

We begin this Sermon by quoting from the Book of Isaiah, and some words about King Hezekiah. It was a tough time for Hezekiah. He was facing a life ending illness.

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: “This is what the LORD says: ‘Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.’”

When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, “Remember, O LORD, how I have always been faithful to you and have served you single-mindedly, always doing what pleases you.” Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

Then this message came to Isaiah from the LORD: “Go back to Hezekiah and tell him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. Yes, I will defend this city.’

Isaiah 38:1-6]

King Hezekiah’s life was a bit overwhelming at that moment. I want to connect that OT reading with our NT reading from Acts, which also talks about an overwhelming time.

Paul is being pestered by a demon-possessed slave girl. He finally gets so frustrated by her that he sets her free from the power of the demon by the greater power of Jesus’ name.

Good thing, right? Well, sometimes good things can have bad consequences: like when you beat your friend at racquetball and they do not talk to you for a week.

After this good thing of a slave girl set free, everything for Paul went down hill in the old wheelbarrow ride.

- The slave girl’s owners are angry because their slave girl can no longer make them money by reading palms and tea leaves.
 - The slave girl’s owners have Paul and his friend Silas arrested.
 - Paul and Silas are beaten – severely beaten.
 - Paul and Silas are placed in an inner dungeon, with their feet locked up in stocks.
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We have in front of us today these two stories of being seriously overwhelmed in life. These stories speak to me because I think a lot of us are going through overwhelming times.

We have had 7 funerals in our church in less than 4 months. We have several people going through multiple doctor appointments seeking to find answers to health concerns. We have many other people going through a variety of things which can best be described as unsettling to daily life.

As I look at our life together I think that many of us might be facing overwhelming times. This feeling of being overwhelmed can come from a variety of sources:

- Circumstances can overwhelm us. This can be anything from a medical diagnosis to a breaking relationship to a job that doesn't fit us.
- Responsibilities can overwhelm us.
- The big "G's" of life can overwhelm us: grief, guilt, grudges.

King Hezekiah wrote a poem about being overwhelmed. In that poem he said, "*I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!*" [Isaiah 38:14] It is to those of us who are feeling that way today I am speaking.

There is a very common phrase which says, "Let go and let God." "Let go and let God: is a bit of an overused phrase. But it can also be very helpful when life is overwhelming.

As we shall see from Hezekiah and Paul, when one has a trusting relationship with God, one can "Let go and let God."

The first thing Paul and Hezekiah teach us is:

1. *Let go of the control.*

Troubles are worse when we think that our only resources are ourselves. Think of a time when you were a child and you broke a window. Just out of curiosity, how many of you as a child remember breaking a window or breaking something of value?

Let's say we broke a window as a child. We tried to control the situation; we put ourselves in charge of damage control.

- We may have tried to put the window back together again.
- We may have tried to cover it up with piled high glass clippings so no one – not even Mom and Dad – would see it.
- We may have run to the far side of the house and tried to hide.

When we relied on ourselves the trouble just became worse.

But when we let go of controlling an uncontrollable situation... In this case when we went to Mom and Dad and said, "I broke the window," then it went better for us.

Hezekiah let go of an uncontrollable situation: his illness. He put control of that into God's hands. He did that by *"turning his face to the wall and praying to the Lord."* After that he let out his feelings by breaking down and weeping.

In this life we are going to have times of being out of control. In fact, most of life is out of our control.

In this life we are going to have family who will die, friends who will move away and out of our lives, illnesses which will strike suddenly or linger overlong. There will be times when we break down and weep.

That does not mean God has abandoned us. It is those times when we may turn over what we cannot control to God. It is those times when like Hezekiah we need to turn to the wall and pray.

Paul turned over an uncontrollable situation to God. He and Silas were behind locked doors. And what did they do? The Bible says: *"At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing."*

Paul let go of the control of his situation. As they sang the other prisoners gathered around and listened. Lives were opened, hearts were touched, stories were shared, and hope sprang forth in the dark place.

