

⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there because it was the most famous high place. He offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask. What should I give you?”

⁶And Solomon replied, “You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity.^[a] ⁷You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today.

⁷“LORD my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David’s place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership.^[a] ⁸Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?”

¹⁰Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. ¹¹So God said to him, “Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life^[a] or riches for yourself, or the death^[a] of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, ¹²I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. ¹³In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be your equal during your entire life. ¹⁴If you walk in my ways and keep my statutes and commands just as your father David did, I will give you a long life.”

¹⁵Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant, and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he held a feast for all his servants.

What would you ask for?

There were three men stuck on an isolated island, unable to get home, unable to do anything but wait. One day as they were exploring this island they uncovered a lamp and an all powerful being says, “I will grant each of you whatever you desire. The first grabbed at the chance to leave and he asked to go home and be with family again. And poof he was gone among family and friends. The second upped the ante and asked that he not only return home but upon his return he’d become a wealthy businessman with a mansion to boot. The third wasn’t the brightest or the best and like the other two he was only thinking of himself and after a while he thought, “I’m kinda lonely here... Can you bring those other two guys back here?”

Now if you were in such a situation what would you ask for? If an all powerful being approached you and said, “**Ask for anything**” what would be your request? At that point you’d be met with the matter of what is most important in your life? What really matters? You know the answer already... you’re here at church but our decisions and choices don’t always reflect that. We think of needs that are more important, health for you or your children and family, money and the ability to support your family. Or maybe you’d be like that third guy sitting all alone and ask for God to bring back family. Life just isn’t the same without them. It’s lonely.

This wasn’t just a hypothetical situation for Solomon. God asked Solomon, “What do you want?” And Solomon responds, “I want a heart like yours.” That is a wise heart, the right attitude, the right emotions to discern between good and evil. This lesson doesn’t serve as an example for us to follow but a witness to what matters most in life from the man who had it all. So, as you make your resolutions this year what will you ask for? May God grant us such wisdom to know and do his will.

The situation for Solomon is that he has just inherited the throne from his Father David. Solomon has firmly established his reign, put to death those who had opposed him. Solomon isn’t a fooling around. He’s serious about his position. He’s also serious about his worship. After worshipping God at the heights of Gibeon, God came to him in a dream. Solomon gave God’s offer some serious thought. He looked back at God’s faithful love to his father. God chose David, the youngest, the least of all of Jesse’s sons, a shepherd and made him king, established that kingdom, and then gave him a son to reign after him.

Solomon then recounts God’s faithfulness to himself. Just as God chose David, God also chose Solomon. **“You have now made your servant king in my father David’s place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership. Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted. So give your servant a receptive heart to judge you people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?”** Solomon is pouring out his heart. He feels inadequate for his calling. He’s king but he’s in his

twenties. He calls himself a child. Jeremiah made the same complaint, **“I don’t know how to speak, I am just a child!”** Solomon and Jeremiah were tasked with a heavy load – a great, numerous, chosen by God people and he felt completely inadequate for the job.

Solomon took a long hard look in the mirror. He’s rightly confessed, “God, you’ve brought me here. I’m in over my head.” If there is to be any future then Solomon needs the help of the LORD. But he doesn’t ask for information concerning threats to the throne, who are they and what are they going to do. Rather he looks to God who has been faithful to his father David and who has been faithful to him and he **asks that God’s will be done.** That he be God’s instrument. He didn’t have himself in mind. This request wasn’t about what’s best for him. He knew that whatever God’s will was – that was the best for him. So he asks for wisdom.

Solomon’s request doesn’t sound like our resolutions. He didn’t want to lose more weight, become more self-disciplined, or even aim for a better job, house or anything like that. He asked that God grant him the wisdom to know and do God’s will. Is that what we want? Of course it is! After all who makes resolutions to be greedier, meaner, eat more fast food, watch more TV and exercise less? It’s going to be my least productive year ever! We don’t do that. But as we look back over our life like Solomon we may see that’s not what we want but it’s often what we do.

