

Destroyed in a Moment

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[0 : 00] 1 Kings chapter 12, we read verses 13 and 14. And the king answered the people harshly and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him.

He spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.

If we were to have a title or a word or two that would sum up this response from Rehoboam, it could surely be this, destroyed in a moment.

That is all that it took for Rehoboam to lose an entire empire. It was destroyed in a moment. When the people came to him, they had probably only endured taxation.

Under Solomon, probably not that severe a taxation. If we were to look back at what Solomon did, we would see that, yes, he raised levies of workers throughout the land, but they weren't Israelites.

[1 : 08] They were taken from amongst the Canaanite population that still dwelt amongst them, which the Israelites ought to have cleansed out in the first place, but they were put to work. Their overseers were Israelites, yes.

The men of war in the armies were Israelites, but they obviously considered that they had been taxed and put to work far more than they would have liked. But what they were omitting and forgetting was that they had known under Solomon untold prosperity.

If they were being taxed, they certainly had the wealth and the means to pay their taxes because of the unprecedented level of peace and well-being that the Lord had given to the kingdom of Israel in Solomon's time.

But let's just look at what Solomon had accumulated and which Rehoboam automatically, at the beginning, inherited.

What did he have? We turn back a wee bit. We see in chapter 10, for example. See in verses 26 and 27 what we read here. Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen.

[2 : 15] He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities with the king in Jerusalem. And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone.

And he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shefala. Now, if anyone's got, you know, 1,400 chariots and 12,000 cavalry, he ought to be able to keep order in his kingdom.

He's got huge military strength and power. But it wasn't just military power that he had. We go back to verse 14 in chapter 10. We read, The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.

Beside that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land, King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold.

600 shekels of gold went into each shield. He made 300 shields of beaten gold. Three miners of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

[3 : 21] And again then at verse 21, All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold. And all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver. Silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years, the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.

Every one of them brought his present. Articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules. So much year by year.

Unprecedented wealth and glory. This is what Rehoboam inherited. And all he had to do was be wise in his response.

[4 : 19] And it was all his for the keeping and for the inheriting. Now, people come to him with a request. Well, your father made our yoke heavy. If you lighten it a bit, we'll be your servants.

And we'll serve you faithfully. It's a no-brainer to anyone who would actually think about it. But he sends him away. He says, give me three days. Why do you need three days to think about a question like that?

But he was taking counsel. He was taking advice. That was a wise thing to do. The only problem was he didn't follow the sound advice. He followed that which pleased himself.

Now, if you're interested in the name Rehoboam, Rehoboam means room for or extension of the people. It may be significant that under Rehoboam, the people are flexing their muscles and throwing off his yoke, perhaps.

It's from the same root as, if you remember, back in Genesis when Isaac is digging his wells and the Philistine herdmen and the herdmen of Gerard strive for one and then they strive for another.

[5 : 23] They chase away Isaac's men and so on. And then finally they dig a well where they've got water and where they have room. And he calls it Rehoboth because the Lord has given them room.

Now, Rehoboam is the same root, room for the people or extension of the people. It means Jeroboam, who's his opponent, if you like, in this particular episode, means a struggler for the people or one wrestling for the people or with the people.

But that's an aside. Rehoboam is the one then who stands to inherit all of his father's glory. But it may be when we think of all the glory of Solomon, when we think of all the untold wealth that Israel was enjoying at this time, it may be that this was half the problem.

Rehoboam was 41 when he became king. Chapter 14, verse 21 tells us that. And his father Solomon had reigned for 40 years.

Chapter 11, verse 42 tells us that. So having been one year old when his father became king, all that Rehoboam had ever known throughout his childhood and youth and as a young man and so on was his father's kingdom simply getting bigger and wealthier and stronger and greater.

[6 : 47] And all of this he stood to inherit. And it might be that he thought he'd been waiting a long time for it perhaps, but at the end of the day, this was unprecedented wealth and glory that he stood to inherit.

