Good Morning!

"O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.” Isaiah 37:16

Hezekiah, the godly king of Judah, made this statement. Just what you would expect from someone described as, “He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among those* who were before him. For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.” 2 Kings 18:5-6

Generally speaking, we imagine that life was going to be good for such a man. The Lord God would bless him and use him, and God did do that. But life was not just wonderful for Hezekiah. From the beginning of Hezekiah’s reign, news of the might of Assyria would come from the north. Year by year one city, one country after another fell to the power of the Assyrian king. For fourteen years, the king and the people were constantly preparing for the onslaught of this people. They took in fugitives from the northern kingdom of Israel and heard the harrowing stories of death and destruction. For years, envoys from the king of Assyria came knocking on Hezekiah’s door reminding him that he was next.

Then this vast army showed up. It was larger than anyone had ever seen ever before. The commander of the army came and shouted to the people sitting on the wall of Jerusalem, “Don’t let Hezekiah fool you. No other nation and no other god has been able to resist us. So neither will the Yahweh god either!” This commander uses our God’s personal name here, which is probably his big mistake. And then this commander sends a letter to Hezekiah stating this same thing. What you do, when staring down the barrel of a gun?

In April of 1999, in a quiet Colorado High School library, a teen put a gun to the face of a 17 year-old girl by the name of Cassie Bernall. He asked her, “Are you a Christian?” She said yes; he pulled the trigger. Yes, he was trying to kill as many people as possible, but we don’t know that he asked that question to anyone else, just to Cassie.

The verse I quoted from Isaiah 37 was Hezekiah’s reaction to the letter the commander of the army had sent. Hezekiah took the letter and lay it before God in the temple at Jerusalem. He first acknowledged who God was and what He was capable of doing. He then asked God to save them for the sake of His own name. “Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, Lord, are God." Isaiah 37:20

God answers, “Because you have prayed to Me…” And the rest of the story is, “Then the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.” [I have always loved that line in the Bible!]

What we need to remember in all of this is not the 185,000, but the “Because you prayed to Me!” Cassie Bernall had little time to formulate a theologically accurate prayer, but she did know how to answer. King Hezekiah also knew how to answer the letter – he took it to the one who can answer prayers.

In Jesus Christ, the God who keeps us until the day…

Pastor EA