

## When the Thread of Life is Cut

Sermon for the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Isaiah 38:9-20



<sup>9</sup> A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness: <sup>10</sup> I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years. <sup>11</sup> I said, I shall not see the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. <sup>12</sup> My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end; <sup>13</sup> I calmed myself until morning; like a lion

he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end. <sup>14</sup> Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety! <sup>15</sup> What shall I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul. <sup>16</sup> O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh restore me to health and make me live! <sup>17</sup> Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. <sup>18</sup> For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness. <sup>19</sup> The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness. <sup>20</sup> The Lord will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord.

Jonas is a carpet weaver by trade. But his work is much more than an occupation. For him, carpet weaving is a reflection of the universe. He attempts to express the reality of our world, what he sees in the universe, with yarn and thread. He needs thousands of little knots for this. The interaction of these many knots makes up the whole carpet. And it creates a wonderful picture that colorfully and in a mysterious way draws the observer into the world of the universe. Sometimes Jonas works together with his children. He gives his children great freedom to work independently. When he sees a mistake, he doesn't make his children start from the beginning, rather he works the mistake into the whole piece and makes something new out of it. Jonas says: "The mistakes ultimately also belong to the universe and that's why they aren't allowed to be left out of his carpet!" But something terrible happened in Jonas' personal life. Two of his children died in a horrible accident. For him, it was as if the entire universe was shaken. His life was ruined. He sadly stood in front of the last unfinished carpet and saw the knots and threads that were still personally tied by the children. The threads were now severed. Jonas held the last knots in his hand and asked himself: "How does the universe continue when life comes to such an end?"

In our sermon text for today, we hear a similar story. It's about the king of Judah named Hezekiah. His life ranged like a Persian carpet over many corners and curves. There was also something wrong in his life. But that's a part of life. In the center of his life was the temple. For him, the temple in Jerusalem was the place where God was. For him, death meant that one was separated from this temple and

therefore also separated from God. His life was like the unfinished carpet. You stand there with loose threads and know that the story must go on. But these loose threads and the unfinished life remain. This was an impossible concept for Hezekiah. That's why he openly cried and prayed that God would save him from the fate of death. It was clear for Hezekiah that God alone held the threads of life in His hand. It was also clear to him that God alone has the authority to cut these threads. So these are the two stories we want to think about today - the story of the Persian carpet weaver and the story of King Hezekiah. Both stand there with the unfinished carpet and the loose thread. The question they ask is also our question: "How does life go on?" We are all in the middle of life. Our life is like a complicated Persian carpet. Sometimes our lives are interwoven with other people. We walk the same path together. There are also times when we our separate ways again. Sometimes because we're going to another country. But sometimes because death separates us. Separation is always difficult. How does life then go on? What happens when the thread suddenly comes to an end and when life is threatened? Many people experience deep loneliness when faced with death. When you die, you say goodbye to everything that defines our life. We say goodbye to everything we know and the future looks dark and uncertain. The question that is then asked is: what comes next? When our life comes to an end, we always feel that it must go on. We always have the feeling that we are going to end up empty-handed with an unfinished carpet and a loose thread in hand. Some also feel that they can't say goodbye. They feel that the carpet of life has gone wrong. They wish that they hadn't made certain decisions. They would prefer to start the carpet again from the beginning. But that doesn't work. And so they desperately stand with the last thread in their hand and don't know what happens next. The feeling of leaving everything behind is not a good feeling. It was similar with King Hezekiah of Judah. He was not yet ready to leave life. He felt abandoned by God in death and had no notion of the resurrection of the dead. All of that was only finally secured after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. And yet Hezekiah knew that God is a God of the living. That's why he turned to this God of life and asked for help and salvation. The story of Hezekiah has a happy ending. God gives him a new chance! God is like Jonas the carpet weaver. He sees that His children don't know what to do. And then He again holds the threads and makes everything new. In the life of Hezekiah, God's actions had tangible effects. Hezekiah was saved from the sickness and he could live again. He was not only healed in body but also in soul. He could grab hold again to the carpet of life and make a new start.

Hezekiah was able to learn that his life wouldn't end in nothingness. No, God has a plan. God actually has many plans and has made a wonderful symphony of life with its many little knots. The question now is: How does your life look? And where do you find yourself currently in God's big plan. All of us who sit here today are tied together. And no matter where we come from and what our background is, we will also be concretely connected to one another at Holy Communion. That means that here and now we are walking the same path. We are connected! God gave us this time together. But not only that. God has also knotted us together with Jesus. Through baptism, we are now united with Jesus. And this Jesus connected us with the living God. That means that our life will never end on a loose thread. Our life will also never end in futility. Even if there are many tangled threads in our life and it seems as if there is no solution to our problem, God is there. God shows us the whole picture then. He shows us that Jesus is before and behind us. And then it is also God who solves all the hopeless situations in our lives and shows us a way out. Just like Hezekiah, we can experience what healing of body and soul means in our own life. We can do that and we sing the praises that the old King Hezekiah sang back then – healed in body and soul. So I want to pick up the thread of life – always. And when I get lost again and when there

is no hope for me or when I am at the end of all my life forces, I want to call on the great Craftsman that He can continue my life with me. And make everything new. Amen.