But Rehoboam had never known anything else. In his lifetime, there had only been increasing wealth and peace and power and prosperity.

He didn't have the knowledge or the wit or the strength to see that this was not normal for Israel. This was not normal for Israel's life.

If you think of the kingship of Saul, 40 years, and it was constant battles with the Philistines and with this enemy or that enemy. Saul was a warrior king. His court was not lavish.

He lived effectively on a shoestring as far as his own expenses were concerned. He was a simple living man, a warrior king, who was constantly at war.

[7 : 50] David had many battles, but likewise, he didn't have the kind of lavish lifestyle that his son Solomon had. So both David and Saul before him had had to be men of war.

It was constantly fighting off the enemies round about Israel. Solomon had known unprecedented peace. And the Lord had given him uniquely, divinely gifted wisdom with which to judge his own people and to build up diplomatic relations with other kingdoms round about.

But it had taken a lifetime. It had taken his entire reign of carefully crafted alliances and peace and skills of diplomacy and divinely gifted wisdom.

And people came for him and they brought their presents and they brought gold and the navy that we read about that went off to bring back wealth from overseas and so on.

It was unique. It was unprecedented. It had not happened before in Israel's history and it wasn't going to happen again. Rehoboam just happened to be seeing Israel at the very peak and pinnacle of its glory and foolishly assumed that it was always like this.

[9 : 12] It would always be like this. That all he had to do was stake his claim and all the glory would continue to be his. This was only possible, this glory, because of the unique circumstances of long peace, which Israel had never known before, and unprecedented wealth, which only Solomon had ever enjoyed amongst all the kings before.

And so Rehoboam could not recognize that what Solomon had achieved was not normal. It was not the norm.

It was unique. But by the blessing of God, an unprecedented abundance, Solomon had accumulated this wealth and power.

But abundance of blessing, of course, tends to make us less thankful rather than more. Doesn't it? You might think, well, does it?

Surely, the more good things we have, the more pleased we are, the more thankful we are. What is it? Let me give you an example. A year or two back, we were getting some repair work done in the house, and it was plumbers working on the radiators or whatever it might have been.

[10:28] At any rate, it necessitated workmen going in and out. You know how they spread the cloth along through the floor, and they're all walking in it the whole time, and the doors were open, and the windows had to be open too, and they were working away on the radiators, so none of the radiators were on.

And to put it bluntly, the house was freezing. And of course, the house was freezing. It wasn't a specially freezing winter day, but because doors and windows were open, there was nothing coming out, the heaters and so on, the house was cold.

It was freezing. Why was it freezing? It wasn't a specially cold day outside. Because as one of our children observed, you don't realize that what you think of is just a normal temperature in the house, not sweltering hot, not freezing cold, just a normal ambient temperature.

It's only possible because not only are your doors and windows shut, but your radiators are chucking out heat the whole time. And because they are positively chucking out heat, you feel just normal in the house.

You don't come and say, oh, wow, wow, wow, warm house. It's like a sauna in here. You don't think that. Nor do you say, oh, it's freezing in here. It's just normal. It's just nice and normal because the radiators are working away, chucking out the heat, pumping out that heat the whole time.

[11:44] So it feels normal. You don't think, my, what good work the radiators are doing. My, how nice it is to have a warm house. It just seems normal. Likewise, we're inclined, of course, to moan about the rain, aren't we?

But how much, how far do you think we'd get without the water that falls down free out of the sky? You might think, well, we'd manage all right for a wee while without water, you know, and we would jokingly say, well, I don't drink much water anyway.

I'm going to drink tea or coffee or soft drinks in a can. That would be fine. I can get by fine enough, but, you know, your soft drinks aren't going to last very long if the manufacturers haven't got water to keep making them.

If you could ask for tea and somebody sends you a packet of tea leaves or a packet of tea bags, they'd be, you know, water to put them in. Can't make anything with them. Somebody gives you coffee beans, says, there's your coffee. But you can't, if you grind them up, you've got no water to put the coffee in.

