

July 30 2017

Reading from the Bible Proverbs 8:32-36
I Kings 3:1-15, I Kings 3:1-15
James 1:5

Sermon *The “Wisdom” of Solomon*

You have just heard a song about Solomon and you probably remember the feud between two unnamed women who had babies. I’m going to call them Molly and Hanna. They lived in the same house. Molly had a baby boy and a few days later, Hanna had a baby boy. Hanna’s baby died. And when Molly woke up the baby she had was not her baby. So they went to the judge. Molly accused Hanna of taking her son in the night. Hanna said this baby is mine and it is Molly’s baby that died. They started yelling at each and the judge said, “Quiet. Bring out the sword, we’ll just cut this baby in half and each of you will have half a baby.” And as the song said, Molly said, “No, no.” “Give the baby to her.” Why did King Solomon favor Molly?—because she was the mother.

When we read in 1 Kings in chapter 3 the story it said, “All Israel heard of the judgment of the King.” And they stood in awe of the king because he had the wisdom of God in him to execute justice. The wisdom of Solomon was legendary- he wrote or collected the proverbs- he wrote the Song of Solomon- people came from all over to hear his wisdom. Reading from 1 Kings Chapter 3 we read about Solomon’s rise to power. It doesn’t quite tell the whole story; Solomon came to the throne through violence and blood-shed. He killed several important people including his brother. David, his father, was concerned how Solomon would use all the wisdom. God told David that the rest of his life was going to be in discord. And it surely was.

I kings chapter 3

“Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh King of Egypt; he took Pharaoh’s daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and a wall around the city. He sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.”

“At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in

place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern your great people.”

Solomon was not quite as innocent as he portrayed himself. He did come before the Lord humbly and in his dream he asked for wisdom to rule over God’s people. But remember there was intrigue and violence. He has a little entitlement in his prayer-: God you have treated David, my father well-he was a faithful servant and now, God, hear my prayer. Solomon asks for a listening heart. He doesn’t ask for traditional king stuff like riches and long life. God will provide abundantly –more than Solomon asked for. Solomon would have his listening heart. However Solomon lost his dependency on the Lord and instead depended on his power as king. What was his downfall? It is a lot like the rock tumbler that I bought my husband for Christmas several years ago. The rock tumbler that I thought he really wanted. I found a good used one and he was so excited about it. Then it sat in the garage and was never used. There were no pretty polished stones coming out of it. He asked for a rock tumbler. It was a good request, he likes to collect rocks. If we ask for wisdom and that is a good choice but don’t put it on the shelf in the garage. Solomon did a lot of outward signs of wisdom. He asked for a listening heart which we could say was a teachable spirit. Are we willing to learn? The Lord wants to work on us from the inside out. As one of the writers that commented on Old Testament Scriptures said that God was looking for those who valued something more than their immediate pleasure, comfort, and desires. Rather the opportunity for us to live in fellowship and in covenant with the living God and to listen to God’s word. In some ways Solomon’s prayer is selfish- help me not to yield to temptations and the pressures of the world. The man named Bill Ival wrote, *Too Busy Not to Pray*. I think it was right after that book came out that he had an extramarital affair and had to confess it to his family, his wife, and to his congregation. He spent many years and has been restored. Too busy not to pray is a great phrase. Solomon was too busy to pray. He was young and inexperienced yet he knew that the Lord could help him. He got in too deep. He wanted wisdom. I think Solomon was sincere. He was sincere in many points of his life. He asked God’s favor to carry out his duties but unfortunately his immediate pleasure and comfort just swallowed up the desire to serve God.

The number one job for all of us is to trust the Lord; to seek the Lord and to let God work on our will and our emotions. Unfortunately Solomon got busy. What did he get busy with? What was his life like? He was rich he had chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses which he stationed in different cities. The king had silver and gold and cedar imported from Egypt.

An imported a chariot for 600 shekels. The country was into commerce in a big way. Apparently he also had other interests. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And we hear at the very beginning of the story one of things that led to his down fall. He married an outsider. She worshipped other gods. Most people went to worship the Lord but others worshiped idols. When he brought people and wives from other places, he listened less to God. Solomon would eventually enslave his own people to build his public buildings. His reign would be troubled. His united kingdom of north and south would fall apart. There would be kings on the throne from the line of David until they were all taken off to Babylon. It would be a mess. Externally he looked great. When he ascended to the throne, the lord's said, "Ask what you want." Solomon's answer revealed he wanted the wisdom but wealth, fame, fortune, and trade got into the way.

So what do we do with this? What do we do when we ask for wisdom? We don't have lots of silver, gold and horses and I know most of you pretty well, I don't think you are involved with lots of wives and concubines either. What happens- I think for us- there is the danger to keep up with others – interest in what we have,-to please others- the sheer busyness that takes us places where we shouldn't be. The Lord invites and he asks what we want? We say we want to do his will-lord- and then we do the opposite. Thank you Lord for your advice and we will do what we want to do. If we want to seek wisdom and the listening heart it takes some time. It means we have to stop anything that fills our hearts. We think we are serving good and evil. We say to God tell me what to do?

Some of you might remember Faust in Shakespearean's play about the man who makes a pact with the devil for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. On the stage there were little devils in the corner of the stage saying go, go, go and the people saying no, no, no. Foust makes the pact only find in the end- up from the bottom comes Mephistopheles (the devil) who takes him to hell.

We ask God for an understanding mind and insight that we might look at the situation and clearly see what the issues are what is Godly and what is not. Sometimes we choose what is fine and thinking that is the best and then we hear that small voice, no, no, no. Solomon wanted wisdom. Solomon wanted to be true. His innocence is displayed here but he was quite ruthless and he murdered and intrigue. He got sucked into power. He liked the praise of the people. His listened to people who said, "Solomon you are so wonderful." His son Rehoboam was a mess. God's words about consequences I Kings 3:14 And I will give you a long life, if you follow me and obey my laws as your father, David, did." We can live our own way or we can live in the generosity of God. If you will walk in my ways keeping my statutes my commandments I will lengthen your life .You can take and run your own way or we can live in the generosity of God

We will take a look at the book of James.

James 1-5

“If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.”

You don't have to be back in the days of Israel, you can just be you to ask for wisdom and then comes but ask in faith never doubting- for the one who doubts is like the wave in the sea that is driven by the wind, a doubter is double minded and unstable in every way must not expect anything from the Lord. Ask with a pure heart. Ask it and believe it.

Prayer: Dear Lord we thank you for the gift of wisdom and we confess we have not always turned to the wisdom. Forgive us for the times when we have not believed. Help us to be truly humble and seek it. Be wise and use it Amen