

Sunday Sermon August 13, 2017 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 3:5-12

Sermon Theme: Wisdom begins and ends in the Lord.

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

⁶ Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

There are many different types of wisdom. There is the wisdom that comes from study and schooling. We call this book learning. There is the wisdom that is due to reason. We call it common sense. There is also the wisdom that can experience something and apply that to other things to fix them or figure them out. We call that experiential wisdom.

It seems like everyone wants wisdom. We don't go through life not being very smart. We want to learn things, we want to get better at things. We want to gain knowledge and be able to apply that knowledge in a worthwhile way.

Yet, sometimes we struggle with acquiring and applying wisdom. The self-help books with their advice aren't working, our advanced education isn't helping in the areas that we want it too, and our friend or co-worker who always seems to be able to help us figure things out, just isn't helping.

Maybe we struggle with wisdom because we are looking for it in the wrong places or maybe we are looking for the wrong kind of wisdom. True wisdom does not start in a book, with experience, or with a person. The Psalmist writes, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.**"

As we look at Solomon and the wisdom he was blessed with this morning we will see that the Psalmist is right. True wisdom begins and ends with the Lord.

When we search for wisdom what are we trying to accomplish? Why do we want that wisdom for? For some it might be more knowledge for ourselves. For others it might be to grow as a person. For others it might be to acquire a new skill so that they can be more attractive to potential employers.

When we look at our own drive to acquire knowledge and wisdom in this world, we often find that the reasoning has to do more with me and less with other people. We don't often acquire wisdom for the good of the family, the community, our job, or the world around us. We acquire knowledge for ourselves and our own reasons. Often we use that wisdom for our own good. This may mean positives for our family or work place, but often that wisdom is used primarily for ourselves.

Solomon was a young man when he became king. Experts say that he was in his teens or early twenties when his father David died. While old enough to take the crown, he was also still well within the years where most of us are ruled by our impulses rather than good sound judgment and wisdom.

He had a lot to think about. His father David was the greatest king of Israel. The people loved him. He has brought peace and prosperity to Israel. He has won wars and defeated enemies. His rule and reign would become known as the Golden Age of Israel.

But now he is gone and Solomon has been anointed king of this kingdom. We don't know if this is something that Solomon expected. Solomon was nowhere near the oldest son in the family. We know of at least three other brothers, Amnon, Absalom, & Adonijah, who were seen as possible kings, but they are all dead. There were other brothers from other mothers that could have been king. But David had chosen Solomon.

Solomon went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices of thanks to the Lord for his kingdom. Gibeon was an important place, it was a holy place, it was the place of the LORD because the tabernacle was at Gibeon. It is here that God comes to the new king in a dream and gives him an amazing opportunity for himself and his kingdom. **“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”**

It almost sounds like the genie has popped out of the bottle and offered three wishes. The smartest answer always seems to be to ask for more wishes. We want to ask for more wishes because we always want more for ourselves. We are never content with what we have.

This shows itself in the simplest of ways. The person walks isn't content with that, they want to ride a bike, the person with the bike wants a car, the person with the car wants a better car, the person with the better car wants 2 more better cars and so on and so on.

This offer that God made to Solomon is as much a test of godly faith and wisdom as it is a offer of blessing. God was certainly going to give Solomon what he wanted, but Solomon could have asked for any other earthly blessings that we might think are important. He could have asked for a long life that was free from illness and disease. HE could have asked for riches and prosperity and not to want for anything. He could have asked for peace and security from his enemies.

But if Solomon would have asked for these things, he would have only have been thinking of himself. He would have shown his selfish heart because he would have been for things that would have made him a great king and would have given him a great kingdom to rule over.

A long life for the king usually means a prosperous and great kingdom. Riches and affluence means that the king is ruling well, has made good alliances, and has been able to pass that prosperity along to his people. Peace from enemies means that either the king has been good at keeping the peace or has been good in making peace through battle. A great army is a sign of a great kingdom which is a sign of a great king.

But he doesn't ask for any of those that would make him a great king or bring him a great kingdom. He asks for wisdom which shows itself in a discerning heart. **So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”**

Solomon shows that wisdom begins in the Lord. In his reply to the LORD, he praises the Lord for the great blessing of the LORD to David. He gives the glory to God for the great kingdom that he has inherited. He does not call the kingdom his kingdom, nor does he call the people his people, he calls himself a servant of the LORD to rule over the LORD's people. And he asks not for a long life, riches or peace, he asks for a wise and discerning heart to tell right from wrong, and to be able to rule God's people in a godly way.

David wrote in Psalm 51, **“Create in me a clean heart, Oh God, and renew a steadfast Spirit within me.”** Solomon wants to walk in the footsteps of his father as he seeks to walk in the wisdom of the LORD.

What would you say if God promised to give you whatever you wanted? I must admit that a wise and discerning heart would probably not be at the top of the list. But it really should be.

Most of the problems we have in this life come from our inability to follow God and do it his way. When we sin we bring its trouble and problems, its consequences on ourselves. When we fail to show the love of the Lord in our life, or are selfish and push ourselves forward, we hurt other people and bring their anger and abuse on ourselves.

True wisdom begins in the LORD, with a heart that seeks to love him first, and then a heart that is willing to reflect that love to others because we love him.

Often we think that following God's way is too difficult, it causes us to be weak when strength is needed, it takes away from our fun, or it will set us apart as different from those we want to fit in with in this world.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of all wisdom. Solomon did not ask the LORD for a discerning and wise heart because he was trying to fool God, he asked the LORD for this kind of heart because he loved the LORD and wanted to follow the LORD's way.

Isn't this love for the LORD above all things, and seeking his ways, the same lesson that we see in our Gospel from today? Jesus illustrates his Word and walking in his ways as a great and blessed thing not only once but twice. He pictures it as a great treasure and a great pearl which we are willing to give up all for, in order to have it.

Why was Solomon so intent on following the LORD? Why did Jesus picture faith in him as such a wonderful gift? The answer to both is the same: True wisdom begins and ends in the Lord.

Solomon did not know the name of Jesus, but he did know a loving, merciful and forgiving God who had forgiven his father David many times. He knew that God had done great things for his father David in establishing and helping him in his kingdom. But he had also heard all of the Psalms that David had written. He heard David praise his God for the Messiah who would deliver his people from their sins once and for all. He heard and believed that true wisdom lay in believing in the promises of God and the Messiah who would come.

Jesus tells us true wisdom does not lie in the world, but in him. He tells us to follow his way not because his way will lead to earthly wealth, long life, or an end to all of our problems. In the parables, both men gave up all they had for something much greater.

Jesus tells us to follow him, to have faith in him, because he will give us treasures that are so much greater than anything the world has to offer. He can make this promise because he has won those treasures and he can give those gifts freely. His treasures, his blessings are great. Faith which clings to our Savior, Forgiveness, freedom from sin and death, a life on earth thanking and praising him, and finally, the greatest treasure, the blessing of eternal life in heaven.

True wisdom ends in the Lord because with the Lord our end on earth is a beginning of life with him in heaven.

True wisdom begins and ends in the LORD. True wisdom begins in the Lord, as we pray that the Lord would give us a wise and discerning heart to walk this road of life in faith, making godly choices and godly decision and then showing the love of God to others as we walk in this Word. True Wisdom ends in the Lord. The Lord will build us up in faith, faith which will lead to the blessings of heaven. This is true wisdom.