

One Thing I Ask

I preach this morning in the name of God, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is the eighth Sunday after Pentecost and we continue in the Days Following Pentecost. In the Days Following Pentecost, the power and the activity of the Spirit of God continues its work among us to lead us and guide us and direct us to put our trust and our faith in Jesus Christ in all things. Because today we are living in unprecedented times, times in which we have never seen before in our day.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc upon our lives and as national and global unrest brings to the surface systemic issues of racism and injustice, now more than ever before, we need Jesus. Now more than ever before, we need to put our trust in Jesus - that God has a plan in and through it all. For Paul said in Romans chapter 8, verse 28 that "In all things God works together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose."

Now more than ever before, we need to put our hope in Jesus because as the Hebrew writer said in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 19 that putting our hope in Jesus would be the anchor of our soul. And now more than ever before, we need the wisdom of Jesus. For who can know the difference between right and wrong? Who can understand and differentiate between good and evil? Who can understand the error of his ways unless the Spirit of God draws him to repentance?

Today, we need God's wisdom. We are in desperate need today for God's wisdom, heavenly wisdom. And today, we look at wisdom. Wisdom is knowing what to say and what not to say. Wisdom is knowing what to do and what not to do.

I recently heard a story of a pastor who, on one Sunday morning, got into his closet to find a nice tie for church. He opened up his closet and what did he find? But a small little box. In this box were three eggs and 100 one dollar bills. Being taken off guard by this, he called in his wife and said, "Honey, come here and tell me what this box is." His wife comes into the room and he asks, "Honey, there's a box here and in this box are three eggs and 100 one dollar bills. What's this all about?"

She was embarrassed and she said in her confession, "Well, you know, I've been hiding this box from you for thirty years of our marriage." And the man was crushed, "What do you mean you're hiding something from me? Thirty years of our marriage? I thought we had a good marriage! And you're hiding this box from me. What is this all about?"

She said, "I didn't want to hurt your feelings." "Hurt my feelings?" He was even more confused. She was honest with him and said, "Every time you preached a poor sermon, I would put an egg in the box." Well, the man started thinking to himself, "Hey, three eggs out of thirty years. That's not too bad!" He started feeling good about himself. Three eggs after all, that's not too shabby now, is it? "But what about the 100 one dollar bills?" He asked his wife. "Oh," she said, "once we got to a dozen, I then sold those dozen eggs for a dollar."

Wisdom is knowing what to say and what not to say. Wisdom is knowing what to do and what not to do. Today we look at wisdom and we look at the life of King Solomon to learn wisdom.

King Solomon was a man of great wisdom. He was a man of dominant power and he was a man of high achievement. He was indeed a man of great wisdom. He wrote over 3,000 proverbs or "Tales of Truth," and he wrote about 1,005 songs. He is the biblical author of the books of Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Wisdom was his trademark; he was known for great wisdom. On one occasion, Queen Sheba came and visited this man because she wanted to sit at his feet and hear the wisdom of God come through his lips.

He was a man of great wisdom, but he was also a man of dominant power. For his kingdom, you see, extended from the Euphrates River in the north, all the way down to Egypt in the south. He was a man of great wisdom; he was a man of dominant power, and he was a man of high achievement. For King Solomon is the one who built the Temple of the Lord. King Solomon took seven years to build God's temple and thirteen years to build his palace. That is a total of twenty years that King Solomon rose to the highest level of achievement to make a house, a dwelling for God, promised to David, but not given through David, but rather his son. Twenty years to rise to the call of high achievement. He was a man of high achievement. He was a man of great wisdom.

And when he was given the opportunity to ask from God anything that he wanted, well, he didn't only speak words of wisdom, he demonstrated words of wisdom, verse 5, "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.' 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.'"

Wisdom, first, is giving honor where honor is due. Being asked of the Lord, "What is it, Solomon, in all the world and all the things for which you could ask, what is it that you want to ask for?" And Solomon, before he asks for wisdom, gives honor to where honor is due. He speaks of his father in verse 6, "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."

You see the kindness and the favor of God that has come upon Solomon is the kindness and favor of God that now has not only come upon Solomon, but that was upon the life of his father, David. Because when God chooses, God anoints. The favor and the kindness of God came upon David because in Psalm chapter

89, verse 3 we read, "You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"

David is the one who was chosen by God and David was the one who was anointed by God. For the Lord said through the Prophet Samuel in chapter 16, verse 1, "Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king." Verse 13, "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David" (*1 Sam. 1:1,13*).