Without water, everything begins to grind to a halt. The very radiators, I was talking about a minute ago, need water to be pumped through them. In order to work, everything in the human body needs water.

[12:54] A human body is something like 60% water for an adult. Every single function of the human body, from digestion to temperature control to blinking your eyes, needs moisture.

We use it in everything. Removing waste products a lot. And it constantly needs to be topped up. You don't realize just how much water we use and how much water we need.

Somebody was talking, or probably may have used this illustration in the past, which I apologize, an Australian I was talking to some years ago talked about a desalination plant that he had seen working in Saudi Arabia or something like that.

Because it's desert there, of course. So they were utilizing the water out of the Red Sea. They were churning it through this desalination plant so they could use it for irrigation. Freshwater.

The salt water is turned into fresh water. And then you could irrigate the desert with it and the land and so on. And he said, it worked fine. It was really good. You needed a lot of money to do it.

[13:58] But Saudi Arabia had plenty of money to do it with. He said, but it's a pretty expensive way of doing it, he said, if it's just going to drop down out of the sky.

And that's what it is for us, isn't it? It just literally drops down out of the sky. That which we need for our bodies. That which we need for life.

In almost every aspect of it. That which makes the crops and the flowers grow. That which means we have grass instead of parched desert. It literally drops down free out of the sky.

Does that mean we're thankful for it? Or does it mean that we moan about it? If it's everyday constant blessing, we are not more thankful.

We are less. And it is the same with Rehoboam here. All that he has known has been wealth and blessing and power and glory.

[14 : 57] And is he grateful? Or does he take it as his God-given right? And he stands to inherit it as the prince of Israel. He's never known anything else except the glory of his father's kingdom.

Getting more and more and more glorious. And remember that at the end of Solomon's 40-year reign, he will have absolutely peaked in wealth and power and glory.

He has all these years of the diplomatic relations, of the peace, of the building up, the agriculture, the navy, the trade, the merchant work. It has never been so glorious as it is finally at the peak when Solomon breathes his last.

So what Rehoboam inherits is Israel at its most glorious, at its most wealthy. It's never been so good before.

And it will never be again. But the tragedy is that it is all destroyed in a moment. Everything that has taken decades to build up is destroyed in a moment.

[16 : 08] Perhaps he thinks he's waited long. Perhaps he thinks he's impatient for his father's glory. But it may be that he wanted to show himself worthy.

That he waited a lifetime for his father's wealth and power. And he wanted perhaps to show himself strong. To be the man that his father might want him to be. To say, I'll rule this people with strength and power.

I'll be the man that my father would want me to be. Perhaps. But those who had actually served with his father, those who had grown up with Solomon, who had seen his vices and his faults, as well as his virtues, and who knew not only how glorious and wealthy the kingdom was, but they could see beneath the veneer and knew just how fragile it all was.

They counseled caution. And they said, look, be a servant to this people. Be humble and be careful and be cautious. And you'll be able to keep it all.

Now, maybe the rest of Israel was spoiling for a fight anyway. And you might be saying, oh, no, no. It says they would be his servants if he just gave them a nice answer. Yeah, but look how many times in the reign of King David, the beloved of the Lord, who other than in the matter of Bathsheba, never put a foot wrong.

[17 : 35] And see how many times the tribes of Israel were rebelling against good King David. How many times they said, what have we to do with the house of David? You know, let's all go to our own tents and set up our own kings, oh Israel.

They were fickle, and they were faithless, and they were probably spoiling for a fight anyway at this stage. But what Rehoboam is, is he gave them an excuse.

He returned a harsh answer that destroyed in a moment everything that his father had built up over decades. Israel, as we say, might have been just looking for an excuse, but at any rate, Rehoboam blew it all away.

He had a desire, no doubt, for the kingdom. But did he have a recognition of the importance and solemnity of kingship?

He had not the wit or knowledge to understand that kingship is a sacred calling, one for which, like the prophets of the Lord, like Elisha and Elijah and so on, who were anointed of the Lord, like the high priest in the tabernacle, anointed of the Lord.

