

Sermon: Be Thou My Vision  
Scripture: Psalm 111, 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-15  
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The first Scripture reading is Psalm 111, a song of praise. Psalmist is testifying as our hearts are enlarged for the Lord in rightful praise, it also means that we will understand more ways of God and God's wisdom, which is beyond our comprehension. Hear the Word of the Lord.

Praise the LORD.

I will extol the LORD with all my heart  
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Great are the works of the LORD;  
they are pondered by all who delight in them.

Glorious and majestic are God's deeds,  
and the Lord's righteousness endures forever.

God has caused God's wonders to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

God provides food for those who fear God;  
God remembers God's covenant forever.

God has shown God's people the power of God's works,  
giving them the lands of other nations.

The works of God's hands are faithful and just;  
all God's precepts are trustworthy.

They are established for ever and ever,  
enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.

God provided redemption for God's people;  
God ordained God's covenant forever—  
holy and awesome is God's name.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who follow God's precepts have good understanding.  
To God belongs eternal praise.

Amen.

Today's second scripture is from 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-15. As Solomon begin his reign, he explores to make his nation peaceful and bountiful. His first recorded action was to marry Pharoah's daughter to secure a relationship with Egypt, which foreshadows his downfall. Yet in the midst of wrong doings, God is faithful still. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

1 Kings 2:10-12 Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

1 Kings 3:3-15 Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, 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 this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let us pray: God of many second chances, as we come before you, may we open our ears and hearts to see the gentle nudges that are in our lives to get back on the path that you have laid before us. May we be reminded to lean on your understanding in the course of our lives. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

2 Peter 3:8 says, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

That led one fellow to pray, "Lord, is it really true that a thousand years to us is just like a minute to you?"

"That's true," God answered.

"So," the man continued, "does that mean that a million dollars to us is like a penny to you?"

"Exactly right," replied God.

Whereupon the man asked, "Lord, could I have just one of those pennies?"

"Of course," said the Lord. "Could you wait here for just one minute?"

One of the questions that I have asked hundreds of youth in my ministry, yet I do not have finalized answer, is the question, "What would you say if you were in the presence of the Lord?" Throughout the years, I gave many different answers; such as "I would be speechless and in awe," or saying "I'm not worthy," to "grant me a heart like David to follow after you." Solomon's answer in today's passage solidifies his place in the pantheon of saints who went before us with a title, as written in verse 12 – a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.

As we look for wisdom from today's passage, my heart was tugged to ask another question: Why did God ask this question to Solomon in the first place? We must realize that Solomon was at the wrong place! He was at Gibeon, the principal pagan worshipping place, sacrificing thousand animals as a burnt offering... While Solomon was doing the wrong thing, why was God granting him a wish that he wanted? When God showed Godself to the many of the champions in the Old Testament, they were asked to do something drastic. To Abram, pack up and leave the land to go to a land that I have chosen for you. To Moses, take your sandals off, for this is a holy ground, and you shall be a messenger to Pharaoh to tell him that I have heard the cries of my people and you shall let them go. To many of the prophets and judges of the Old Testaments and their parents, God asked them to do incredible things. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.<sup>1</sup> So what is being asked of Solomon?

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:48

My hunch is about how we value giftedness. We are led to believe that if we are gifted and talented, that would lead us to having a good, successful life. Each of us are endowed with a gift from the Lord, yet we have created our own tiers of value on which gifts and talents from the Lord are worth more in the world. Wisdom, as we have seen in today's passage is one of those gifts that we value more than others. However, when we compare the life of Solomon to his father, David, there is something intangible that we can discern which pleased the Lord more. And that something is the character.

Nothing is more valuable than the intrinsic building blocks of who we are to the Lord. The heart of the matter can be shown and expressed through the fruit or result of the inward spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Jesus' shorthand version is loving God and loving others like you love yourself.

Managing our gifts and talents can be tricky and mishandling them can lead to our demise like Solomon. We have all seen extraordinarily gifted people who do not have the character to bear their gifts. Under the pressure to make more money, hit more home runs, to stay under the spotlight, and not to fail or lose, they push away their inner values and character and turn to other vices. We, too, are tempted to use our gifts to push on our own agenda and often, it is our own gifts that steer us away from depending on God.

Today's passage speaks of this truth: as long as we love the Lord, God continues to reach out and mend us, guides us, work with us, and empower us to be walking in the ways of the Lord, to keep God's statutes and commandments. Story of Solomon's prayer and dream starts out by saying Solomon loved the Lord, but he was not perfect because he sacrificed and offered incense at high places while the ark of the covenant, when God's presence was back in Jerusalem near his home. By giving him wisdom, which pleased the Lord, it is clear in hindsight that Solomon could have used the wisdom to turn back to the Lord's ways, like his father. Ironically, however, it became Solomon's vice and led to his demise by leaning on his giftedness in defiance against the character that God wished upon him.

Much like Solomon, when we ask for something in prayer and in our dreams, we look for them in our high places and also crave that God will play genie in our lives, granting our wishes. We need to be careful of the giftedness that we ask for in our prayers. These requests usually become a character building exercises, where one gets an opportunity to practice such request. For example, when one asks for patience, God will give you an opportunity to practice such patience by placing an event or someone in your life that demands patience from you.

According to Thomas Blair:

*Wisdom has to do with whom we entrust ourselves to; who we know can fill our empty buckets; whom we most believe, trust, and confide in.*

*If we do not know what resources we have, we cannot use them to make happen what we want to happen. If we do not know what we want to happen, then we will not even know what to wish for in the first place. Wisdom arrives when the soul discerns its destiny, when life aligns in sync with the soul.<sup>2</sup>*

So, after meditating over this passage and the definition of wisdom by Blair, I have come to an answer that eluded me for so long. In God's presence, I would ask God, be thou my vision, for I need God to be my everything – Lord of my heart, my bestest thought, my delight, my shelter, my treasure, and my light.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas W. Blair, "Pastoral Perspective: 1 Kings 3:5-12," *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 3*, David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, editors, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).