We learn from Paul and Hezekiah to let go of the control. Turn the situation over to God.

2. *Let God work the plan.*

Sometimes we have to call in the workforce and let them do their work. A few examples of trusting the workers to work:

- Early this week I placed a phone call to Liz McNutt, and had a conversation with Jessica Magnuson at a softball game. These two gifted people were asked to sing the song, “His Eye is on the Sparrow.” Liz sang it wonderfully at the 9 AM service, and Jessica will sing it at 11 AM.

This song is a great bookmark to this message. Now, I could have not asked them. Or, after asking them, I could just skip over them in the service. Just say to myself, “Aw, what was I thinking, who needs them to sing.”

In doing that I would rob a whole congregation of God working in us through that song. Let the workers work.

- The lights in my office went out – I called in Glen Mastel. We needed to amplify 5 instruments for the 11 AM service – called in Del Jordahl. We needed lunch for funerals – called in the Workgroup.

Sometimes we have to call in the workforce and let them do their work. In every case things I could not do were accomplished.

Hezekiah called in the Lord. He did not know how the Lord would respond or what the Lord would do. But he knew his Lord, and he trusted his Lord.

Hezekiah called in the Lord, and waited for the Lord do his work. The Lord sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to say to him: *‘This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears.’* Hezekiah was healed and he was involved in Jerusalem being saved.

Paul called in the Lord. He did not know how the Lord would respond or what the Lord would do. But he knew his Lord, and he trusted his Lord.

Paul called in the Lord, and waited for the Lord to do his work. God sent an earthquake: *“There was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!”* [Acts 16:26]

More importantly, Paul was given the opportunity to share his faith with the jailer. And the jailer, like Lydia from last week, became a charter member of the Philippian church.

God had a plan:

- for Hezekiah to be involved in the saving of Jerusalem.
- for the jailer and his family to meet Jesus.

God worked through the illness of Hezekiah and the imprisonment of Paul to accomplish his plan.

God has a plan for your life as well. The specifics I do not know. But the outline of the plan is revealed in the Bible. This is God’s plan for your life.

- God has a plan to give you a certain number of days of life. Psalm 139 says, *“Lord, You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”* [verse 16]

We do not know if our life will last for a few days or a few years or a few decades. But we do know that whatever life we have has been given by the Lord of Life.

- God has a plan to give us no more than we can handle. 1 Corinthians 10 says, *“God is faithful. God will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”* [verse 13]

To have a promise that we will be able to endure is a priceless promise. Is the road of life difficult? Yes, it is. Is the road of life that God gives to us passable? Yes, it is. God's plan is to help us to endure to the end.

- God has a plan to make our days memorable and meaningful. John 10 says: "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*" [verse 10]

Whenever we have a death in this congregation I try to spend some time recalling the life of that person. Who did they touch? Who did they help? What did they accomplish? How did God use them? How did God use them? One can see the hand of God in so many people's lives.

- God has a plan to keep our treasures safe. Matthew 6 says, "*Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" [verse 20]

God is the one who opens a treasure house in heaven and keeps our treasures safe. In that treasure house are no cars or clothes or jewelry. In that treasure house are real treasures: hope, faith and love.

- God has a plan to bring everything to completion. Isaiah 55 says, "*My word that goes out from my mouth shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*" [verse 11]

I hate loose ends. You probably do as well. Do you know where we get that feeling from? I think it is from God. Earthly life has so many loose ends. But the plan of God is that he will bring all loose ends to completion.

I think that is my favorite part of God's plan. The child whose life was cut short, the conversation we always intended to have but never did, the healing that never seemed to arrive – God will finally make sure all of those things are remedied, and that all is brought to completion.

When we are overwhelmed – and it will happen again or it is happening now in your life – when we are overwhelmed remember Hezekiah and Paul: Let go of the

uncontrollable, and let God work the plan. The promise is that we will not be overwhelmed, but God's amazing grace will overwhelm us. Amen.