

What a marvelous hymn of our trust, our confidence in our Lord and our God, in our Savior, Jesus Christ. And it's appropriate for our scripture reading this day from the book of 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 18, verses one through eight. The word of our God. In the third year, of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was 25 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David, his father, had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the ashraf. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. For until those days, the people of Israel had made offerings to it. It was called Nahashtan. He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him. nor among those who were before him, for he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him. Wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. He struck down the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory from watchtower to fortified city. The renewal, the revival in the time of Hezekiah was one of the most sudden in all of the scriptures. He began his work of reformation early in his reign at the age of 25 and he ruled for 29 years. but he came to reign at a time of national crisis and wickedness, for apostasy was widespread across Judah. And the Assyrians had just successfully besieged the city of Samaria, the capital of the northern tribe and kingdom, which led to the fall of Israel. And the Israelites were carried off into exile. At this point, the book of 2 Kings was the tale of two kingdoms, north and south. But now, from this section of the book forward, it's only about the southern kingdom of Judah. And it's at this point, that we meet young King Hezekiah. He lived in a day much like our own for the wickedness of his father Ahaz had brought a spiritual poison across the land. the vast majority of the people were indifferent to God, the temple was closed, and those who loved the Lord were profoundly helpless. And like the psalmist in the earlier day, perhaps Hezekiah could have asked from Psalm 11, when the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do? Over 2,500 years ago, when Hezekiah lived, he lived in a day much like our own. Ernest Baker in his analysis of God bringing renewal and refreshment in the scriptures writes, within two months of Hezekiah's arrival, the entire nation was swept with a wave of spiritual enthusiasm. Well certainly, the renewal did

not come because of the positive influence of Hezekiah's father Ahaz. For we read that Ahaz was the very epitome of evil. For 16 years, he led the people away from God. In each of Ahaz's acts, led further and further leading the people into spiritual doldrums. They cast idols to worship the various Baals. They mix the worship of the true and living God with that of the Canaanite gods and of Moloch, even the king himself. burned some of his children to the false god, Moloch. We read that Ahaz cast off all constraint. And a little further in his reign, it says he became even more unfaithful to the Lord. He shut the doors of the temple, He took the temple furniture and utensils out and he cut them all up to pieces. And he built altars for the pagan gods in every town throughout Judah. But God raised up Hezekiah amidst this darkness and decline. And we can't read 2 Kings chapter 18 without asking the question, how? Or even perhaps why? How is it that God worked in Hezekiah's young life? Was it his mother that God used? Was it a priest? Was it one of the prophets of his own day? Both the prophets Hosea and Micah record that their prophecies were made during Hezekiah's reign. And Isaiah makes reference to Hezekiah in his ministry. Was it a teacher? Was it something that he observed in God's working, perhaps even what happened to the northern kingdom? We are not told. The Bible is silent. that we might keep asking and wondering how could this be so that we might conclude that it's the pure hand and mercy of almighty God who in love and grace is coming to visit his people. And while God uses instruments The mighty and mysterious working of His Spirit is what He sovereignly brings to bless, to renew His people in true restoration and revival. Hezekiah opened the doors to the temple. He resumed worship services. But merely opening the temple doors and the resumption of worship services doesn't bring about true revival of the fresh presence of almighty God in majesty and in love and grace. No, there must be a two-fold turning, a turning away from sin, that 90-degree turn from the direction that their lives were headed in, and a second turn, a turn toward God to make it a complete about-face turn towards the Lord. This is what the Bible means by repentance. It is the word that Hezekiah uses in describing what God was doing in his own heart and among the people is described in the book of Second Chronicles. I'm gonna read a verse or two from 2 Chronicles chapter 29, where we get a glimpse of Hezekiah's sense of their sin before God and their brokenness, their genuine humility and repentance. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They have forsaken him and turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and they've turned their backs. They've also shut the doors of

