

Wisdom

Once upon a time there were brave people who lived for generations, oppressed as slaves, who wandered for a lifetime in unfamiliar territory with no clear direction and only a vague destination in mind. Who, when they arrived at that destination, found it occupied by other people.

Once upon a time, there were a community of people who were survivors against enormous odds, who were now settled, with homes, centers for life and worship, who were ruled by a strong, powerful King with a proven track record in battle and government.

Once upon a time, a new, young King was anointed to rule the people of God, who lived in the magnificent palace built by his powerful father, King David....and this new King recognized one very important fact:

“I’m too young to do this! I haven’t got a clue what to do! How can I possibly fill my father’s shoes? What have I gotten myself into?? Help!!!!

At least that’s what I would be thinking if I were in Solomon’s shoes. And as we hear in today’s Hebrew Scripture, God spoke to Solomon and said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

So, let me ask you? If you had 3 wishes, what would you wish for? Because our popular culture is filled with lots of stories about wishes made and wishes granted, right?

There are stories about fairy godmothers who are more than eager to grant the young princess’s wishes and save her life. There’s a wonderful story about a peasant boy, Aladdin, who cleans up a filthy, old bottle and a genie pops out, ready to do his master’s bidding. I’ve always thought your first wish should be to ask for unlimited wishes!

And there is the story of the man that wishes for sausages, and then wishes that the sausages were attached to his wife’s nose, since she made fun of his wish and then he had to use the third wish to remove the sausages.

And staring up at the sky and reciting: “Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight.”

And deep down inside, haven't we all wished that our deepest wish could be so easily granted? But truth be told, would our wishes – made on the spur of the moment – really bring us true happiness? I don't know about you, but I was raised with the old adage: “Be careful what you wish for! You just might get it!”

Going back to our scripture lesson for today, God asks Solomon: “What do you MOST want and need?” And, after all of the soul searching that he has done...Solomon asks for one thing only. It isn't riches or wealth or fame. Solomon asks for wisdom!

The gift of wisdom lies at the core of the teachings in Deuteronomy. That's the law that God spoke through Moses as they wandered in the wilderness. This gift of Wisdom that the Law of God speaks about is manifested in and as “An understanding mind” with which to govern and which can keep you from jumping to conclusions too quickly.

It is a listening heart – I love this one...this is the gift to sit quietly and to truly listen to the entire story of another without interrupting or judging prematurely.

It is the ability to discern between good and evil.

It is the ability to discern what is right in any given situation, and to choose what is best for everyone and everything. And, as we know from the very famous story involving 2 mothers and a baby, Solomon immediately puts his precious gift of wisdom into use,, and he becomes a wise and great leader in his own right.

But there is an even better – though lesser known – story about Solomon's great wisdom that is included in both 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles...a story that spotlights Solomon as the administrator who not only organized but completed the building of the Temple.

Chronicles is a wonderful book that doesn't appear in our lectionary readings. In short: it is literally the recorded history of the major families, you know, the list of who begat who for generations and who was married to whom, as well as the famous battles, territory gained and lost...you know, all the wonderful things you can put on a list!

We have the same sort of things in our church today...in our large bound books dating back to the 1800s, recording births, deaths, marriages, baptisms and confirmations.

According to this story, four years after becoming King, Solomon is ready to begin the project that his father, King David, had wanted to build....but God had said no.

God told David, first strengthen my people. Building the Temple is a huge undertaking....it is a massive building that will be built from the finest of cedar, pine, gold, silver, ivory and bronze. And it is much more than Solomon and the locals could achieve – by themselves.

And so Solomon wisely contacted the kings and leaders of neighboring countries, first of all, seeking the finest materials that could be found in the known world. Then he offered a generous salary for their finest craftsmen: stone cutters, wood workers, seamstresses and needle artists, gold and silver smiths, as well as supervisors and laborers.

By engaging and including people of every status in the process – from kings to common laborers, seven years later, the magnificent Temple – the house of God and the home of the Art of the Covenant – was completed!

I believe that the Church today could certainly take a page from Solomon's notebook. And I'm not taking about Central – or any one congregation – or for that matter any one denomination – but the entire church universally.

I believe that, as the church, we are really good at recognizing the scope of work that needs to be done – in our communities, in our churches, in our world. And I believe we are good at finding creative ways to accomplish great things for our people and for our God.

And we also have a lot of people with a wide variety of gifts and abilities who can cook, bake, tell stories, knit, crochet, quilt, play games, teach, play music, sing, are good at computers and technology, people who write, paint, work with wood or metal, electric, plumbing.

I think that where we fall short, though, is in putting out generic asking for specific help – just like King Solomon did.

Our world has changed so much that we don't have the luxury of relying on just ourselves in order to accomplish what God is calling us to be and do as a church. To effectively minister to our 21st century world and beyond, it will take not just one person here and one person there doing it ALL, but every one of us, pooling our combined resources in order to achieve our goals.

Nominations will be meeting soon and we have vacancies we need to fill for the leadership of our church for the next year. We need you and your gifts to be successful as we move forward in ministry.

We don't have to be perfect at what we do, individually, in order to make a difference in our world, because when you put all those different abilities and gifts together, you wind up with more beauty and strength and resourcefulness than you could ever imagine, or accomplish on your own.

And this isn't just my optimistic dreaming that I'm talking about here. But I am doing what Sheilah Clay shared with us in our last meeting. I have been envisioning walking around in a hard hat since I moved here 8 years ago. That's my vision. New life to some old bones, just like Ezekiel saw. We are moving forward in redeveloping our site for even more ministries than we have right now because Centralites are willing to share their gifts. And there are many more non-profit organizations that are interested in moving in and doing more for our community.

And when the buzz hits the neighborhood we will have more visitors who will become members because of who we are and what we stand for. We need you all to be more than pew warmers moving forward. By the way, I looked it up and pew warming is not listed in the spiritual gifts.

We need each and every one of you to join us as we move forward. What are the gifts God has given you and how can you use them for God's glory and the work of this church.

God gifted Solomon with the gifts of wisdom and an understanding mind so that he could faithfully govern the people entrusted to his care.

God gifts us too, with the gifts of wisdom and a listening heart and an understanding mind, so that we might, not just discern what God is calling us to do, but so we can also make God's vision for this world a reality. I know that we can do it. The vision has been laid at our feet. God is leading us into a beautiful new creation....God gives us the strength we need to NOT be afraid to take a chance..the courage to try something new...all so that we can blend our gifts with the gifts of others and share joyfully what we have and who we are – as we faithfully serve the world and the people that God has entrusted to our care. What an awesome gift. So, what are you going to wish for? Amen