

# “The Lord Himself Will Give You a Sign”

“A New Thing” Series, July 18 & 19, 2026 | Isaiah 7:10-17 (1-17)

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## What do you do when the tornado siren sounds?

### **It’s a terrifying feeling when the tornado siren sounds in the Twin Cities.**

Tammi, our boys, and I moved to Minnesota in 2007. Weeks after we arrived, a line of severe thunderstorms passed near us. Tammi was home with the boys when the tornado siren went off. We lived in a townhouse with a sheltered cupboard under the stairs where our boys liked to play. They all crawled in the cupboard together while the winds blew ferociously outside. One of our boys cried out, “I want to go back to South Carolina!” Tornadoes in the Midwest can be massively powerful, so the tornado siren is an awful sound.

### **Sirens were sounding across Judah.**

The kingdoms surrounding Judah were working together to push off the yoke of the great Assyrian Empire. Judah refused to join them, so they invaded, hoping to replace Judah’s king with one who would help them. Aram and Ephraim invaded from the north and devastated Judah. In one battle, 120,000 soldiers of Judah died. The Philistines and Edomites invaded from the south. Judah was surrounded, and the armies were heading for Jerusalem.

### **King Ahaz was shaking like a leaf.**

Ahaz and his whole administration were terrified. Their enemies didn’t just want to defeat them. They wanted to replace Ahaz, and that meant killing them all. The sirens were blaring, and there was no cupboard under the stairs to jump into for safety.

### **We all face moments when the alarm goes off and we know that life is about to change.**

Your business is bleeding cash because a competitor has found a way to undercut you. A close friendship is suddenly strained because someone has been gossiping—accusing you of doing or saying something that you didn’t do or say. Your son or daughter left home suddenly with people you know are dangerous. Tomorrow is going to be different from today, and (to be honest) you’re worried. The alarms are going off.

### **What do you do when the siren sounds?**

We’ve wired for one of three reactions. We fight, flee, or freeze—we come out defending ourselves and hurting others, we run from the problem and the people, or we panic and shut down. The Bible offers us a better option: trust. Trust is a better option. When we fight, flee, or freeze, someone usually gets hurt. So, we need a better option—an option rooted in God.

## **We are going to trust someone during our deepest crisis. Who?**

### **King Ahaz inspecting the water supply shows us whom he trusted.**

Jerusalem didn't have a natural source of water at the time. Nor was there an aqueduct bringing water into the city. As soon as an invader surrounded the city, Jerusalem was cut off from fresh water, and the supply already in the city had to last. So, Isaiah knew exactly where to find Ahaz. Ahaz wouldn't be in the Temple praying to God to deliver the people. He would be at the water source preparing to defend the city himself.

### **God sent Isaiah into Ahaz's crisis to call him to trust Him.**

Isaiah came acknowledging the crisis. Aram and Ephraim seemed fierce and their kings determined. But Isaiah announced God's defining word. In **Isaiah 7:7** we read, ... thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass." The nations would be defeated, their kings fall, and their people judged for their great sin. God Himself would defend His people, Isaiah assured the king. Ahaz didn't need to fear. He could trust God.

### **The deep cry of God's heart was for His people to trust Him.**

Since God called Abraham to leave his home and go to the Promised Land, God has longed for a people who trusted Him. For Israel to be a light to the nations, they would have to trust God. And even now, God longs for us to trust Him—to know that He keeps His promises, to know that He is good, to know that He is able, to rest secure in that knowledge, and to follow Him willingly as a result because He is our good Father in Heaven.

### **A baby penguin has to trust its parent for warmth.**

Chicks are tiny when they hatch--weighing just a small fraction their parents' weight. They have a thin layer of down, so they aren't able to keep their body temperature up in the Antarctic. It takes 50 days for them to develop enough to do that. Until then, they cuddle into their parents' brood pouch—a flap of belly skin that the chicks pop into. It keeps them warm while they eat and grow and get ready for life on their own.<sup>1</sup> Until then, they have to trust their parents for everything.

