

Hezekiah gets ill



Colour me!



2 Kings 20:1-11

Hezekiah was a very good and godly king, and trusted in the Lord. He destroyed all the idols and their places of worship from the country. God gave him victory over many enemies. But one day...

About this time, Hezekiah got sick and was almost dead. Isaiah the prophet went in and told him, "The Lord says you won't ever get well. You are going to die, so you had better start doing what needs to be done." Hezekiah turned towards the wall and prayed, "Don't forget that I have been faithful to you, Lord. I have obeyed you with all my heart, and I do whatever you say is right." After this, he cried hard.

Before Isaiah got to the middle court of the palace, the Lord sent him back to Hezekiah with this message: Hezekiah, you are the ruler of my people, and I am the Lord God, who was worshipped by your ancestor David. I heard you pray, and I saw you cry. I will heal you, so that three days from now you will be able to worship in my temple. I will let you live fifteen years more, while I protect you and your city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city as an honour to me and to my servant David. Then Isaiah said to the king's servants, "Bring some mashed figs and place them on the king's open sore. He will then get well."

Hezekiah asked Isaiah, "Can you prove that the Lord will heal me, so that I can worship in his temple in three days?" Isaiah replied, "The Lord will prove to you that he will keep his promise. Will the shadow made by the setting sun on the stairway go forward ten steps or back ten steps?" "It's normal for the sun to go forward," Hezekiah answered. "But how can it go back?" Isaiah prayed, and the Lord made the shadow go back ten steps on the stairway built for King Ahaz.

Commentary

Hezekiah was one of Judah's good kings. He put God first, especially during the threats from the Assyrian troops, who at one stage were camped outside the walls of Jerusalem. The Lord answered Hezekiah's heartfelt prayer for rescue, and the mysterious death of many of the enemy soldiers forced the whole army to withdraw. But even faithful kings aren't immune from becoming ill like the rest of us, and in this story Hezekiah is near to death. Again his prayers are answered and God gives him extra time on earth—although, arguably, he didn't use that time well when he rashly invited Babylonian messengers to admire the city's wealth and weaponry.

Isaiah was God's prophet at this time and brought God's answers to the king, including the confirmation of his healing by the miracle of the sun's shadow going backwards on the stairs. God granted Hezekiah peace throughout the rest of his reign, and his readiness to turn to prayer both for his country and for himself is an example for us all today.

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Questions

- ▶ Why do you think God changed his mind about the timing of Hezekiah's death?
- ▶ Do you think it is always right to pray that God will heal people?
- ▶ Isaiah is the one who brings God's answers to Hezekiah. How might you be the answer to someone else's prayer?
- ▶ Hezekiah was given 15 more years to live. Every day of life is a gift from God, so how can we use each day well?



Visual aid

Find a first aid kit and explore what is inside, including the plasters and bandages. In Hezekiah's day, a first aid box would have contained herbal remedies like mashed figs.



Activity idea

The shadow cast by the sun on Hezekiah's stairs moved in an unusual way in this story. Put a bright light next to a wall in such a way as to cast a shadow when something is placed in between. Try creating some shadow shapes with one and then two hands. Can you make the shadows move in an unusual way? Can you create animal or human figures from the shadows? How about making shadows of some things from the story—soldiers, a crown, a bed, a palace tower, stairs or figs?



Prayer idea

Make a list of the people you know who are ill at the moment. Talk about them and any ways in which you could help them or cheer them up. Now work on a special prayer together, asking God to heal them in the best way and to give them peace. Read out this prayer together, once for each of the people you have named.

Key verse

I have been faithful to you, Lord. I have obeyed you with all my heart, and I do whatever you say is right (2 Kings 20:3).

New Testament story link

John 9:1-12: Jesus heals a blind man after the man follows some simple instructions. This healing is also a special sign from God (see John 9:39).



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