Elam (ally of Babylon) *bore the quiver* with *chariots* and *horsemen*, and Kir (little is known) uncovered the *shield*. ⁷ Your choicest *valleys were full of chariots*, and the *horsemen took their stand at the gates*. ⁸ He has *taken away the covering of Judah*... ⁹ and you saw that the *breaches of the city of David were many*....
 - **Isaiah 22:2-3 (ESV)**
² ...Your slain are not slain with the sword or dead in battle. (suggest famine) ³ All your leaders have fled together;
 - **Isaiah 22:4 (ESV)**
⁴ Therefore I said: "Look away from me; let me *weep bitter tears*; do not labor to comfort me *concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people*."

- But in this time of great need, instead of repenting of their sin and turning to God for help as they should have, Judah did what they could to save themselves and threw a party instead.
 - o Judah's success, prosperity, and *safety* as a nation were directly linked to their obedience to God.
 - Blessing and Curses (Dt. 28 and Lev. 26)
 - The sword
 - o Isaiah knew this, and that's why we see him weeping in verse 4 and calling Judah to repentance in verse 12.
 - He's weeping not only because he loves his people and his city but because he loves his God whom they are being unfaithful to.
 - He calls them to repentance because he knows that their sin is the reason for their destruction and that turning from it is the only way to prevent it.
 - o But instead of weeping and repenting, Judah throws one last party instead, and Isaiah can't believe it.
 - **Isaiah 22:1-2 (ESV)**
¹...*What do you mean that you have gone up, all of you, to the housetops, ²you who are full of shoutings, tumultuous city, exultant town? (People are starving to death because you're surrounded and your leaders have abandoned you only to be captured without even putting up a fight.)*
 - **Isaiah 22:12-13 (ESV)**
 (What do you mean) ¹³ ...joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ¹² ...the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth;
 - God is calling you to repentance and you're throwing a party instead.

- o Isaiah also knew that God was the *only place* that Judah could turn for help because He was the one who had brought the trouble upon them.
 - In verses (8-11) we see Judah doing everything they possibly could to save themselves *except* or the one thing that might have helped, calling out to God.
 - **Isaiah 22:8-11 (ESV)**

⁸...In that day you looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest, ⁹ and you saw that the breaches of the city of David were many. You collected the waters of the lower pool, ¹⁰ and you counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. ¹¹ You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. *But you did not look to him who did it, or see him who planned it long ago.*
 - o Finally, Isaiah knew that Judah's Godless response to their imminent death meant there was no longer any hope for them.
 - **Isaiah 22:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ The Lord of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: "Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you until you die,"...
 - The Bible clearly teaches throughout that wages of sin is death. Either we repent of our sin and turn to God for forgiveness and atonement, or we die. Judah chose death.
- Whatever Judah might have thought or said they believed about God, the way they faced their death, proved that it wasn't true.
 - The way a person faces death reveals a lot about a person's life. What they're truly all about, what they truly believe, who they truly are, etc. So the way I want to spend the rest of this morning is pondering this question...

How would you respond if you were in Judah's place? How would you spend your last day on earth?

- I know that if I had faced death in the first 23 years of my life I would have spent my last day on earth just like Judah did, completely focused on MYSELF.
 - o First, I would have done all I could, in MY strength, to save MYself.
 - I would have looked to the weapons, repaired the breaches, collected the waters, broken down the houses, fortified the wall, and made the reservoir.
 - Like Judah, the one thing I *wouldn't have done* would have been to look to the God who did it, who planned it long ago, at least not until I'd absolutely exhausted every other possible option.
 - Then, if I did call out to Him as a last resort, I would not have called out to Him with any real confidence or expectation of help or deliverance. After all, I wasn't even sure He existed.
 - o Second, once I knew the writing was on the wall and I was going to die for sure, I too would have thrown a doozy of a party. Though it wouldn't have looked just like Judah's because I've never been a big drinker, *the focus* would have been the same, ME.
 - There would have been plenty of eating throughout, early morning golf, late morning basketball, fishing after lunch, kids, family, and friends in the late afternoon, and a date with my wife to cap it all off.
 - It would have been all about ministering to ME and MY passions.
 - It would have been a perfect reflection of my self-centered, self-focused, Godless, life.
- But now that I've come to know the Lord, I'd like to believe I'd spend my last day differently.

