

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

¹ Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Then David joined his ancestors. He was buried in the City of David. David ruled Israel for forty years—seven years in Hebron and another thirty-three in Jerusalem. Solomon took over on the throne of his father David; he had a firm grip on the kingdom.

¹ Kings 3:3-14 *The Message (MSG)*

¹⁻³ *Solomon arranged a marriage contract with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He married Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the City of David until he had completed building his royal palace and God's Temple and the wall around Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the people were worshiping at local shrines because at that time no temple had yet been built to the Name of God. Solomon loved God and continued to live in the God-honoring ways of David his father, except that he also worshiped at the local shrines, offering sacrifices and burning incense.*

⁴⁻⁵ *The king went to Gibeon, the most prestigious of the local shrines, to worship. He sacrificed a thousand Whole-Burnt-Offerings on that altar. That night, there in Gibeon, God appeared to Solomon in a dream: God said, "What can I give you? Ask."*

⁶ *Solomon said, "You were extravagantly generous in love with David my father, and he lived faithfully in your presence, his relationships were just and his heart right. And you have persisted in this great and generous love by giving him—and this very day!—a son to sit on his throne.*

⁷⁻⁸ *"And now here I am: God, my God, you have made me, your servant, ruler of the kingdom in place of David my father. I'm too young for this, a mere child! I don't know the ropes, hardly know the 'ins' and 'outs' of this job. And here I am, set down in the middle of the people you've chosen, a great people—far too many to ever count.*

⁹ *"Here's what I want: Give me a God-listening heart so I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who, on their own, is capable of leading your glorious people?"*

¹⁰⁻¹⁴ *God, the Master, was delighted with Solomon's response. And God said to him, "Because you have asked for this and haven't grasped after a long life, or riches, or the doom of your enemies, but you have asked for the ability to lead and govern well, I'll give you what you've asked for—I'm giving you a wise and mature heart. There's never been one like you before; and there'll be no one after. As a bonus, I'm giving you both the wealth and glory you didn't ask for—there's not a king anywhere who will come up to your mark. And if you stay on course, keeping your eye on the life-map and the God-signs as your father David did, I'll also give you a long life."*

The young, smart aleck walked into the blacksmith shop shortly after the blacksmith had thrown a horseshoe on the ground so it could cool. Seeing it there, the young fellow reached down, picked it up, but instantly cast it aside as it burned his fingers. The blacksmith said, "Kind of hot, isn't it, son?" The brash kid said, "No, not too hot. It just doesn't take me long to look at a horseshoe."

Sounds like the boy wasn't too smart. He learned the hard way that picking up a hot horseshoe is going to hurt, doesn't it? We're inexperienced at something—maybe we do something new without knowledge or goof or maybe even get hurt—and instead of admitting our inexperience, we come up with excuses for our ignorance. In moments like that, we wish we would have thought and been smart enough not to do such a crazy thing.

In today's story, we read about Solomon, the son of King David and Bathsheba. After David died, Solomon took over the throne of Israel. He was smart enough to recognize the fact that he was young and inexperienced for the role of serving as king. He probably was feeling vulnerable too. Solomon knew he was going to need a lot of help.

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The scripture tells us that Solomon loved God; and like his father, who also loved God, tried to walk in his father's footsteps by honoring God. But even with doing that, on his side, he had a great deal to learn. The fact that Solomon followed the practice of his people of worshipping and offering sacrifices to God in local shrines is a dead give-away of his lack of understanding of worship. The practice of worshipping God in community shrines was started in those days because the Israelites did not have a temple of their own at the time in which to worship God. God prohibited King David from building a temple because, as God said, David had too much blood on his hands from fighting wars. Building a temple for worshipping God was going to be King Solomon's job.

It was in the prestigious Gibeon shrine that God appeared to Solomon in a dream after Solomon had offered a huge sacrifice to God. I thought it a curious thing that God didn't scold Solomon for worshipping him and offering sacrifices to him in community shrines. Apparently, God was less concerned about where Solomon worshiped God than God was about the fact that he did worship God. In this early stage of Solomon's reign, he worked on his relationship with God, and greatly valued the connection he felt with God.

Eventually, a temple for worshipping the One True God was built, and at that time then, the people had no reason to worship their God in the shrines used for the worship of other gods. Even so, this small piece of Solomon's story is evidence for us of a reality that we should know because we read in later written scriptures that God is everywhere—available at all times, circumstances and places, even when we are overwhelmed with difficulties and can't feel his presence, even when the temptation of earthly gods like selfishness, desire and pride grasp for our souls—God is with us. God has no problem finding us. I guess the big question for us then is when we find ourselves in these unholy spaces of time, do we try to find God, beginning with our worship.

