

SERMON ~ BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 3

INTRODUCTION

Wisdom – that is the ‘wisdom’ the Bible talks about – comes from a living relationship with the living God. Wisdom – that is the ‘wisdom’ the Bible talks about – calls for an obedient heart and a teachable spirit. Wisdom – that is the ‘wisdom’ the Bible talks about – is not common sense or an intellectual ability – no, wisdom – that is the ‘wisdom’ the Bible talks about – is the ability to make the right moral choice and go on to behave as God wants us to in any given situation.

But now let’s turn to our Bible reading for today and think a bit more about this wisdom the Bible talks about. Our first heading is:

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM...

and for a heart for justice and for a skill to listen; he asked for this wisdom because he knew that being king was a heavy responsibility – for it would be his job to speak out for the oppressed, to make sure the land enjoyed prosperity and experienced right living; it would be his job to stand up for the poor, to help the children of the needy and to knock cruel tyrants off their high horses. The king was responsible for justice in the nation – to open his heart to the destitute and the weak and to rescue them from oppression and violence.

Of course, Solomon really does appreciate God’s generous faithfulness – he knows that God’s love is going to be as great and as generous to him as it has been to his father, David – but equally he does feel inadequate for the task – he is too young to be ruler and he doesn’t know the ropes or the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of the job. He realises that without wisdom he could not be the kind of king God required.

And if we are going to be the kind of people God calls us to be – those who make right choices and decisions, speaking out for the poor and the weak, standing up for justice and integrity and working to make poverty and oppression history – then we too will need God’s wisdom to help us; in fact, we won’t make it without it. Which brings us to our second heading:

GOD GIVES SOLOMON WISDOM...

God is pleased to honour Solomon’s request – he promises him wisdom and adds the blessings of wealth, honour and long life, the last gift, however, being conditional on Solomon’s obedience.

The New Testament writers encourage us to ask God for wisdom; and Jesus promises us that, when we do ask for wisdom and then make the wise move of putting God first, God will meet all our everyday human concerns and we won’t miss out.

SOLOMON USES HIS WISDOM...

Solomon's wisdom is put to the test; he must decide between two women, both claiming to be the mother of a baby. His wisdom is shown in the way he produces an emotional response from the true mother of the child.

In today's church, leaders – and in our Presbyterian tradition that means the team of ministers and elders – need wisdom and discernment in directing the church's strategy, as well as in the pastoral care and support for individuals and groups. Please pray for us, for me, for your own elder, that we will be given wisdom – that is the 'wisdom the Bible talks – as we seek to discern God's way forward for the North Kirk, how we are going to get to where he wants us to be and how we are going to care more passionately for the North Kirk family. We are counting on your prayers.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

'...[wisdom] is like being taught to drive. What matters in driving is the speed and appropriateness of your reaction to things and the soundness of your judgment as to what scope a situation gives you. You do not ask yourself why the road should narrow or screw itself...nor why that van should be parked where it is, nor why the lady (or gentleman) in front should hug the crown of the road so lovingly; you simply try to see and do the right thing in the actual situation that presents itself. The effect of divine wisdom is to enable you and me to do just that in the actual situations of everyday life. To live wisely, you have to be clear-sighted and realistic – ruthlessly so – in looking at life as it is.' (I Packer, *Knowing God*, 1975)

GOING DEEPER

Questions on the Bible passage and sermon for you to think about during the week, either on your own or in a small group:

1. God promised Solomon wealth, honour and long life as well as wisdom. But God does not always give health, wealth or honour to his people. Why not?
2. God's wisdom comes to us in Jesus. How does the cross demonstrate God's wisdom? (1 Corinthians 1:22-25)
3. What place does God's wisdom have in the way we are governed, eg human rights, education, health, and justice policies?