

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 10, 2011

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

1 Kings 3:5-12

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." 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. "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. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 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?" The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 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, 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. (NIV)

Ask for whatever you want me to give you. Ask for anything, anything at all. Really, I'm not kidding ask for whatever your heart desires. Go ahead and ponder that for a moment – if you want even whisper something you want to your neighbor. So what do you want me to give you? What do you want? If the sky was the limit and you could have anything what are some things you desire. Unfortunately, I do not have the ability to give you whatever you want this morning. But I want us to think about what we really desire. I have no doubt that if we are truly honest with our thoughts we all would have to admit how wrapped up we are in this materialistic world. We tend to want things like money, and power, and possessions. We place worth on our bottom line and titles and property. We think of true riches in terms of having lots and lots of things!

So today we have a valuable lesson before us. We hear a very generous offer – an offer where the sky literally was the limit. It comes from the only One who can give someone whatever they want. God offers a young man anything, anything he wants. We also find a humble and wise answer. But most of all I pray we find a very generous God, a God who continues to open up His hands to satisfy the desires of all living things, a God who continues to give us more than we could ever ask for or imagine, a God I pray we recognize today who still comes to us in His grace and says: *"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."*

In the verse before our text, we read: *"Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David."* King Solomon went to Gibeon, because the temple was not yet built, and there he offered a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord. It is here at Gibeon, a city 5 miles northwest of Jerusalem, we are told *"the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."* What an amazing, incredible, astonishing offer! The Lord tells this new king (now the third in Israel's history) he could have anything his young heart desires. He could ask for anything! I think at this point my head would be spinning. Ultimate power, unlimited riches, fame and

glory, a healthy, strong body and long life on earth – think of all the things for which Solomon could ask!

Solomon can ask for anything, for whatever he wants God to give him. So what does he want? Listen to his response. He starts by pointing to the Lord's faithfulness. ***"You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David.... You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David."*** Next Solomon expresses how he feels unfit for such a position. ***"But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number."*** Imagine the job placed upon Solomon who is only about 20 years old. The kingdom of Israel now had borders that reached all the way to Egypt. It was filled with people too numerous to count or number. The nation that Solomon is to lead is not just any nation, but these are God's people - His chosen people. This is the nation that has God's promises. The Messiah will come from this people! It is not surprising Solomon feels inadequate to carry out his responsibilities.

So what does Solomon want God to give him? Solomon considers it and asks, ***"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?"*** Solomon asks for wisdom. His request is a discerning heart to lead God's people. He wants to be a good king who carries out justice by distinguishing between right and wrong. Solomon wants to be able to carry out the work the Lord has given to him - the tremendous responsibility of governing God's great people. His request is wisdom to be able to serve in the best way possible.

Isn't this a pretty impressive request for such a young man? If you were handed a blank check to ask for whatever, one wish for anything you wanted, would you ask to be better at your job? Would I ask to be a better pastor? Would we ask for wisdom to be better parents or better children? Would we ask God to give us the ability to do more at church and to serve God and others in the best way possible? It is no wonder that the Lord is happy with Solomon's request. We read: ***"The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. 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, 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."*** Solomon receives even more than he asks for when it came to wisdom. Open 1 Kings this week and read about wise Solomon. People came from the corners of the known world to see and hear him. We have a taste of the awesome wisdom of Solomon in the books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. Not only did God make him wise but, in the next verse, the Lord also promises Solomon riches and honor for which he did not ask.

How would you like to have a dream tonight like Solomon's? Wouldn't that be great? But we are missing something if we walk away here this morning thinking ***"man that Solomon was one blessed guy and I sure would have liked to be in his shoes!"*** For the truth is you and I have been given a blank check too! It is ours because of Jesus. Jesus took away our sins by shedding His blood on the cross so that we now have free access to God anytime we want. Open up the Scriptures and listen to how many times God invites us to call on Him. Hear how often He says ***"ask for whatever you want Me to give you."*** We have a God who hears our every prayer and answers every prayer with what is best for us. In fact, ***"we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."*** What a promise that is! What a God we have who tells us to come to him anytime not just with one wish, but with as many prayers as we want to lay at His

feet!

This is the first lesson I pray we take away from this account this morning. The second lesson is to learn from Solomon's request and think about what we want God to give to us. This account leaves me asking if my prayers are a bit selfish in nature. Are my prayers all about me and what makes me happy? That's kind of the generation we are living in now, isn't it? The new photo craze is to take a picture of yourself doing whatever you are doing and call it a selfie. I wonder if that isn't short for selfish, because that is what each one of us all too easily becomes. It is all about me! What is in it for me? We too, like the world, want to grab a piece of the money and pleasure, fame and fortune, possessions and power. Do our prayers and lives ever reflect this?

This is why it would be good to start off every prayer in the way Solomon does with his request. He points to God's faithfulness. Twice Solomon uses the Hebrew word that means "faithful love." It is a steadfast, unwavering love. It is grace, an undeserved love. The most important lesson I pray we take away this morning is how generously God pours out His grace to us just as He did for Solomon. For more than offering us the blank check by saying "**ask for whatever you want me to give you,**" God says, "*Here is my only Son for you. Here is your perfect substitute who was never selfish or greedy for money or power! Here is your Savior who suffers and dies on a cross to pay for all your selfishness and sin. Here is your forgiveness. Here is your empty grave and gift of eternal life. Here is your free ticket to endless pleasures and treasures in heaven.*"

What else could we ever ask for when we have a God who already gives us all this? Yet, the gracious Giver keeps inviting us to "**Ask for whatever you want me to give you.**" So keep asking dear friends. Ask for whatever your heart desires. Ask often and for anything, yes anything at all. But do so with this lesson in mind and also remember the command and promise of Jesus, "**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**" (Matthew 6). Now that is true wisdom from above! Amen.