The scriptures tell us we can worship God anywhere and at any time. In fact, the bible tells us to praise our God morning, noon and night, in the good and the bad times, and we should pray without ceasing. We can worship God on the mountaintop or in the valley below. Since God is everywhere, we can and should worship God everywhere.

There are some people who feel worship only happens Sunday morning in church, and they think that they've done their duty of worshipping God when they attend church on Sunday, so they can go home after church forget about worship until the next Sunday worship service. Our everyday and everywhere worship of God keeps our hearts right with God; it keeps our hearts open to God; it reminds us of whose we are. It helps to keep us on the path of God's will for our lives. And it reminds us that we always have God to go to when we're in need.

As we move along in this scripture text for today, we see that God was there for Solomon when Solomon was feeling vulnerable and inexperienced as a king. We read, in fact, that God came to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he wanted. God told Solomon that he could ask for anything. Because Solomon witnessed God's love and faithfulness to his father David, Solomon knew he could be honest about feeling vulnerable and too inexperienced to be a good king, so Solomon expressed that to God, saying, "I'm too young for this, a mere child! I don't know the ropes; I hardly know the 'ins' and 'outs' of this job." And then Solomon, upon his confession and with confidence in God's ability to help him, asked God for wisdom.

The mere fact that Solomon knew he needed wisdom to fulfill his role as king of Israel tells us that the seeds of wisdom were planted within his soul already. Thomas Jefferson once said: "The wise know too well their own weakness to assume infallibility; and he who knows most, knows how little he knows." Solomon knew himself well enough to know he was going to need God's help and God's wisdom to support him with the enormous task that was before him, and he wasn't ashamed or afraid to ask for God's help.

God was very pleased with Solomon's request. God was also pleased with Solomon because he was not selfish with his request. He didn't ask for riches or a long life or a great army or even God's strength to eliminate all of his enemies. Solomon's request for wisdom was not rooted in the desire to benefit himself, but instead he wanted wisdom in order to be a good and effective king who would do what was best and—wealth and glory.

August 29, 2021 - "When God Asks, What Do You Want?"

Some people think highly of themselves; they think more of themselves and what they want; and, therefore, their selfishness desires can give way to foolishness and result in poor endings to their goals and ventures.

There's a story about a minister, a Boy Scout, and a computer expert, who were the only passengers on a small plane. The pilot came back to the cabin and said that the plane was going down but there were only three parachutes and four people. The pilot added, "I should have one of the parachutes because I have a wife and three small children." So he took one and jumped.

The computer whiz said, "I should have one of the parachutes because I am the smartest man in the world, and everyone needs me." So he took one and jumped.

The minister turned to the Boy Scout and with a sad smile said, "You are young, and I have lived a rich life, so you take the remaining parachute, and I'll go down with the plane."

The Boy Scout said, "Relax, Reverend, the smartest man in the world just picked up my knapsack and jumped out!"

We should not see these other things, wealth and glory, which God gave Solomon as a reward for requesting wisdom. These extras were actually a result of the wisdom Solomon received from God and utilized in his leadership. They grew out of the wise decisions he made early in his reign. Solomon designed and managed the kingdom in a manner that naturally delivered financial and political success.

We also read that God told Solomon that if he stayed the course and remained faithful to God, he would also receive the gift of long life. Unfortunately, Solomon did eventually drift from God. He did not stay close to God and nurture the wisdom God had given him, and sadly then, Solomon became an oppressive leader of the people. But that is a sermon for another time.

A preacher named Kent Crockett wrote this illustration about wisdom. He wrote, "When I was in college, I lived in a dorm that had 100 rooms, with a lock on each door. It took 100 keys to open those 100 doors. However, the person in charge had a pass-key. That single key had the ability to open the doors to every room in the dorm."

Wisdom is like a pass-key that will unlock difficult decisions and open doors for us. The Lord is the only one who has the key, but He'll loan it to us, if we will ask for it. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him or her ask of God, who gives to all people generously and without reproach, and it will be given to them."

Wisdom is a precious gift from God. It begins with our connection with God, strengthened as we seek God and worship God. Then in our realization of our need for God's guidance in our lives and our awareness that God is for us even though we have imperfections and, therefore, God wants to help us, we are not afraid to ask God for wisdom. We trust that God's wisdom is good and necessary for living the good life, even when there are other less than virtuous things trying to pull us down wrong roads. May we be wise enough to ask God each day for this precious gift so as to remain faithful as we continue our journey through life. Amen.