### **If we insist on trusting the wrong person, we are going to be left out in the cold.**

For a time, Ahaz trusted himself. Eventually, he would reach out to the powerful but awful Assyrian Empire in desperation. That move devastated Judah. When we face a crisis, our instinct is to trust ourselves. When we think a little more deeply, we too reach out for powerful help. We may reach out for friends, for medicine, for loans. It can feel as though we were desperately flailing. Friends are good. Medicine can be good. Even loans can serve a purpose. But our trust is meant to be in God. When we place our trust in anyone or anything other than Him, we will find ourselves out in the cold.

## **We are going to do something with our biggest failures. What?**

### **Ahaz's failures were profound before this crisis hit.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/animals/penguins/emperor-penguin/breeding-cycle>

2 Chronicles 28 tells the story of his reign. He was a young man when he came to the throne. He made idols to the Canaanite god, Baal. The Bible says that he turned every high place and every green tree into a place of pagan worship. He even burned several of his own sons as sacrifices to pagan gods. He was a devastating disappointment because he was a king who wanted nothing to do with God.

**During the crisis, Ahaz doubled down on those failures, and judgment was the result.**

Out of unimaginable love, God had already promised deliverance from Judah's enemies. Their invasion had been an act of judgment on Ahaz, but it was a warning and not a final verdict. To prove that God would deliver the people, God invited Ahaz to ask for a sign. Listen again to God speak in **Isaiah 7:11**, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." Ahaz refused. He pretended that he refused because he was too pious to test God. But how can you ask for a sign from a god you don't serve? In **Isaiah 7:13**, Isaiah responded, ... "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?" No longer did he call the Lord "our God" or "your God." The Lord was Isaiah's God. Not the God of Ahaz. And judgment would come. Instead of relying on God, Ahaz was going to pay the Assyrian Empire to take care of his enemies. They would indeed take care of Judah's enemies. Then they would turn on Judah. They would take and take and take from Judah because that's what empires do. Ahaz chose to trust the wrong people. What a devastating failure!

**The Gallipoli Campaign was, for Winston Churchill, a costly and very public failure.**

During World War 1, the Ottoman Empire, with its capital in Istanbul, sided with Germany. Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty at the time. He was ambitious to sideline Turkey and open the Dardanelles so that their Russian allies could operate more freely. British battleships pounded the straits but were unable to make it through. The land invasion was also successfully repelled. It was an embarrassing and costly defeat.<sup>2</sup> Churchill resigned and seemed to be finished in politics.

**What does your biggest failure look like?**

It may be a moment when you did something foolish. Reckless. Thoughtless. Wrong. A moment that you regret to this day. You may lie awake some nights thinking about it. Wishing you could go back and do it over again. There may be consequences even today. What is the biggest failure in your life? Don't boil it down to one that's bigger than the rest—what are the big failures?

**Our responses to failure are shockingly similar to the stages of grief.**

What are our responses to failure? Denial: Sometimes we say to ourselves that the failure didn't happen, it wasn't a failure, it wasn't our fault. Anger: We get angry at ourselves, at the consequences, and at those who give us those consequences. Bargaining: We replay the scenario in our minds, thinking about what we might have done differently. Depression: Sometimes, we're just tempted to give up. Acceptance: We finally admit that we have failed, but we become open to grace and to God's doing something new in us. That's when we're getting somewhere because God is better than we can imagine.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Gallipoli-Campaign>

## God is “with us” through our deepest crises and even our biggest failures.

### **The birth of Immanuel heralded immediate judgment but long-term promises.**

Picture the scene. Isaiah was confronting Ahaz outside of Jerusalem. Ahaz was accompanied by a group of court officials. Isaiah pointed to a young woman in the crowd and said that she was going to become pregnant and have a baby. They would call him “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us.” Here is what his growing-up days will look like. **Isaiah 7:15** “He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.” What does it mean to eat curds and honey? It means that agriculture has stopped. It means that people are foraging for food. Tough times were coming. But the child is there to remind the people, “God is with us!” God is still working. His promises are still true. We are still God’s covenant people, and the future is certain! But Isaiah was pointing to something much bigger.

### **The birth of Jesus fully fulfilled the promise of Immanuel.**

Isaiah was pointing to a miracle to come. A virgin would conceive and have a son with no mention of a father. The child would be “God with us.” The New Testament tells us that Jesus fulfills this prophecy.