the vestibule and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore, the wrath of the Lord came on Judah and on Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are now in captivity for this. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, that this, that his fierce anger may turn away from us. My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings. to him. The Old Testament word to turn, or to repent, is used 818 times. The Hebrew word is the word shuv. And Walt Kaiser, an Old Testament writer, talks about how God giving the people a shove in the right direction as they repent with this word shiv. So back to Psalm 11. When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? For just a few moments, I'd like to look at three things that we find that Hezekiah did do. The first is that he brought David-like, King David-like reformation. A major change came to Judah. About the year 713, a new David appeared. Hezekiah did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord in line with all that David, his father, had done. Period. No qualification. Many of his predecessors Amaziah did right, and yet he was not like David his father, it says. Or Asa, he did what was right as David had, but he did not put the high places out of business. And what we have here in these opening four verses of 2 Kings chapter 18 is what 2 Chronicles 29 to 31 covers. Hezekiah opened the doors to the temple. He was a champion for the true and genuine worship of the covenant living God. He knew that God is holy and jealous, that God doesn't tolerate rivals. We find that he cleansed the temple, he reinstated the Passover, and he reorganized the priesthood. We see his genuine heart for the true and vibrant worship of the true and living God. He also removed these competitors to the true worship of a God, tore down the high places. He shatters the pillars. He hacks down the asherahs. He shows that worship is his true priority. During the days of Moses, when the people of God were in a state of serious sin, as they were wandering in the wilderness with disbelief and complaint, They were to look to a bronze serpent that they might be delivered from death. God himself had commanded this, but eventually that bronze serpent itself became a superstition and the people were offering sacrifices to this bronze serpent instead of the living God in a way that he never ordered or intended. And so we find Hezekiah pounding this brown serpent from Moses' time to bits so that it can never

be worshiped again. Perhaps we could see this as one of the fulfillment of the Bible's oldest promise of salvation, that Hezekiah crushed the serpent's head. Now we have been made for worship. We've been created in God's image.

As we come to Jesus, we've been born anew that we might be true worshipers of him. And as his people, we are now living stones as we've come to that living stone. And we are a temple, a living temple of worship and praise to our great God. So we are to declare God's greatness with our lips and from our hearts. I've used this illustration before, but it's been, I think, some years. Louis XIV was that king of France. He was, of all the monarchs, he held the longest reign, 72 years, 110 days. He was the Sun King. He built Versailles and the beautiful, lovely gardens. And when he died, he had left instructions that the great cathedral was to be very dimly lit and that his gold encased casket was to have one candle, one light near his head to represent his shining light and influence.

At the beginning of his funeral service, the presiding minister quietly made his way to that candle. He snuffed it out, saying, only God is great. And that is what we declare in worship. Our own worship, my own worship constantly needs reform that I might truly rejoice and worship God and not be distracted to worship Him as He would have me to. And it's this vision of the glory, the greatness of God, of being caught up with His splendor and His majesty of who He is. This was very much in the mind of young King Hezekiah as he was committed to reformation of worship in a David-like way. Secondly, We find with King Hezekiah that he was David-like in his heart, in his own relationship with the Lord. This is verses five to seven in our passage. We read that he trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. In the Hebrew, has the God of Israel at the head of the sentence. That is the emphasis, the one in whom he is trusting and relying. And this word, to trust, to rely, occurs 10 times in this chapter and in chapter 19. And it fits lovely with our hymn that we sang, I Am Resting. It's a confidence in God. It's a rest in Him, a reliance upon Him. And the stress is not upon so much Hezekiah's own faith, but in the one in whom he has placed his trust and confidence in the Lord. That raises a great question for you and for me, Who is it? Whom do I trust? Especially in times of difficulty or adversity. Where do I turn? On whom or on what do I rely? And Hezekiah's own day, the people largely trusted in themselves. Much like in the Day of Prophets, they sought to do what was right in their own eyes. They turned to the Canaanite gods. We read that in this respect of trust, of belief, of confidence in God, that Hezekiah is unique among the kings of Judah. After him, there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah in this regard, nor like him

before, or who would come after him. He stayed close. to God. The old authorized version speaks of him clinging to God by faith. This clinging to God is the same verb that's used in Genesis chapter two of Adam who cleaved unto his wife. He held fast to her, Hezekiah, holding fast to the Lord, his God. As he holds fast to him, he's described as one who remembered, who kept, who lived out the reality of God's loving and true commands that were given to Moses. Following the Lord means by His grace, because of our trust and faith, that it leads to a life of growing obedience, that evangelical obedience because of Christ in the gospel. Martin Luther described faith in this way. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing. While we are not saved by works, the Bible is very, very clear that our own works and efforts do not gain us a good or right standing. It's the very opposite of that. And yet, the genuine faith that does save us is a faith that leads to work. There's a living relationship between faith and works. And I think this is shown to me, especially by Lady Jane Grey. On the eve of her execution, she was a devout Protestant woman. And when the English Parliament rejected her as queen instead of favoring bloody Mary, who was a Catholic, Lady Jane was sentenced to death. She was put in the Tower of London. And the night before she was beheaded, she was given one final opportunity to renounce her belief in justification, a right standing with God by faith alone, and declare that good works performed by us are necessary for salvation itself. And she said, I deny that. And I affirm that faith only saveth. But it is meat for a Christian to do good works. in token that he follows the steps of his master, Christ. And yet, we are unprofitable servants and faith only in Christ's blood can save us. Spoken like a true queen who belonged to the royal line of the house of David through faith in Jesus Christ. We find that Hezekiah brought reform, David-like reform. We find him with a David-like heart and his own loyalty and love and commitment to the Lord. And then finally, we learn that he is given David-like success in verses seven to nine. We read that the Lord Jehovah or Yahweh was with him wherever he went. And wherever he went, he was successful. Verse 7. The Bible speaks in Deuteronomy chapter 25 of the covenant blessings as well as covenant curses. The blessing on those who by the grace of God are faithful and follow the Lord and the curses against those who turn their back on God and go their own way and forget his words. In part, At the heart of that blessing is the very presence of the Lord, spoken of even by our Lord Jesus in Matthew's gospel among his final words. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end. It is that covenant presence of our true God and Savior. And we find here that God was also with the king as he went forth to battle. His military exploits are David-like in parallel way that was not true of the rest of David's descendants,

