

Whatever you Wish
United Church of Broomfield
July 30, 2023

1 Kings 3:5-12 CEB

5 The Lord appeared to Solomon at Gibeon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask whatever you wish, and I’ll give it to you.”

6 Solomon responded, “You showed so much kindness to your servant my father David when he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and with a heart true to you. You’ve kept this great loyalty and kindness for him and have now given him a son to sit on his throne. 7 And now, Lord my God, you have made me, your servant, king in my father David’s place. But I’m young and inexperienced. I know next to nothing. 8 But I’m here, your servant, in the middle of the people you have chosen, a large population that can’t be numbered or counted due to its vast size. 9 Please give your servant a discerning mind in order to govern your people and to distinguish good from evil, because no one is able to govern this important people of yours without your help.”

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had made this request. 11 God said to him, “Because you have asked for this instead of requesting long life, wealth, or victory over your enemies—asking for discernment so as to acquire good judgment— 12 I will now do just what you said. Look, I hereby give you a wise and understanding mind. There has been no one like you before now, nor will there be anyone like you afterward.

Solomon comes on the scene at a great time of peace in Israel’s history, 970 B. C. The Promised Land has been settled. Saul, the first king, had turned aside from God’s plans. Then came David the 2nd king, a warrior and a poet. God called David a man after His own heart. He served God well, though he had messed up at times, and when his son Solomon came to the throne, the work of war was mostly finished. Solomon was handed a time of peace and prosperity that needed to be well-led.

There’s no temple yet – only “high places” where they offered sacrifices, and it seems that the main one is in Gibeon. There, at the start of his reign, Solomon offers 1,000 sacrifices. It seems like Solomon was seeking something from God. That night, in a dream, God speaks to him and says, “Ask anything you want of Me.”¹

It’s as if Solomon had 3 wishes given to him from a genie – except this was real, and it was God. God made Solomon an incredible offer. Ask anything you want. ----- When’s the last time that happened to you?

If you’re like me, you can’t recall a time lately when anyone, let alone God, has come to you with an offer like this. What about this story is any kind of help to us? We get to read about Solomon making a good choice and all, but I just haven’t had God make me this kind of an offer!

¹ 1 Kings 3:5 and 2 Chronicles 1:7

Well...perhaps that's not entirely true. If we think about the kind of offers that God has made – the kind of offers that God makes when we pursue a right relationship with God, there are actually, many...

Rest – real rest and peace

Life – full life and eternal life

Freedom – from worry, and from the power of death

Companionship – God'll never leave or forsake us.

Participation in God's divine nature – to be co-creators

Wisdom - if we'll ask for it.

Adoption – not just to work for God but to also belong in God's Family

The Holy Spirit – to reassure us, to empower us, to intercede for us.

Heaven – a way of living that is at the ready

These are all some of the good things that God extends and says, "Ask Me for this. It's yours!"

Let's consider Solomon here considering the offers that God has extended to us, and especially considering the offer God gives us in prayer. Jesus said, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer"² and "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."³

If you could have anything you wanted, what would you do? Do we understand how to even fathom where to begin with truly comprehending this? Here are some things to think about:

When God Makes You An Offer...

I. There are No Conventional Limits

If you ask a child, a very young child, "ask for anything you want", you're likely to get "small" responses like; a toy, a doll, a puppy, a video game or perhaps a clothing, like a dress. This is because they haven't had enough experience in life yet to think big.

I think we're too often like that. God comes to us to offer us things too great for us to even think of.

- We want to have an easy life, a life free of pain, a long life. Jesus wants us to have life to the full.
- We ask for a vacation. Jesus wants us to have rest and real peace; real re-creation.
- We ask for freedom from stress and worry. Jesus wants to set us free from the slavery of death.
- We ask for more money. Jesus wants us to have real treasure in heaven.
- We ask for help fitting in with the crowd. Jesus wants us to be adopted into the Family of God!

