

*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."* Tonight, when you lay your head down to sleep, what if God came to you and gave this same generous offer? What would you ask for? Take a few seconds. (15 seconds). Would you ask for the end of this pandemic and for no new ones? Would you ask for wisdom like Solomon did? Would you ask for peace in the nation, the world, your family, in you? Would you ask for a happy meal? Our gracious God made this offer to Solomon and our hearts flutter with excitement and awe about just the thought that God would do that for us. But he has. Not in exactly the same way, or under the same circumstances, but Jesus did say, *"Ask and it will be given to you"* (Matthew 7:7). Jesus did promise, *"I will do whatever you ask in my name"* (John 14:13). James, the Lord's brother, wrote, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you"* (James 1:5). What do you ask for? What do you want?

**God shows us what to want.**

*"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."* Solomon knew his father David and God's great kindness to him. I'm sure he also knew his father's failings. No doubt he heard about how his mom and David got together. No doubt he witnessed not one but two coups against David and his throne by two of Solomon's half-brothers and David's permissiveness and sparing the rod with his sons. I'm sure he knew a whole lot more. But he knew God was gracious to his father, brought him to repentance for his sins and kept him close, made David a man after his own heart. So *"faithful, righteous, upright in heart"* can be applied to David the King – just read some psalms he wrote – 22, 23, 24, 32, 51, 103. Solomon knew grace. God brought David, that shepherd boy from the fields and made him King. Solomon knew the promises God had made to David, promises that included Solomon. *"This very day"* God's grace was not lost on Solomon. Remember God's grace to you and your family this very day. What would you add to your list of blessings to thank God for if he spoke to you tonight? Take a moment. God is gracious *"this very day."* **God shows us what to want.**

What about you and me? Do we fail to ask God? Do we subconsciously wonder if God could really love us still after all our sins, all our failures, and our selfish misuse of his gifts of time, talents, and treasure? Maybe we don't want to pray because we don't want to bother God or draw his gaze our way as we are caught in some sinful habits and don't know what to do or if God can change us and help us? Do we doubt that God cares enough about us *"this very day?"* But God didn't dig two graves in the Garden of Eden and call it good. No, he went to Adam and Eve as they hid in fig leaves ashamed. He promised them a Savior. He sent Nathan the prophet to David in his arrogance and hypocrisy and broke him so he'd see. God does not tolerate our sin either. He shows it to us. So should we ask? Thousands of things we could ask God for would all carry temptation with them. Even Solomon went astray later in life. So don't look at Solomon. Look at who is it that bids us ask? It is God our Savior. He knows our sins and our sinfulness. In his great love he sent a substitute for us who would never disappoint him, who would never fall to temptation, who would ask and receive and give to all in abundant measure, even feeding 5000 on a hillside. This perfect substitute didn't just live for us. He took our unfaithfulness, unrighteousness, our sinfulness, and God withdrew from him, forsook his own Son, Jesus. Jesus suffered for you and me. Jesus died for you and me. Jesus rose for you and me. We are forgiven children of God now because of Jesus. And God stands behind Jesus' offer to us to ask. And God promises to give. We can say with Solomon, *"You have shown great kindness."* It is **our Gracious God who shows us what to want.**

We look to God and realize because of Christ we are forgiven and can ask. But what about when we look in front of us? *“Now, 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.”* Two obstacles were clear to Solomon in this moment. 1) Solomon, a twenty-year-old, was going to take over a kingdom which had only been united 33 years earlier. He knew his father’s hardships, the wars, the intrigue, and the people’s need for justice among each other. Solomon was not a shepherd or experienced warrior who had won the peoples’ hearts. Who was he to take up these duties! 2) This people was so great and numerous. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if they could only be here to see how God had fulfilled his promises - a people too numerous to count inhabiting a land flowing with milk and honey. This was a promised people, a people chosen by God, loved by God. And they were too many to count!

Solomon, in listing these personal obstacles, humbly shows us what gives us confidence as we ask. The LORD is our God, the L-O-R-D, the God of free and faithful love (Exodus 34). The LORD keeps his promises. Abraham and Sarah – 99 and 89 years old and still waiting on their first child. And God grew them into this great nation. What gives you confidence as you pray to God? What acts of God’s grace to you or others emboldens you to ask God. God is faithful and will give us what is good for us and our fellow believers. So don’t be afraid of what’s in front of you. Ask! Solomon did.

*“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?”* Solomon asked for a “hearing heart,” a “listening heart.” The heart as the seat of understanding and knowledge could be fickle, blind and miss a whole lot. Solomon asks for his heart to have ears – ears for God’s Word and ears for God’s people. He wasn’t asking for smarts or a fancy vocabulary. He knew God had placed him, by an act of his generous grace, as king over His people. Can you pray that pointedly – realizing what God has placed in your life – the callings, responsibilities, and time and then knowing that God is using you to impact his world? Think about what you can pray for this very night that will be a blessing to the people around you, to God’s people and his kingdom. Ask for it! This pleases God!

*“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.”* What a beautiful phrase, *“The Lord was pleased.”* Solomon’s goal was to serve. He was thankful. Solomon knew how gracious God had been to get him to this point. Solomon had offered 1000 burnt offerings at Gibeon and would sacrifice more in Jerusalem right after he awoke from this dream. God showed his true generosity. He had Solomon’s heart. Solomon sought the Lord’s kingdom and his reign first. God gave him everything else a king could want as well. And he gave it to the highest measure. God is pleased when you ask! You are his too!

So what do we want to ask for? Jesus said, *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:33). Solomon is a beautiful example. So ask. Ask for Jesus. Ask for his kingdom to come. Ask for him to bless you with what you need to glorify him and serve your neighbor. Seek Jesus’ kingdom where he has told you we’ll find him – in his Word, in the Sacraments, for yourself, for your children, for your neighbor. God shows us he wants us to ask him. He’s saved us, forgiven us, and made us his own. *“This very day”* we have God’s grace and he gives us purpose to serve. Pray for a *heart with ears. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Our Gracious God shows us what to want for us and for his kingdom.* He has given us Jesus and all these other blessings as well, *“This very day.”* Amen.