[18 : 51] The kings of Israel were the anointed of the Lord. It is a sacred calling. Our own queen is anointed at her coronation.

It is a sacred calling. It is one that requires servant leadership. It is one that requires you to be a servant of your people.

And not everybody can cope with that kind of service in a sort of gilded cage environment. Kingship carries solemn and sacred responsibilities.

And Rehoboam was almost certainly impatient, not for the kingship per se, with its solemn responsibilities and burdens of government and state and leadership.

An example, so much as for the wrappings and the trappings of it. If you think of like a, think of an infant child, say at its birthday, and all the relatives and the family, they've carefully chosen presents and they've gone to a lot of trouble to find a particular toy or a particular thing they think the wee child will like and maybe it's cost a lot of money and they give it to it and they're all sitting around watching it open its wee presents and it sort of unwraps everything and sort of puts the toy to one side.

[20 : 08] Here's this shiny, spangly paper and it makes a lovely, crunchy noise when you squeeze it and when you work it and you pull it apart. Look at it. Look at these ribbons and bones and things and the toy is forgotten.

But the shiny, sparkly paper, the wrappings and the trappings, that's fascinating to the little child because it doesn't know the value of the gift that has been given.

It is only interested in the wrappings that go with it. This is like Rehoboam. He doesn't know the sacred calling, the responsibility, the burden of leadership to which he had been born.

That sacred, anointed calling. He's only interested in the trappings. He wants the glory. He wants the sparkle. He wants the power. And Rehoboam was determined to assert his own personal power and superiority so determined that he lost it all in a moment.

And all the glory and wealth and splendor of Solomon was destroyed in a moment of shallow and short-sighted vanity.

[21 : 21] But this is not just a long-ago story of a foolish and far-off king of Israel. Much that takes long to acquire may be lost in a moment.

And many of us have seen it or perhaps experienced it or know someone who has. You know, a house that may be filled with the personal treasures, whether economic, financial treasures or sentimental treasures, the things of personal value, can be destroyed, burnt to the ground in a night.

A whole home and all its contents can be completely destroyed in a night if a fire rips through a house. You might have an heirloom that's been in the family for generations, perhaps centuries. And if it is carelessly dropped on the floor and smashed to bits in a split second. You might have a tree that has taken decades or perhaps centuries to grow.

It can be deliberately cut down in a matter of hours or it can be torn up by the roots in a storm in one night. And what takes years to grow or to build can be destroyed in a moment.

[22 : 44] That is the nature of life and so it is too with wisdom or virtue or reputation. We see in Ecclesiastes chapter 10 verse 1 dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give of a stench so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour as the authorised version has dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour so doth a little folly in him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

Just say for the sake of argument I'm a minister so let's take the example supposing a minister serves for like 30 years and her 30 years of plodding diligent but faithful service let's say he'd been working away in his place and being diligent and trying to be faithful and yet one day one day for whatever reason he turned up drunk in the pulpit slurring his words and making a mess of the service and not really getting through at all and everybody was just so embarrassed by it.

By the evening obviously he was a little better and a bit more sober and getting on with it and so on and by next week he was back to normal but the only thing anybody is going to remember about that ministry is not the 29 years and 11 months and 3 weeks of faithful diligent ministry it's the one time when he disgraced himself and embarrassed everybody else it's the one time he was drunk in the pulpit it's the one time fictitious example in case everybody's thinking I wonder who he's talking about it's nobody it's a completely fictitious made up example but just say for the sake of argument that that were to happen it would be a lifetime's work overshadowed by one incident on one day and it can destroy so much it can destroy everything such is the nature of what can be lost in a moment and this is the case with Rehoboam here and like Rehoboam we often want or we desire the instant he desired instant acquisition of all his father's power and wealth now he didn't have the recognition to see that even Solomon didn't get it all in an instant