Come to think of it, most of our answers seem small, when you consider asking God for them. Just how much is possible with God? "...but with God all things are possible."⁴

When God makes you an offer, there are no conventional limits. Our prayers should reflect that. Our dreams and goals should reflect that.

² Matthew 21:22

³ Matthew 7:7-8

⁴ Matthew 19:26

If what you ask of God is a God-honoring request, don't set conventional limits. Don't rely on conventional wisdom. Perhaps we ask for;

- wisdom to lead in my home and in the Church.
- influence to shape our community.
- resources to accomplish reaching the unserved and needy.
- strength of character to go against the crowd and social media trends.
- power to do things for God that we could never have done on our own.

When God Makes You An Offer...

II. God's Watching for a God-Honoring Attitude

The Bible tells us to not get bitter or despair when we encounter hard times. Sometimes, God allows us to go through some difficulties to test us. But sometimes God also blesses us to test us. How well have you handled God's blessings?

There's no greater test that can be placed upon a person's faithfulness to God than success and prosperity. Many of the parables that Jesus told were about people being given some blessing: a day's wages, a feast, forgiveness, a bumper crop, a bunch of money - and in each case, the person who was giving was expecting to see a right attitude in the person receiving. Some handled it with gratitude. Some handled it selfishly. Some looked at it for what they could get out of it. Some considered how it could be used to honor God.

You're Solomon. You're 19 years old. You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth. You've become king of Israel. Your father David served well and left you a great legacy. God comes to you and says, "Go ahead. Ask Me for something. Ask Me for anything. What do you want?" You could ask for wealth. You could ask to just have a long, peaceful reign. After all, your name even means "peaceful." God had told your name to your father before you were born. But Solomon doesn't think of just himself. He knows he has a great load. He knows he's not king for just his sake. And by his right attitude and his request, Solomon honors God.

*Solomon responded, "You showed so much kindness to your servant my father David when he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and with a heart true to you. You've kept this great loyalty and kindness for him and have now given him a son to sit on his throne. And now, Lord my God, you have made me, your servant, king in my father David's place. But I'm young and inexperienced. I know next to nothing. But I'm here, your servant, in the middle of the people you have chosen, a large population that can't be numbered or counted due to its vast size. Please give your servant a discerning mind in order to govern your people and to distinguish good from evil, because no one is able to govern this important people of yours without your help."*⁵

When it comes to the things we ask God to give us, there needs to be an overriding criteria that accompanies our request. We need to start with a selfless attitude. James wrote, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."⁶ Solomon's father David, wrote Psalm 37:4 which says, "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart."

⁵ 1 King 3:6-9

⁶ James 4:3

God knows that when our attitude is right, we're going to honor Her with good requests. If our heart's in the right place, we're going to be asking for the right things.

When God Makes You An Offer...

III. God Gives Us an Opportunity to Choose Well

You may have noticed, but the offers we get in life don't come from just God. We get all kinds of offers every day. Every time you have money, you're faced with choices. You can do different things with it. Like, paying rent, buying groceries, tithing to the church or playing the lottery. Millions of people are convinced that if they could just win the lottery, they'll be happy.

In Denmark, when lottery winners were asked for their reaction after a huge win, only 26% said their first reaction was "happiness and joy."

Back in 1996, John Stossel hosted an ABC News special, called "The Mystery of Happiness." He interviewed several big buck lottery winners. Most of them said that the big money didn't bring them anything close to big happiness, and it often caused them unexpected problems with loved ones--leading some to the therapist's chair.

Virginia state lottery officials found in 1999 that of 300 millionaire winners, as many as 60 eventually encountered financial problems.