David was the one whom God had chosen; David was the one whom God had anointed. And wisdom is giving honor where honor is due. What does that look like in your life today? Who has God used in your life to pave the way of righteousness for your new business launch? For your new initiative? For your new project? Who has the Lord used in your life in ministry to lead the way of righteousness, so that now the labor and the toil has already been done and now you are reaping that which has already been sown into the field of ministry on your behalf? Who today is God calling you to honor because honor is due? Because credit is due?

That's what Solomon is doing. Before he even asks the Lord for anything, he says, "Lord, there is somebody whom your anointing and your choosing has caused me to now sit on the throne." And this is the anointing of God. And he needs the Lord, he needs the wisdom of God, but wisdom, you see, is first giving honor where honor is due.

Second, wisdom is understanding that those whom God has called you to lead and serve do not belong to you, but rather belong to God, verse 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. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 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?"

Wisdom is knowing that those whom God has called you to lead and serve do not belong to you, but rather belong to God. You see, Solomon understands who he is. And because he understands who he is, he understands who God is and those who belong to him. It's all God's. It all belongs to him. The very throne which Solomon is now inheriting is a result of the benevolent goodness of God the Father and the life of his father David. And he is now called to the kingship of Israel to lead this nation of God, the chosen people of God. And he knows that this is no easy task. This task and this call of God upon his life has led him to his knees in humble prayer because he knows that it all belongs to God, it all belongs to the Lord.

Do you know today that that which has been entrusted into your care does not belong to you, but belongs to God? That business that is so successful is not yours, it's the Lord's. This church and its ministries over the years, this belongs to God - this is all His. This is His vision; this is His church. We are His people, the people of His pasture. Everything that we have been given is on loan to us. Therefore, it belongs not to us, but it belongs to the Lord. It is all the Lord's and wisdom is knowing that what God has extended to you for such a short time is on loan to us. It's not ours, which makes us stewards of what's God's.

King Solomon understands that, which is how he can ask for wisdom, verse 9, "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong." This is a timely word for our nation. This is a timely word for our community. This is a timely word for our church.

We are in desperate need of God's intervention. We are in desperate need of wisdom, heavenly wisdom, God's wisdom, that we might stand in the midst of darkness and proclaim the name of life in Jesus Christ. That we may not back down, not turn our back away from the needy, but stand with a humble heart and with a compassionate spirit and say, "Thus saith the Lord: this is what the evil

one meant for harm, but God is in the process of working all things together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (*Romans 8:28*). Today, we need God's wisdom. We need Jesus Christ to lead us and to guide us into the way of truth, knowing that wisdom is honoring those whom God has anointed, honoring those whom God has chosen. So stand up, Men of God! Stand up, Daughter of the Most High King! For God has called you and God is leading you to receive His wisdom. We need it and we are living in a day where God is raising us up to stand for truth.

Wisdom is knowing that what has been entrusted to your care is not yours, it's God's - it in all belongs to Him. It's giving honor where honor is due. And lastly, wisdom is asking from God that which is in accordance with the heart of God, verse 10, "The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for a long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 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.'"

Wisdom is asking from God that which is in accordance with the heart of God. Solomon could have asked for anything in the world that he wanted. He did not ask for something for himself, he asked for something for others. He asked for God's discernment: the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, the ability to hear the voice of God, to listen to the voice of God, and to obey the voice of God, as the Spirit of God, who does the anointing, who does the leading, who does the shaping, who does the mourning, would lead us into the pathway of His peace.

What are you asking of God today? Are you presenting before Him a long list of what you would like God to do for you, like a genie in a bottle? Or will you fall to your knees today in prayer and say, "Lord, I need your wisdom. God, I need your leadership in my life. Holy Spirit, I need you more than ever before. I need your wisdom to honor those who have come before me. Lord, I need your wisdom to

recognize that everything in my life, everything - my family, my wife, my husband, my children - everything that has been given to me is not mine, but Lord, it's yours. And Lord, break my heart for that which breaks yours, so that I can ask from you that which is of you."

Is that your prayer today? You see, when you ask in accordance with God's heart, you can be assured that Jesus hears you when you pray. Because Jesus said in John chapter 14, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (*Jn 14:13-14*).

Asking in Jesus' name is connecting to Jesus' heart. Is that your prayer today? We need God's wisdom; that is my prayer. There are many things for which we could ask, but one thing, only one thing, that we do ask. "Lord, give us your wisdom." Amen