

Isaiah 7

Who do you trust?

I know that Bruce has shown us things like this before, but I wanted to show you the latest update on which professions we as Australians most and least trust.

In 2013, of those who responded to the survey 90% trusted Nurses, 88% Doctors and 84% Pharmacists, the 3 with the least trust are Real Estate agents 12%, Advertising People with 9% and Car Salesman at 4%. If you were wondering where Ministers fitted in they are at 44% roughly in the middle. Don't worry that's not me picking on Bruce, my job would probably most closely be described like the Advertising people so I hope you guys are the 9% who will trust me.

The interesting thing to note is that the top 3 and the bottom 3 are each closely linked. The top 3 are all professions where we need their help and more than that we have to trust them as we often have little to no knowledge of the area they are going to help us with. While the bottom 3 are almost the exact opposite, we often don't feel we need their help, we think we can know better or at least something on their topics and the bottom line is we think they are just trying to sell us something. Which way do you treat God? Do you trust God, do you realise you need him and that you can't do things without him? Or do you not trust God, do you treat him like he is trying to sell you something and that you can figure things out on your own.

Well today in Isaiah 7 we see are going to see how Ahaz King of Judah trusts God. First we will see why Ahaz has a need to trust somebody. We will then see how God asks Ahaz to trust him. And finally we will see Gods response.

When Ahaz was king of Judah, it was being attacked by 2 other countries however verse 1 tells us they could not overpower Jerusalem. We also learn that Ahaz and the people were shaken. They were scared. And if we look at some more information from the rest of the bible we can see why. (P) In 2 Chronicles 28 it gives some details of the war that was happening between Judah and Israel, it says "In one day, Pekah Son of Remeliah (Israel) killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah – because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their ancestors....The men of Israel took captive from their fellow Israelites who were from Judah two hundred thousand wives, sons and daughters. They also took a great deal of plunder which they carried back to Samaria."

It's obviously a pretty hard time for Ahaz and the other Judeans. They are being attacked and they are scared. The question now is what will they do? Who can they turn to in their hour of need? Its really the same question for us isn't it. When we find ourselves in times of trouble where do we turn? Who do we trust? Who do you trust? When you have problems do you look to others for help, do you just try and deal with it yourself or do you curl up in a ball, or do you do one of those three things but add in prayer to God. When you are in times of trouble do you trust God? It's something I know I battle with, time and time again in my life. My first instinct is to always try and fix the problem myself, and I find myself worrying a lot rather than turning to God. Well, at this point in our story, Ahaz isn't given a choice at this stage whether or not to turn to God, because God comes to him. In verse 3 God tells Isaiah to go and speak to Ahaz tell him to not be afraid and he gives reasons why. But before we look closer at what God wants Isaiah to say to Ahaz, I just want to pause and look at verse 2 and 3 because there are some important things to take note of.

(P) Firstly its interesting that verse 2 refers to Ahaz, the king of Judah as the house of David. This is interesting because it brings to mind who Ahaz is. He is not just king of Judah, he is King of Judah, ancestor of King David who was promised that one of his ancestors to be a king of a forever

kingdom. The chapter here in Isaiah 7 establishes very early on the question of trusting God, can you trust God? Will he keep his promises.

(P) Secondly, it's significant that God asks Isaiah to take his son with him. You may be wondering why, well it's because of his name, Shear-Jashub. This name had a meaning and it meant "A remnant will return". Imagine Isaiah going up to Ahaz to talk about what God says is going to happen with this invasion and Ahaz asks, who is this young man? At which Isaiah replies, this is my son "a remnant will return." Wow. Imagine what Ahaz is now thinking. There is some debate as to whether this would have been perceived as a positive or negative and it could well have been both. On one hand a remnant will return, could give you hope as you know there will be continuation to the house of David, Judah will keep going, on the other hand there is the issue that there will be a remnant and what are they returning from? So maybe not so good news.

(P) Finally, before we go on, do you notice what God has said in verse 3 to Isaiah? Its not Go, take your son and find Ahaz to tell him this news. No, it's Go, you and your Son to meet Ahaz at the end of the Aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the Launderers Field. God tells Isaiah exactly where Ahaz is. This verse reminds us that God is powerful, in control and can see things we can't. That's really the key with trust isn't it. Do we believe the person we are putting out trust in has the power and the will not to let us down. Well here God gives a small example of the power he has and one of the reasons we can trust him.

So what does God tell Ahaz. The first thing God tells Ahaz is not to be afraid. On one hand this would have been quite hard given what we know was happening. But God gives Ahaz a reason. In verse 7-9 God basically says that the heads of the two nations coming against him are just men, and that Ephraim or Israel will be gone in 65 years. It helps to know that these big scary armies are really just being led by a man. It helps personify the problem. It reminds me of when I used to do puppets here at church. I remember during one of the (P) kids spots, I jumped up as Axel, a red furry monster character and one of the boys got really scared, I think he started crying and didn't want to be in church (not what you are hoping for a kids talk). But afterwards his Mum brought him up and showed him it was just me with the puppet, there was just a man behind it, to reassure him. God is doing the same here with Ahaz. Though it's actually even more powerful than that, as the thing thats implied is that although the heads of these nations are just men, the head of Judah, is not just a man, its God. This is all meant to reassure Ahaz and Judah.

However, a(P) condition is added. "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." You see Ahaz had not had much faith in God, (P) we read in 2 Kings 16 that *"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God."*

God has promised to stand by Ahaz and Judah, (P) but they still needed to have trust in him. Its the same with us today, God has sent his son Jesus to die for us, but we still need to believe to be saved. God offers salvation both to Ahaz and to us, we just need to trust him and accept it.