- 1989, Willie Hurt of Lansing won \$3.1 million. Hurt spent his fortune on a divorce and crack cocaine. Two years later, he was broke and charged with murder.
- Dec. 19, 2001, lottery millionaire Phil Kitchen was found dead on his couch. He'd apparently drunk himself to death.
- July 11, 2002, lottery winner Dennis Elwell died at work, shortly after telling a coworker that he'd drunk cyanide.
- Sept. 13, 2003 16-year-old British lottery millionaire Callie Rogers said, "Two months ago I thought I was the luckiest teenager in Britain. But today I can say I have never felt so miserable."

Too many of us don't realize that God has placed before us an opportunity to make good choices. Why, then, do so many people choose so poorly about what matters most in life?

Not only can God do far better, but we would find that we do far better when we choose what's *really better* for real life and not just stuff.

Solomon is a great example of this. He was offered anything. He could have asked for money; for fame; great health and power. But he chose what was better; better for real life (his and everyone's). He asked for the wisdom to lead God's people well – to be a good servant for Him.

When was the last time you cried out for insight? When was the last time you pursued wisdom like it was hidden treasure or silver? When was the last time you got out your prayer list and said to the Lord, "God, please, give me insight, give me understanding! I don't know what I'm doing here! I don't know how to be the best parent; I don't know how to be the best spouse. I don't understand how to get through to people! I'm wandering around down here. Please give me wisdom!"

When God Makes You An Offer...

IV. God Gives a Trust to Guard

When we do choose well, we might expect God to bless that choice. We can learn that from Solomon. Did God give Solomon wisdom?

In 1 Kings 4:29-34 it reads, “And God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding—insight as long as the seashore itself. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than all the famous Easterners, greater even than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite or Mahol’s sons: Heman, Calcol, and Darda. His reputation was known throughout the region. Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and one thousand five songs. He described the botany of trees, whether the cedar in Lebanon or the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He also described cattle, birds, anything that crawls on the ground, and fish. People came from everywhere to listen to Solomon’s wisdom; even the earth’s kings who had heard about his wisdom came!”

It’s clear that Solomon was given wisdom. He didn’t access the world wide web like we can to sound wise. He had the God-connection, and God trusted him with knowledge and the skill to use it well. He had made a good choice. He had made a good request from God, and God gave it to him.

But beyond that in versus 13-15, God said to Solomon, “Because you have asked for this instead of requesting long life, wealth, or victory over your enemies—asking for discernment so as to acquire good judgment—I will now do just what you said. Look, I hereby give you a wise and understanding mind. There has been no one like you before now, nor will there be anyone like you afterward. I now also give you what you didn’t ask for: wealth and fame. There won’t be a king like you as long as you live. And if you walk in my ways and obey my laws and commands, just as your father David did, then I will give you a very long life.”⁷

Like Solomon, we’ve been given a trust. It can greatly benefit others. It can be used selfishly. It can be taken away - instantly. Like Solomon, we can take God's trust to us and use it, or we can choose to disregard it.

- God offers us a family in Him. What have we done with that privilege of being a part of the family of God? What are we contributing to that Family?
- God offers us rest. What have we done with the rest that comes from being in God? Are we resting so that you can serve God with more energy, or resting beyond what God wants us to?
- God offers us Her Spirit, to come live inside us to empower us to live right. What have we done with that privilege? Do we suppress the Spirit? Do we listen?
- God offers us freedom. What have we done with it? Is it the freedom that enables us to serve God well, with great motives and power, or is it a freedom that we misuse to cover for evil?
- God offers us the gospel. Have we used it to extravagantly welcome the excluded; to care and love the poor and advocate for injustice? Do we choose to resist and fight back against those who co-opt Christianity and pervert its message?

⁷ 1 Kings 3:11-14

Just like Solomon could misuse his trust, and later did, you and I have the choice of what we'll do with the trusts given to us by God. God gives us a trust to guard. A creation to protect. A humanity to embrace and help flourish. Years from now, when history reflects back on us and our lives, what will it record about the way we kept the trust?

“Ask whatever you wish, and I'll give it to you.”

For what will you ask?

AMEN