Solomon had built it up carefully over a 40 year ministry a 40 kingship I beg your pardon 40 year kingship which had been blessed uniquely with divine wisdom which God had given him as his special gift and all the diplomatic abilities and all the wisdom and foreign affairs that Solomon had and all the gifts that he accumulated it took Solomon a lifetime of kingship to accumulate and acquire what he had and Rehoboam thought it could be his in an instant instead it was destroyed in

a moment but we all would like things quick and suddenly wouldn't we ministers are no different if someone were to say to him what would you like revival revival in a moment with hundreds of people in church and loads of conversions or you know plodding away over the barren years and ones and twos being converted here we're all fallen creatures we'd all say yes of course we want revival everybody wants revival we want the crowds to flock in we want conversions by the score this is what we want and of course we want that it's natural and it's human but it almost never happens it is the rarity it is the exception it is not the norm who wouldn't want to see crowds flocking and dozens of conversions at a time who wouldn't want to see revival and great ingathering of souls but what do we have if we have a mass revival all at once in spiritual terms we have an awful lot of baby Christians now think if you will for a moment of a nursery full of babies but with no nurses to look after them they're not going to be very well cared for think of a school bursting at the seams with children but with no teachers to teach them the training up and growing up of the nurses and of the teachers and of the leaders of the fathers in God and mothers in Israel who would be the shepherds and the guides and the examples to those who would be ingathered as masses and masses of new baby Christians their growth and their training up into the wisdom and experience of the years which will enable them to lead others takes time it takes decades it takes experience now to grow to learn to mature to ripen all takes time and it takes many seasons many cycles of weather and in our spiritual lives sometimes it is winter and in our spiritual lives yes there's spring too when there's bud and blossom and all the promise of hope for the future occasionally for a while it's summer but as we know even in summer of course you've got your problems you've got midges you've got other problems you've got flies you've got all the other things that attack you in summer and so on so even summer is not without its problems but there are different cycles and different seasons and different experience that must be learned as we grow in grace and grow in years and it takes time to ripen when an apple tree grows it takes years before it is strong enough to spread its branches to begin to blossom the first few apples that appear it will be little hard green things they won't be edible it will take

more years before you get the big ripe red juicy ones and I remember when I was a very wee boy we were on holidays somewhere and I was just a little toddler and it was a place that had an orchard full of apple trees and me and my sisters could climb in the branches we could climb the apple trees it was great and I thought my father then planted an apple tree in our garden and I thought great we're going to be able to climb this apple tree and it was just a little spindly sapling it was nothing and it was so disappointing and I thought well surely it will grow soon enough and all the years I was at home it grew a bit but it never became like the big strong apple trees that we could climb in when we were children it didn't help that maybe my football might smash a few branches now and then along the way but it's because it was fragile because it was weak and it takes time to grow experience by which we grow is not always nice but it is always necessary some of you will know this morning with the remembrance service at the war memorial and in the church next door to it and of course some people were there veterans with their medals and their ribbons and so on now if you have medals it means you've been involved in at least campaigns you've served for a number of years some of the medals might have been for gallantry for particular things that they had endured or undergone now if you are serving in campaigns you are exposed to danger if you've got a medal for gallantry or for valour it's because you have put your life in your hand either to serve in some way or to rescue injured comrades or whatever the case may be every medal ribbon will tell a story of danger and probably of suffering and difficult conditions but if you've got a whole new swathe of raw recruits fresh faced and eager to become servicemen and weapon who is going to train them if not the people with the ribbons and the people with the experience and the

[31 : 29] NCOs who have been through mud and bullets who have seen and suffered in campaigns and difficult times and experiences that probably they would not choose but which because they have been through that they are in a position to train up those who have not yet been through it and who are able to say this is what to watch out for this is what I learned on campaign this is what I learned from an old sergeant that taught me years ago but you can't instruct the next generation unless you have the experience and the years behind you and that takes time Solomon's kingdom was not built up in a night but it was lost in a moment and that which takes us time to grow and to ripen and to mature for can be lost in a moment because it is so fragile experience is not built up on a series of one-off spectacular events it is the training for our future day by day by day if we were to ask you know has anything spectacular happened to you today is