Given Ahaz's track record and perhaps to encourage him God asks Ahaz to ask for a sign. Any sign, even something seemingly impossible. At this point Ahaz answers in what seems like a very pious way, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test." It sounds good doesn't it, it sounds like what Jesus says when Satan is tempting him in the desert. But here, its the wrong answer. The difference is, is that God is asking him to ask for a sign, its not Ahaz putting the Lord to the test, this is God putting Ahaz to the test.

Consider Ahaz's track record at this point, God wants to see Ahaz show some faith in him, to show trust in him and not the other gods, or in Assyria. You see Ahaz was either considering or had already

decided to ask Assyria for help with this problem. Assyria was the reason the other 2 nations were attacking Judah. They were the dominant world power of the day and were gradually conquering many of the countries near Judah. The 2 other nations wanted Judah to join them against Assyria but Judah had said no, that's why they were being attacked. So Ahaz really had 2 options. To change his mind and join the 2 other nations or join Assyria. Except God has now given him a third option, trust me, don't trust the 2 other nations and don't trust Assyria, trust me, Trust your powerful God not mere humans who will end up dying. And Ahaz fails. He decides not to trust God and he chooses to ask Assyria for help.

Before we see the ramifications of that decision, let's see what God now says. God through Isaiah says that he will give a sign anyway, a sign from God (P) himself. "The virgin, will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel and that before this boy has grown up the land of the two kings Ahaz dreads will be laid waste. Now there is a lot of discussion as to what these verses mean, especially what would they mean to the people of the day and I am happy to discuss them with you afterwards if you would like to know more, however the key things that I think are being communicated here is that the two kings will not prevail, they will be laid waste and that a son is to be born. The sons name is significant, Immanuel means, God with us. This is the important thing, God is promising to be with them. And that is one of the greatest promises God gives us, God with us, its reassuring because we know how great and powerful he is. To have the God who sits on the throne, the all powerful one who can see the future on our side is an amazing thing. And more than just on our side, he promises to be with us. As Bruce said in a sermon on this chapter 6 years ago, (P) "We may sometimes think that we're like fish in an aquarium and God is tapping on the outside, trying to get our attention. That he stands over the top of the tank and throws in food, and rain and all the things we need to survive. But he's not like that at all. God is WITH us. God came to earth. He got IN the aquarium we live in. And when Jesus went into heaven after his resurrection, God STILL STAYED WITH US through his Holy Spirit. God is with us." It is a promise worth trusting. Although the context of the verse may be hard to define exactly we do know the ultimate fulfilment is seen in Jesus. (P) Matthew 1:23 actually quotes this verse to say that Jesus fulfils this prophesy. Jesus is the ultimate example of God with us.

The chapter finishes with God telling Ahaz the result of his distrust in him and the choice to trust in Assyria. And it's an awesome vision. The great nations of Assyria and Egypt are treated as insects before God. God foretells that he will use Assyria to come in and crush Judah. This is not a happy ending for Judah in this chapter. Despite the hope we still have that the "remnant will return" and that "God with us" there is still destruction because Ahaz did not trust and listen to God. This is a reminder that although God is a patient God that there is a limit to his patience, there will come a day when judgement does come and if we have not trusted him we will not stand. Again its the same with us, he has offered forgiveness if we trust, but there will come a time when Gods patience comes to an end, when Jesus returns and we are judged. So if you have not decided to trust God, to believe that he sent his son to die for your sins, I would encourage you to trust, to not delay as although God is a patient God he will not wait forever.

So coming back to my question at the beginning of this talk. Who do you trust? IN yourself, where you treat God more like a sales person or a real estate agent, where you don't quite trust what he says and instead choose to trust your own council you trust your own ability to fix things. Or do you trust God and treat God like a Doctor where you rely on what he says and trust him.

To me there can be two different types of circumstance when we trust God, the first is when we have no control over the situation and things seem desperate. Maybe you've lost a loved one, maybe you've felt completely overwhelmed at work. For me, it's when I feel my loved ones could be in danger. I then feel I have no control. I can think of examples with both David my younger brother

and with Emily. Both examples are strikingly similar though with my brother its when we were younger, and Emily more recently. With both, I've been at the Easter show and have gotten separated from them. They haven't met at the spot where we said we would meet when we were going to. You know that feeling, when people don't turn up, at first it's mild annoyance wondering where they are, then a few minutes more pass, and your brain goes into some crazy scenarios, well at least mine does, maybe they've been kidnapped, maybe they've hurt themselves and somehow no one has seen them. It's then that I know that I've prayed the hardest to God, it's then I know that I've needed to trust him, because it's then I know that I can't do anything about it, it's a time where all I can do is just sit and wait, and pray they turn up. That's when I've been shaking like the trees in the wind. When there are things that are out of your control we don't have any place to go than to trust in God. The good news is that we can have confidence that we can turn to a God who is powerful and in control. This chapter reminds us that we can have hope, because God has promised that he will be with us.

The bigger challenge for me though, when I think about trusting in God is when I'm going through problems in life where I feel I can solve them by myself, like Ahaz. This is where I sometimes find myself choosing to trust myself rather than God. Its when we think we are in control. But thats an illusion, even when we think we are in control we are not, there are always things that can go wrong, our health, someone else, an accident, natural disasters. We should always trust God because God is always in control, God always knows what is going on. I am not saying that we can't try to solve problems, but that we should not forget God, we can still pray to him and ask for help.

Who do you trust? Do you trust God, do you realise you need him and that you can't do things without him? Or do you not trust God, do you treat him like he is trying to sell you something and that you can figure things out on your own. Let me pray now that we can trust God, that we can put our faith in him, because he has promised that he is with us and he has the power to protect us.