

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 27, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“A Reversal of Fortune”

READING: II Chronicles 32:1-3, 9-11, 16-17, 20-21 – After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to make war on Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him.

Later...Sennacherib king of Assyria says: “On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, ‘The Lord our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,’ he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst.”

Sennacherib’s officers spoke further against the Lord God and against his servant Hezekiah. The king himself wrote letters insulting the Lord, the God of Israel, and saying this against him: “Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand.”

King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this. And the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons cut him down with the sword.

Perhaps you have seen the advertisement on TV for “Red Bull” energy drink where a hairdresser finds two new shops opening on either side of him, both of them barbershops. He is going to have a heap of competition. But then he drinks a Red Bull and inspiration happens. He puts up a new sign under his that reads “Entrance” with an arrow on either end pointing to his own door. Ah! Now their signs serve his interests: problem solved. That is called a “Reversal of Fortune”.

That is a trope that we find again and again in the Scriptures. Everything seems to be going against God’s people when the Lord intervenes, and a reversal of fortune occurs. God’s people are saved, and their enemies disgraced. It happens with Noah when for years and years his neighbors laugh at his efforts only to see him and his family saved while they themselves are treading water. It happens again with Joseph rotting in prison one day and the next day he is the viceroy of Egypt. The same thing happens when the Israelites are trapped at the Red Sea. Just when it looks like the Egyptians have them in their hands, the sea is parted, Israel escapes with dry feet, and the chariot corps of Pharaoh is drowned. It happens with Joshua and the Israelites as they are heckled and jeered by the residents of Jericho as they march around the city for seven days. When the city’s walls suddenly collapse and Israel swarms in, the reversal of fortune is complete. We see the same thing happen with Daniel in the lions’ den when he is saved but his enemies devoured. We see it again in the book of Esther when the bad guy Haman is hung on the very gallows he’d had erected for Esther’s uncle Mordecai.

All of these stories are but a prelude and a picture of the greatest of the reversals of fortune in the Scriptures: the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. As Jesus is arrested, falsely accused, beaten and misused, flogged, and then crucified, it looks to all the world as if his life and ministry have come to naught. His disciples have fled into hiding, no one will speak for him, the Roman court of justice fails him, and Satan howls in hatred and victory. The Son of God lies in a borrowed tomb, dead as a doornail.

But on Sunday something amazing and unexpected takes place: the stone rolls away to reveal a living, all-powerful, and ever-loving Savior who has taken the curse of sin upon himself, paid its price, and now lives

to all eternity. Even more, having done all that, he now confers to us his own righteousness that we may become the children of God, and that is what we are! We, who should have suffered condemnation for our sins, are now declared righteous through our faith and union with Jesus. We who were destined for death and hell are now promised eternal life and a place in heaven. That's a reversal of fortune if ever there was one.

The ads say, "Red Bull gives you wings!" I'm very skeptical of that, although I must confess that I have never tasted one of those. But I do know that God has again and again through the history of the world acted on behalf of his people and reversed their fortunes. He did this in his mercy and because of his grace. And each time one of those reversals took place it was a sign of things to come. Through his Son God was planning the greatest reversal of fortune in his plan of salvation. Right to the very last book of the Bible God gives us this message: "Christian, no matter how dark it looks; no matter how much it appears that evil is winning; no matter even if you should lose your life for the faith; know this: Jesus Christ is the victor and in him YOU WILL BE VICTORIOUS!" I doubt Red Bull will give me wings, but I know that God will carry me home on the wings of the angels. I take his word for it! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) **GOLDEN SAINTS LUNCHEON:** On Thursday, September 29, about noon, join us for lunch in the Fireside Room. Whether you attend the Thursday Saints Bible Class or not, bring a dish to share. The meat, beverages, and table service will be provided. Join us for wonderful food, good fellowship, and some fun.