



Solomon's Wisdom
Pastor Julie McCain
Sermon on 1 Kings 3:4-12; Proverbs 3:3-8; Oct. 26, 2014

Please pray with me: Speak, O Lord, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word and plant the light of your grace deep in our hearts. Amen.

The whimsical idea of a genie who could grant us the very desires of our hearts is quite appealing.

- In Disney's Aladdin, the genie is a comedic blue being, and his master, Aladdin's, desire is to be transformed from a pauper to a prince so that he can win the heart of a princess.
- Or who can forget the classic t.v. show, I Dream of Jeanie, in which the Jeanie is a beautiful blond who blinks her eyes and raises her arms in order to make her master's wishes come true; and yet somehow the majority of the show is actually the story of Jeanie running around trying to fix the wishes that have gone awry.

In every genie story, there are rules: that the genie can't do certain things like kill people or make them fall in love, and there's also a question that perpetually hangs in the air: what is your next wish?

As we turn to our story today, God asks something similar of Solomon: Ask what I should give you, God says. And it seems like a fairly normative thing for God to say.

Now just before the start of our text, Solomon became king, and we're told that he loved the Lord and offered a thousand burnt offerings to God. And yet in the midst of all of this worship, Solomon was clearly not asking God for what he needed, because in order to get Solomon to ask for something, God literally has to break into his dreams.

→ And how many of us have also experienced God interrupting us, showing up in places where we don't expect him, speaking words that we need to hear.

Now I don't know why Solomon was going through the motions of worship without ever getting to the heart of the matter, but I know that we often find ourselves in the same situation.

How many of us have ever experienced zoning out as we sit down to listen to a presentation, watch a tv show, or even to listen to a sermon, *though of course not mine*.

Before we know it, we're mentally going through our to-do list or your grocery list instead of listening. Now zoning out is not a new phenomenon, but many argue that our distractedness has reached an all-time high; I think that it is an adaptation to schedules that are full, and brains that know that if we don't figure out the grocery list now, that it will have to happen later, and there just isn't time for that.

And so it makes sense that across the board people who study attention spans say that ours are decreasing:

- one study noted that 43% of us will abandon an email if it requires takes more than 30 seconds to read it,
- and that just over 30% of us will begin to tune out our co-workers after just 15 seconds of talking. That one shocked me a bit because I like to think I'm a better listener than that.

Now we could tell ourselves that this is a terrible thing and we live in a terrible age, and go home feeling terrible, but the reality is that, like every other age before it, this time has both its gifts and its challenges. We are gifted with:

- technology that lets us video chat with loved ones from thousands of miles away,
- with technology that greatly increases our efficiency and health,
- and we are gifted with access to many opportunities for both our children & ourselves.

→ We are, however, perhaps more so than ever before challenged to use those things wisely and prioritize well.

I want to return to a genie's question for its master. what do you wish for? The gene asks. And what are some things that people might wish for? Shout them out, and help me make a list....

- World peace, kindness, end world hunger, to be rich, to be...

Probably without too much thought most of us, could choose our 3 wishes from this list. Many of us would likely choose a couple altruistic ones and then one that would really help out your family and make life a lot easier.

God's question to Solomon, and to us, sounds very similar to the genie's question, and yet it is quite different. Ask what I should give you. Or if we put it in the form of a question: What should I give you?

This question is different because first, it is asked by a gracious God whom we can trust with our whole hearts, rather than by an unknown genie.

And, God's question is a heart question; Solomon's response shows us that. As Solomon ponders God's question, first, he remembers God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

And then he says this: "And now, O lord my God, you have made your servant king 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 so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted."

- [whisper] Solomon admits that he has no idea what he's doing.
- He admits that he has no idea how to be king.

And only after he makes that admission can he truly answer God's question, can he truly ask for what he needs, and he says this: "Give me an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil."

God's question for us is a question of the heart. It is a question that invites us to set aside our distractions for just long enough to take stock of our hearts and our lives. It invites us to honestly name the reality of our situations so that we might hand that reality over to our gracious God.

If your schedule is what weighs down you, then tell God that, and then ask him for wisdom and clarity moving forward.

And if there is some area of your life, where like Solomon, you have no idea what you're doing, tell God that, trusting that just as God blessed Solomon with precisely what he needed, he will also bless us with what we need.

Amen.