your

Christian life much improved by explosions of spiritual stars in the sky have you seen something wonderful fantastic today people say well no anything exciting happen to you in your spiritual walk today well no not really nevertheless today like every day the Lord says will be a step along the journey a stone in the wall of the temple that the Lord builds a means of growing a means of ripening and of gaining experience day by day as the showers of rain come down as the sun comes out in its due time as the stars appear in the skies the cycle of the years and the seasons past you grow in your spiritual and Christian experience you grow in your walk and in your knowledge and not all experience is nice and not all experience is easy much of it will be hard and much of it will be difficult and will leave its scars behind but who do you want training the young raw recruits if not the battle scarred veterans with the metal ribbons that tell their own stories who do you want training your children if not the experienced teachers who from long experience know what works and what doesn't who are able with simply their presence and command to bring discipline to a class for example who do you want looking after your babies in a nursery if not the experienced nurses who know exactly what they're doing because they have done it before again and again and again and there was a day when they were not experienced there was a day when they were still raw and fresh faced and wet behind the ears just like the new recruits or the babies or the children in front of them but they grew day by day step by stumbling step campaign by campaign lesson by lesson to grow to ripen in the knowledge in the service of the

Lord no individual day should be despised no individual experience is for nothing nothing is for nothing with the Lord and it may not be glorious but it will be building something which is glorious you know of all Solomon's wisdom and all the years in which he reigned 40 years he reigned and we read that God gave him wisdom like nobody else had the Queen of Sheba asked him all these difficult questions and he answered all her questions but how many examples do we actually have of Solomon's wisdom being put into practice one the incident with the two babies or the one baby that was to be allegedly cut in half and half given to each of the disputing mothers that's the only incident we have it stuck in people's minds and it was near the beginning of his reign and it made such an impact that they wrote it down a thousand other little judgments and decisions here and there year by year didn't get written down didn't get recorded weren't spectacular and yet Solomon accumulated this reputation for positively divine wisdom day by day year by year nothing spectacular may have happened to you today but it is another Sabbath in the service of the Lord it is another day in your Christian experience it is another building up and another ripening towards whatsoever the Lord may be calling you to do and whatsoever he may require of you in the fullness of time this will be part of what prepares you for that future requirement each day is precious to the Lord and none of us has any promise of another there are many whom we bury week week by week month by month year by year that we would wish were still with us but they were not spared to this day this day you have been given tomorrow if you are given it as well it will be for a purpose it will be for

God's experience to use for you to ripen to grow to utilize it can be lost in a moment but it will be a lifetime to build therefore every day and stage of that building is as vital as the one before vigilance we must have watchfulness we must have to be prepared for war when it comes is the surest way of preventing it to be prepared against the attacks and the warfare of the devil is the surest way to be safeguarded against it let each day be a training up let each day be an experience let each day be a maturing a ripening a work of the Lord because by it we are nurtured by it we are built up and each day built upon and utilized for the building and growth may be slow but the losing of it may be spectacularly instantaneous as it was for

[38 : 37] Rehoboam Satan would love nothing more than for you to lose everything Christ's desire is for you to build for everything that he has for you remember the king whose empire was lost and destroyed in a moment because he would not be the servant to his people servanthood is safety not only is it safety but it is that for which we have the ultimate divine example in Philippians we read it chapter 2 have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself the sense there is he emptied himself he humbled himself even more by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death on a cross that is what

Christ did he humbled himself he lowered himself he emptied himself he ripened he matured for the work of glory which as we then go on to read therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father who doesn't want that kind of glory but if we want that kind of glory we have to follow the example of the one who was the servant the one who lowered himself the one who emptied himself the one who was not ashamed to build for that glory day by seemingly humdrum day 30 years in the carpenter's shop of Nazareth and we don't have a word about it humble quiet faithful experience preparation building ripening nurturing it takes day by day campaign by campaign step by step it can be lost in a moment but it need not be if you take each day the Lord gives and treasure it because that is not only the teaching of God in his word it is the example of Christ in his life let us pray