

What Will You Ask For?

I Kings 3:4-15
November 6, 2022

All of us are familiar with stories where someone finds a magic lamp, rubs it and a genie pops out offering three wishes to the lucky finder. People ask for everything from true love to great riches to absolute power. When given such an offer, King Midas wanted everything he touched to turn to gold, which destroyed his food, his wife, his children, and everything else. Others have made equally bad choices. What would you wish for? You might just get that offer. To discover what Solomon requested, open your Bibles to I Kings 3.

Last week was our last full sermon in our series on David as we saw him sitting in front of his fireplace, writing his final Psalm, perhaps Psalm 23 reflecting back over his life. Although he didn't reign as long as Queen Elizabeth, David did reign for 40 years and as I Kings begins, his age is catching up with him. He can't stay warm anymore and there are no electric blankets. For whatever reason, maybe not good ones, none of his 8 wives are sleeping beside him so they call in a young girl who keeps him warm without anything sexual. She's simply his bed warmer.

During David's gradual decline, one of his sons, Absalom's brother, Adonijah, decides to take advantage of his father's weakness and seize the throne. He crowns himself king while his dad is still living. Even David's ruthless general Joab got in on the scheme and supports him. In addition, he's backed by all the key players except for the priests, prophets, royal guards, and Queen Bathsheba.

When **she** gets the news, she and Nathan the prophet inform the ailing king of what is going on behind his back. He previously promised Bathsheba that her son, Solomon, would be the next king. What will David do? He directs in no uncertain terms that Solomon be anointed king, which he promptly is. I Kings 1:39-40 tell us "Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing flutes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound."

Say Solomon. This is Solomon's day! Like England, Israel had not seen a coronation in many years, but they were about to! Solomon is anointed king at the Gihon Spring and all the people rejoice! He's apparently the people's choice. When Adonijah a few miles away hears the ruckus and finds out what happened, he realizes his short run at power is over. In great mercy, Solomon forgives him and allows him to live as long as he doesn't cause any more trouble. Which, as we'll see, he soon does.

Meanwhile David continues to decline and 1 Kings 2:10-11 simply says, “Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. 11 He had reigned forty years over Israel — seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem.” And that was that. It was the end of a most incredible era in Jewish history.

Shortly thereafter, Adonijah again rears his handsome head with an ugly scheme to undermine the young King Solomon. That’s the final straw and Benaiah who killed the lion in a snowy pit struck him down as well. If you did your homework, you also read how Solomon dispatched Joab as well as some of his father’s enemies. All of that was part of Solomon establishing himself as king.

We also saw how he reached out to other leaders for help, especially King Hiram of Tyre just up the coast. That’s where he got the cedar logs for the temple as well as the project manager, another man named Hiram who was half Jewish. Solomon is also the only Jewish King that we know of that had a navy. He partnered with King Hiram to sail the seas and the ships returned every three years carrying gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons. Sounds like Congress.

One of the most incredible parts of Solomon’s early reign, however, happens in 1 Kings 3:4. If you are able, please stand as we read it together.

4 The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 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."

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, O 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?"

Remember these events happened before he built the temple. Solomon, freshly crowned as king, in one of his first official duties, arranges a special worship service. He invites everybody who is anybody to come. The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles says he invited all the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, the judges and all the leaders in Israel, the heads of families. So it was going to be quite the celebration. And it was going to be at Gibeon. Say Gibeon. Even though David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the Tabernacle, the bronze altar and all the rest was still 6 miles north at Gibeon. So Solomon has everybody meet him up there.

After they all got there, he offered 1000 burnt offerings. Many more will be offered for the temple dedication, but up to this point, this is huge. Solomon wants to put a smile on God's face, and apparently he did for that night, God appeared to him and made that incredible offer. "What do you want me to give you?" Basically, "Ask whatever you will and it will be yours!" The next time you think God doesn't care about your offerings, read this.

But how would you answer that question? New 4-wheel drive? Mountain land? A Boone and Crocket Buck? A gold Ferrari? To be President? World peace? 10 billion bucks? True love? Perfect health? The door is wide open! The sky's the limit! I probably would have said, let me get back to you on that after I've had a chance to weigh my options. And talk to my wife 😊.

Solomon didn't. Apparently without batting an eye, he says, "I'm young and inexperienced. I don't know what I'm doing. And I'm the king of millions of your people. Oh God, I need wisdom to do this well." As we read, he asks for "a discerning heart." Discernment means the ability to make good judgments, good decisions. And Solomon knew he was going to need it. 2 Chron 1:10 says, "Give me wisdom and knowledge."

What a genius answer. I'd say he was pretty wise already, wouldn't you? To ask for that? God not only granted that, but He followed it up by saying, Vs 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. 13 Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for -- both riches and honor -- so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. 14 And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."