only David. and Hezekiah are said to have been told that the Lord was with them, that they were successful in war. Only David and Hezekiah are described as defeating those perennial enemies, the Philistines. The Bible uses this phrase, the Lord was with him, he prospered, he was successful whenever he went to war. elsewhere to describe King David. And Hezekiah is reversing the losses of his wicked ungodly father, Ahaz. God granted him the victory. As we think about Hezekiah, his life, and his reign, we can't help but think of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the one who is the greater, greater David. Hezekiah, as Ralph Davis says, was David revisits us, but there is a greater King, the Lord Jesus. Is it not typical of God's dealing with his people and his kingdom that when we face danger within or without, that there are times in which he brings refreshment and renewal The church seems tottering on extinction. It's a day of small things. And then we find, in the working of Almighty God, a time of recovery, a Hezekiah-like interlude. In China, when communist leader Mao Zedong, during his reign and persecution, the church, which was very small, has grown. Now, estimates of the church today, over 200 to perhaps 250 million believers. Christianity, the fastest growing religion. Or Idi Amin, the third president of Uganda. His persecution of the church and how the church continues. Think of the church in our own day, of some churches who have slid from an evangelical commitment to the authority of God and his word to abandon a confidence in the scriptures, to go from strength to more of an impotence of weakness blended with the ways of this world. In God's grace, The ARP church has had the reverse of that. In the 1970s, there was some tottering of the ARP belief in practice related to the doctrine and authority of scripture, but God has brought renewal, has brought the ARP back to himself and to his word. It was an interlude of Hezekiah-like working. And Hezekiah points us ultimately to our Savior Jesus, his triumph over his enemies, his unparalleled trust in his Father. We see here as Dr. Stewart, our new pastor, has said, a shadow, a shadow of the greater David to come. that he perfectly fulfilled all that was spoken of concerning the king. His baptism pictured the presence of God the Father with him, with whom he was well pleased. He always did right. He always kept God's commandments. He was jealous for the worship of God, driving out the money changers at his house, may be a house of prayer for the nations. And as he was dying on the cross, There we find his continual trust in his father, that he might be raised, that his sacrifice would be accepted. He gained eternal victory over Satan. Satan's head was truly crushed in the powers of hell, and he now lives, and he reigns, and

he rules in triumph. And the humblest, weakest Christian who believes in Jesus will likewise share with Him in His great work of redemption and forgiveness of sin, of cleansing and glory, being removed of the very sin, being removed from our very presence, and for all eternity, living and ruling and reigning with Him in triumph. When I was a boy, my father would often remind me of the difference between D-Day, which actually is my birthday, so he brought it up every year, and V-E Day. D-Day, June the 6th, 1944. But

VE Day, 336 days later in May of 1945, when the war against Germany officially ended. And as you have perhaps often heard, the cross indeed was the D-Day for Satan. And yet he continues seeking to wreak havoc And yet, passages like 2 Kings 18 reminds us that there is a VE day coming and that for all eternity. Let's give God our joyful thanks. Our Father, our hearts praise and extol you for your love and your mercy to us in the Redeemer. How much we need your hand of refreshment, of renewal, of help in our own lives and hearts, in our land. We pray for the working of your gracious and mighty spirit, that we might delight in you and worship, that our trust might be in you and in your word, and that we might have the confidence as we go about the work to which you have called us, even in a day that may seem like a small thing, that we know that you are a God who is accomplishing all things for your great glory and your marvelous praise. We give you our joyful thanks in Christ, our mighty Redeemer's name. Amen.