God has been faithful to us through it all just as he was with David and Solomon, he’s here with us. And yes you might have been through many serious obstacles and challenges this past year where you felt completely inadequate for situation in which God has placed you – but guess what? You’re still here. Because of your sheer grit and determination? No. Because our God is good. But when life doesn’t go as planned or when we feel as if God has made a mistake we might often wish, “If only I were in charge. If only I had the opportunity of Solomon to stand before an all powerful being and make my request.” Imagine if we had the power of God. I’m certain there would be numerous changes that we would make throughout the year: cure cancer, restore justice, bring peace, and make such a world that we wouldn’t want to leave. But that’s only because we lack wisdom – when you look back everything you can see clearly. Our selfish decisions have consequences and do damage to those around us like the one guy who wished his friends would return to that isolate island rather than for his situation to improve.

But if we had the wisdom and power of God, we’d leave things as they are. We aren’t as wise as God and life won’t go as planned. We’ll forget our resolutions. We’ll slip back into sin even when we’re determined to finally stand our ground against it. Solomon did too, so did David, even the apostle Paul confessed, **“I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do.”** I’m only a child, I don’t know how to lead. And that is not an excuse. It’s the truth that we confess. We deserve nothing from God but to be cut off and cast out of his presence. My will won’t be done, and it will cause problems... just like last year, and the year before, and every year since the fall into sin. So if we are to have any future – may we pray along with Solomon, “LORD your will be done. Give me a heart like yours.”

God came to Solomon in a dream and he rejoiced in his confession of faith. He didn’t ask for riches, long life, or the death of his enemies but for the wisdom to administer justice. And God gave him wisdom to such an extent that even today we still use the expression, “The wisdom of Solomon.” Solomon is unmatched and unequalled. Even if there are wiser people today we can look back at verse 15 and see how God qualified his statement, **“no king will be your equal during your entire life.”** Because there was a king who came well after his death that was wiser, more than his equal, greater in every regard – though he didn’t look like a king, nor was he born into a palace.

This child came to us in a feeding trough, wrapped in linen cloths. He didn’t look like a king but he is and remains King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This one grew in wisdom and stature before the Lord. Look at the traps that were set by his enemies and the wisdom Jesus used to diffuse such situations and turn them around. **“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s... give to God what is God’s. Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone.”** “

Jesus is David’s greater son. Solomon was just the first installment in the fulfillment of that promise to David. His name Solomon – is a play on the Hebrew word, Shalom. Solomon would bring God’s people peace for a time, Jesus will bring peace between God and humanity forever. He did this not by jockeying for position and demanding his will be done but instead by looking out for the needs of others and humbly accepting his Father’s will. Jesus prayed, **“Not my will, but your will be done.”** Jesus willingly and obediently desired to do his Father’s will even if were on a cross. There Jesus suffered and died for the sins of all people, past and present so that we might have a future. That’s faithful love.

1 Kings 3:4-15

2nd Sunday after Christmas

January 3, 2021

God has shown us his great and faithful love to his servants. God comes to us not in dreams but in his Word. There we see how he's been faithful to humanity even in spite of countless atrocities that we've committed he's still here. our wisdom may not be unmatched, unrivaled, unequaled but God has made us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. In his Word he has revealed to us all that has done to save. So we pray.

We pray to the same God as David. We pray the same prayer as Solomon that God give us wisdom and strength, not only the ability but the desire to do his will and God answers our prayers. This wisdom is restored through faith which is often described as the fear of the Lord. To have this wisdom is to have salvation. Such wisdom is ours only through Christ crucified. We are equipped and empowered to live a life of wisdom. This wisdom includes such common sense that says if you want to seek God's kingdom first, start by being in God's Word, assemble with the saints, receive the sacraments his body, "Given and shed for you." Don't wait for a dream go to where he speaks most clearly. Then seek to live life as God would have us live. If you disagree with God's Word or will for your life grant that the Holy Spirit is wiser than you are. When we do this God often adds to it. Solomon received other gifts as well.

So how should we respond, "Thank praise, serve and obey." is the answer from our catechism. You might not return to Jerusalem and offer burnt offerings" but you can return and bring fellowship offerings. (Tritip has a pleasing aroma). Rejoice, give thanks to God, and share that with others. And know that you can face the future with its many ups and down because God goes with you.

So if you were stuck on a deserted island what would you wish for? Long life. More coconuts. More friends. it doesn't matter. It's a hypothetical situation. But God asks, "What can I do for you?" And we can respond, "You've already done everything for me: your son, our salvation. If there is anything more that you do for me, let it be according to your will." Amen.