Say wow. Top ten answers on the board and I'll bet you wisdom wouldn't even make the list today even though it's sorely needed. Life is full of hard decisions. Which coffee cup to use, which channel to watch, which sandwich to order. Then there those a good bit tougher. Which job to accept, how to discipline children, when to speak to your boss, how to deal with ornery people. Such situations don't require book knowledge, they require wisdom. Intuition and understanding that surpass a simple yes or no. Where do you go for **that** advice? And as much as **we** need wisdom in our own lives imagine how much more world leaders need it. Their decisions affect billions of people and wisdom, it seems is in very short supply. Partisan bickering? Plenty of it. Wisdom? Not

so much. Solomon realized the gravity of the choices he would have to make and he asked for wisdom to make them well.

Because he wisely asked for that, God said I'll not only give you wisdom, but I'll also give you riches, honor, peace, and blessing like no other king. And he did as we'll see another week, God willing. And long life, if you obey Me. Vs 15 Then Solomon awoke — and he realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.” Imagine getting promises like this from God!!!

In that same chapter, Solomon makes the famous ruling with two women both claiming the same baby. Now they'd do a DNA test. Solomon didn't need one. He just needed wisdom to identify the real mother. In 1 Kings 4:29-34 we read that, “God gave Solomon wisdom and **very great** insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. 30 Solomon's wisdom was **greater** than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than **any other man**, including Ethan the Ezrahite (think Einstein) — wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. (think Dr. Phil) And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations (without Facebook or Twitter). 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33 He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. 34 Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.”

So God gave Solomon what he asked for that night. He would write the Book of Proverbs which is a collection of many of his wise sayings like, “16:16 How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” which he did. And “19:13 a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.” Chinese water torture. Thank God I never learned that from experience but Solomon likely did with 700 wives. He also wrote two other books of the Bible one of which is part of his 1005 songs. According to 2 Chronicles 1, Solomon asked for knowledge along with wisdom and God blessed him with that too as he was quite a naturalist. People from all over the world came to listen to his wisdom including the Queen of Sheba.

Good for Solomon. But how does that help us today? Do any of you need wisdom? For one thing, we can and should read his book of Proverbs. It still applies! It has 31 chapters. My brother Jimmie would read 1 chapter each day which would take him through the whole book every month. We can still benefit from the wisdom God gave Solomon from the Holy Spirit inspired books he wrote.

But we can do much better even than that! We can go to the same source Solomon got his wisdom from. God is the headwaters of all wisdom. Job 12:13 says, “To **God** belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.” And Rom 11:33

declares, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God...” God is all wise and all knowing! And He still gives it to those who ask today! Solomon wrote in Prov 2:6 ... the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. In Jeremiah 33:3, God says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” Even though we may not be a king or a queen, we need wisdom every bit as much as Solomon did. And God will give it to us if we ask! He’s promised! I remember when I was elected Student Body President at Central 1000 years ago, getting on my knees that night and asking God for wisdom to do that job. And I did the same when I started teaching and when I started here as your pastor, and many times since. I know some of you think He never gave me any, but imagine how much worse it’d be if He hadn’t!

In fact, one much wiser than Solomon has come Who we can learn from. In Matt 12:42, Jesus said, “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.” Who’s He talking about? He was talking about Himself! And they rejected Him. Don’t make the same mistake. Col 2:3 tells us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Jesus! If you want to be wise, come to Jesus!

And as we come to Him, He gives us the same opportunity God gave Solomon. In Matt 7:7-8 He said, “Ask and it will be given to **you**; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Not just wisdom! In John 15:7, He said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask **whatever you wish**, and it will be given you.” What an offer! I know those Scriptures have been twisted by health and wealth preachers, but I also know they’ve been neglected by others. Jesus **did** say those things and He does keep His promises. In Matt 21:22 He said, “If you believe, you will receive **whatever** you ask for in prayer.” Say whatever. That’s pretty open ended. James 4:2 says, “You have not because you ask not.” So ask!

I know we all have some unanswered prayers. But we also have many unasked prayers. “Oh,” you say, “God would never give me this or that.” Have you asked Him? 1 John 5:14-15 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask **anything** according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us — **whatever** we ask — we know that we have **what we asked of him**.” I’m not sure a new Ferrari is His will for me right now, but it might be His will to give us wisdom so we can make godly decisions with what we do have. Good choices for ourselves, our families, our church, and on Tuesday, for our country as we vote. Thank God for His offer of wisdom.

Two things today. 1. We see where Solomon got his superior wisdom and we can get ours from the same place. How badly we need it! Seek and find wisdom in Jesus. If you've never accepted Him as Savior, that is the wisest decision you'll ever make. And 2, as you do, we see an open ended promise from God to ask whatever we will according to His will that we might have it. We got the same offer as Solomon and as Midas, what will you do with it? What will you ask Him for today? Lift up your requests to Him now as we pray.