- o I'd like to believe I'd spend it more like the Apostle Paul, praising God and serving others.
 - In the book of Philippians we find Paul in prison facing the very real possibility of death, just like Judah. How did he spend his last day(s) on earth?
 - Writing a letter of encouragement to his beloved Philippians
 - Praying for them joyfully and diligently (1:3-9)
 - Sharing Jesus with the prison guards (1:12-14)
 - Rejoicing in and praising the Lord (4:4, 20)
 - And *looking forward* to dying and going to Heaven to be with Jesus
 - o **Philippians 1:21-23 (ESV)**
 - ²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain...²³...My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.
- o Now I think I'd still be tempted to spend at least part of my last day on myself and my fleshly passions. Based on Romans 7, I'm sure Paul was tempted to do the same. But, like Paul, I don't think I would have, because those fleshly passions no longer control me.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (ESV)**
 - ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
- o Jesus frees us to stop living for ourselves and to start living for Him and for others. To start living for what really matters.
- o One young man who experienced this first hand was Victor Watters.

- Corrine Watters, the youngest of five Watters children at that time, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in 2006. She was 11.
- While undergoing treatment, the Watters family met Victor who had the same rare cancer and was at the exact same stage in his treatment. Victor was 9.
- Victor had no family, was in foster care, and had been in the hospital for three months because they had nowhere to put him.
- Though adopting a child was the furthest thing from the Watters' mind, especially in the midst of their trial, they followed the Lord's leading and adopted Victor anyway.
- Victor came to know the Lord through the Watters and was baptized as a believer.
- Though Corrine's cancer began to get better, Victor's got worse and on September 7th of this year, at the age of 14, Victor died.

Here is their [CaringBridge](#) entry from September 7:

Victor Manuel Watters passed into eternity earlier this morning at the age of 14 years. He ran a good race, and finished well. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The testimony of Victor's life is that of a young man who spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ everywhere he went. Last week, his mom shared this exchange between them:

Victor turned to me intently and said, "Mom, if I go ... I mean soon ... will you tell my family about God, about Jesus?" Then his eyes grew fierce as he clarified, "I mean really try?" And I promised as the tears rolled some more. Then we talked about making a video so that he could say what he wanted to them and others ... and he asked if I would help him. Yes sir.

From a Friend

Many friends and family members gathered at the Watters' home over the past few days. One friend wrote:

We shared heart-wrenching emotions of loss and yet incredible joy in the hope (and now reality) that Victor was leaving this world and would soon be face-to-face with his Savior, Jesus Christ. This young man touched thousands of lives, and as family, friends and neighbors came to say their goodbyes, *Victor overflowed with just the right words of encouragement, humor, gratitude, and heart-felt prayers on to each one of them.* Statements he made such as “I’ll see you in heaven” were not throw-away phrases; rather, they expressed deep convictions that Victor held firmly as he stood on the solid rock of God’s Word.

Undoubtedly, Victor was on a mission to share the gospel with unbelievers — to spread the fragrance of Jesus everywhere. He did so with articulation and wisdom beyond his years. With his Bible in hand, he would read God’s Word, imploring those who came to “be reconciled to Christ.” Victor spoke truth generated by love and genuine concern. It was incredible to see that *although Victor’s body was withering away, he was strong in his desire to point others to Jesus.* We were so blessed to experience the fragrance of Christ through Victor, and we will never be the same.

Victor's Testimony

In May of this year Victor was baptized. Here is the testimony that he wrote and shared:

I was born in a non-Christian family. I don’t think we ever went to church. And I didn’t ever think about where I would go if I died. God changed me probably a little differently from most people. He changed me through cancer. I was diagnosed with Ewing’s Sarcoma in December of 2006. They found out I had cancer because I had a seizure. The tumor in my hip got so big that it had shut down some of my organs.

I was moved into foster care because both of my parents were making bad decisions. I went to church sometimes with my new foster parents, but I didn’t care about Jesus or God at that time. In the hospital, I would always think to myself that it was by *my* strength that I could get through this. Well, by God’s grace I met the Watters family, which was just the start of everything.

God decided that he wanted to move me to a Christian family. The Watters were really wanting to adopt me, which was perfect timing, because at that time, my foster parents were not able to take care of me anymore. So I became a Watters.

Living with the Watters for a couple of months, my mom one day told me about Christ and how he died for me. That same day, I knelt down on our kneeler and accepted Christ. I believe that God gave me cancer for a reason, and that reason was to meet the Watters and become a Christian so that I can be with him forever!

So I'm getting baptized because I truly believe that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth to die on the cross for all of our sins, and to save us from eternal fire. I am trusting that God is sovereign over everything, including cancer, and that he has a wonderful plan laid ahead for my life, and he will never let Satan take me from his hands.

My friends, THAT'S how I want to respond when I face death, THAT'S what I want my final days to look like. I hope that you do to.

Let's pray