**Matthew 1:22-23**, All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). He is the ultimate sign that God is with us!

### **God is with us, proclaiming forgiveness in our biggest failures.**

Think back to that list of your big failures, the ones that you keep mulling over in your head, the ones that still hurt. It may be the thing that you secretly think separates you from God, makes you so that God could never really love you, and damages you so that no one could ever fully love you. Jesus—the Son of God—died on the cross to pay the price for that sin. He carried that sin, that guilt, and all that shame on the cross. When He died, (that sin, guilt, and shame were) paid for. Now, Jesus offers you forgiveness. It’s like God is with you in the moment of your biggest failure and is saying—if you’ll accept it—that you are forgiven! That’s what it means that God is with us!

### **God is with us in our deepest crises proclaiming unrelenting hope.**

When your business is failing, your friendship is ending, or your kid is leaving home. The tornado sirens are going off, and there is no cupboard under the stairs to hide in. God is there, with you, proclaiming hope! The future is certain. I don’t mean that everything is going to be okay right now because we have all faced moments when it’s not. I mean that eternity is secure. The Kingdom of God is surely coming. God’s plans are on track. Darkness is closing in all around you, but the light still shines in the darkness! The darkness has not, cannot, and will not overcome! God Himself is with you!

### **God is always with us; that’s who He is!**

Can you imagine what would have been different for Judah if Ahaz had only realized that? What would change in your life today if you understood that God is with us in Jesus Christ and that nothing can change that?

## We can trust God Who is always with us.

**God told Ahaz, “This is your moment to finally trust Me!”**

After telling Ahaz for certain that Aram and Ephraim would be defeated, God called Ahaz to trust Him. Listen to what God said in **Isaiah 7:9**, "... If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all." I think the NIV makes this clearer, "... If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." In other words God was saying, 'This is your moment, Ahaz! If you're going to ever trust me, now is the time to do it!' But Ahaz failed. He didn't trust God. We must not fail the way Ahaz did. But how can we be faithful?

### **When we trust God, we don't lurch into action. We watch and wait.**

When we face our biggest failures and deepest crises, some of us freeze. But most of us jump into action. We fight or flee. We act. The irony is that God didn't need Ahaz to do a single thing but trust Him. That impulse to act is sometimes fear speaking, not confidence. If we trust God, then when we face a failure or a crisis, we pause. We don't rush. We don't lurch. We wait and watch what God is going to do. It takes superhuman—supernatural—trust in God. But God's Holy Spirit within us gives us the trust that makes watching and waiting possible.

### **When we trust God, we do the next right thing.**

By right thing, I mean the right thing done the right way for the right reason. We take one small step of righteousness, one small step of obedience that aligns our lives with God. It could be asking for forgiveness. It could be picking up our Bibles to read. It could be making right something we have done wrong. It could be a giant next step in the right direction, but it is probably going to be a very small next step. But doing the next right thing shows that we trust God, and it helps us to trust God more and more with each next right step. Is there some small next right step you can take today?

### **The pain and hope I felt in Istanbul remind me what it means to trust God.**

I was in Istanbul a few weeks ago on a short-term mission trip. Istanbul itself was a tale of two cities. It is a beautiful city. But it was painful to be there too. Everywhere, there are old cathedrals that have been turned into mosques and subtle reminders that Islam's goal is to spread over the entire globe. On the last night of our trip, I was sitting in a restaurant by a window with a view of the Bosphorus. The setting sun lit up the place where Europe and Asia meet, over a city of more than 16 million people that spans two continents. Far less than one percent of them are Christians. At times this trip was incredibly painful. At the same time, I had been there to serve 100 church planters who are working across the Middle East and North Africa. They are giving their all and working in the power of the Holy Spirit for a day when the Gospel will spread like the dawn over the entire region. No despair. Only hope. And confidence. That's what it means to trust God.

### **God may be saying to you, "This is your moment to finally trust Me!"**

Is it with your biggest failure? Or with your deepest crisis? Is it with your life and heart? Or is it just with the details of your everyday life? You can trust Him with whatever comes next.