

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – August 13, 2017

Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

**1 Kings 3:5-12 (NIV)**

**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, 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.

Dear members of the Lord's family:

**The LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."** It's kind of hard not to be envious of Solomon isn't it? It's like God handed him a blank check and said, "Fill in whatever you want." What if God appeared to us in a dream and made the same offer to us? Wouldn't that be grand? Actually God has made a similar offer to us. Unfortunately, you and I often get so caught up in taking care of our selves and providing for our families that we forget a precious promise our Lord Jesus has made to us. Repeatedly in John's gospel Jesus made this promise: **Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.** (Jn. 16:23 (NIV); cf. also Jn.15:7,16, Jn. 14:13-14) So...

**Theme:** What Do You Want God to Do for You?

Let's not answer that question immediately. First

1. Consider His Generous Offer to You

So long as our requests are made in Jesus' name – we can be confident that they will be granted. That's certainly a generous offer. It becomes all the more generous when we take our sins into consideration, doesn't it? Sin separates from God. It makes us unworthy of his blessings. Yet in his grace and mercy God sent his son to restore our connection with God and to bring us back into a position of being able to receive his blessings. The apostle Paul reminds us: **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** (Romans 8:32 NIV)

Jesus signed God's generous offer with his own blood to guarantee us that whatever we ask in his name it will be given to us. **"Jesus has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father."** (Rev. 1:5-6 NIV) That certainly puts a different perspective on the way a person will answer the question, "What do you want God to do for you?" doesn't it? Apart from faith in Jesus and the Bible, people can concoct some incredibly stupid and ungodly answers to the question: What do you want me to do for you. Solomon recognized that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. His answer to God reflected his faith in the Lord's saving grace. He trusted the Lord's promise and purpose for his

life. He sought something in keeping with God's will and word. He sought to glorify God with his request. That's really what it means to pray or ask in Jesus' name.

Let's review what it means to pray in Jesus' name:

- o Praying in Jesus' name means that we recognize that he is the one who provided us with the right to bring our requests to God.
- o Praying in Jesus' name means that we trust that he knows what is best for us. We can ask for anything but we will do so with the prayer – your will be done.
- o Praying in Jesus' name means seeking what is in agreement with God's word and will.
- o Praying in Jesus' name means that we accept God's purpose for our life – to glorify him.

So now, "What do you want God to do for you?" Let's wait just a bit longer to answer that question, OK? We've considered God's generous offer but perhaps it would also be helpful for us to consider Solomon's response to the offer the Lord made to him. So let's take a closer look at it before we answer the question for ourselves.

**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, 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.**

Solomon began by making a humble confession in which he recalled the Lord's great kindness. Solomon realized that King David's greatness was a gift from the Lord. Even though a son had never succeeded his Father in ruling over this nation before it might have been easy for Solomon to assume that he had a right to the throne of his Father – but in humility, he confessed that the throne was a blessed privilege and gift from a gracious God. Solomon recognized God's grace to his Father's family in the promise that the Savior of the world would come from his line.

Solomon realized the responsibilities the Lord was placing on his shoulders. The people were as numerous as the sands on the seashore. The borders of the land were wide – extending to Egypt. Solomon saw himself as the Lord's servant. The kings of this nation held a special place among the rulers of the world. This was the people whom the Lord had chosen to bring a Savior into the world. He also saw his own weaknesses and the weight of the office he had been given. We can learn from Solomon to

## 2. Make a Humble Confession.

Rather than counting our selves as being entitled to our position in life, we can with Solomon recognize that what we are is an evidence of God's mercy. The Lord has blessed us by enabling us to be what we are. Called workers in the Lord's kingdom, lay workers in the Lord's kingdom, council men, ushers, church cleaners, we have these positions because our God has been gracious to us. He enables us to serve his church in these ways. The Lord has blessed us by enabling us to be what we are. In addition to being members of his church – we are also members of the society which he has established. We are Christian parents, Christian children, Christian citizens, Christian employers and employees.

Let's face it, there are those times when what we are gets to be a bit overwhelming. Who of us feels completely adequate for the tasks the Lord has given to us? What a privilege the Lord has given to us with his

offer: **my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.** Whatever position the Lord has given to you – he has also given you the opportunity to seek his help to carry out the responsibilities of that position in ways that are pleasing and acceptable to him.

Solomon recognized that fact with his humble confession and as he brought a humble request. **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 sought a very practical gift – the gift of wisdom – specifically the ability to listen with understanding so that he could govern the Lord's people and determine what was right and what was wrong for the people. We can learn from Solomon to

### 3. Bring a Humble Request

in response to the Lord's offer to give us whatever we ask for in Jesus name.

Solomon asked for a practical gift which would allow him to fulfill his responsibilities in a way which would glorify God. In whatever role God has placed us – there are gifts that we can use to help us to a better job and to serve as better witnesses of the grace of God. We can seek such gifts from the Lord.

When we sense our own inadequacies for the work the Lord has given to us, we will understand the value of seeking wisdom from the Lord and we will imitate Solomon's humble request.

- o Children might ask for wisdom to know how to honor their parents or superiors. They might ask for wisdom to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and his will. They might ask for wisdom to determine what is a right and a proper choice of activities or friends or career paths.
- o Parents might pray: Lord give me wisdom to understand my children and to discipline them in love. Help me to train them in the way they should go so that when they are old they will not depart from it. Give me wisdom to better understand my spouse and show me how to be a more loving husband and father or wife and mother.
- o Church leaders can pray for the wisdom to see the strengths and the weaknesses of God's people so that they can properly rebuke sin and unbelief but also so that they can strengthen and build up God's people for works of service.
- o As members of God's family and of a Christian congregation, we might pray for the wisdom to use all of God's gifts with gratitude and joy. Or we might ask for the wisdom to know how to encourage each other or comfort each other in time of need or suffering.
- o As Christians we might pray: God, give me wisdom to understand correctly the situations that confront me, wisdom to speak fitting words so that others can come to glorify you as their Savior and wisdom to do all that I do in ways which are pleasing and acceptable in your sight.

And when we have finished praying for ourselves – why not pray for others? After all the Lord hasn't placed any limits on our prayers – he has said: ask whatever you will!

Solomon brought a humble request for wisdom to the Lord. **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.**

The Lord kept his promise to give Solomon whatever he wanted. In fact, if we were to continue reading beyond our text we would discover that the Lord gave him even more than he asked for including both riches

and honor together with a long life if Solomon would continue to walk in the Lord's ways. The Lord provided a perfect answer to Solomon's prayer.

We can also

4. Expect a Perfect Answer to our Solomon-like prayers.

St. James assures us that God will also answer our prayers for wisdom. **If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.** (James 1:5 NIV) In fact, God is even willing to give us some of the wisdom that he gave to Solomon. God used Solomon to write the books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. As we read these books, God will impart to us some of the wisdom that he once gave Solomon. Other books of the Bible will also equip us to know and understand God and his will better.

The Lord Jesus declared: **So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32) For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33) But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** (Matthew 6:31-33 NIV)

The promises of the Lord are intended to strengthen our faith in our gracious Father's will so that we will pray with confidence. When you pray do not doubt! Place your trust and confidence in your Savior who has washed you from your sins. Remember the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Therefore pray expecting a perfect answer.

Now how will you answer the question: What Do You Want God to Do for You? Before you answer

1. Consider The Lord's Generous Offer to You
2. Make a Humble Confession
3. Bring a Humble Request
4. Expect a Perfect Answer

Then pray to the Lord in Jesus' name and don't forget to give thanks when the Lord responds by granting your request for Jesus' sake in keeping with his good and gracious will. Amen.