

Theme: What would you ask for?
Text: **1 Kings 3:5-12**

⁵ 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.”

⁶ 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.

⁷ “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. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ 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?”

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ 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, ¹² 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.

The Word of God’s we’ll consider today is the 1st lesson from 1 Kings chapter 3. We pray: *Speak, O Savior, I am listening – as a servant to his Lord. Let me show respect and honor to your holy, precious Word. Amen.*

Many of you know who Jim Carrey is right? He’s an actor who’s been in tons of movies over the years... you might especially remember him from comedies like Ace Ventura Pet Detective, Dumb and Dumber, or the Dr. Suess movie How the Grinch Stole Christmas. In his life he has amassed a tremendous amount of fame and fortune and has a lot of fans of his work. But over the last several years he has opened up about how such a life is really not all it’s cracked up to be.

Now I wouldn’t say Jim Carrey is a Christian by any stretch, he has said as much... but he’s made some very accurate observations about his own life and life in general. Maybe some of you have heard this quote from him when he said: ***“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it’s not the answer.”***

After a life spent acquiring fame and fortune Jim Carrey has come to realize that there is no point to all of that in and of itself. And of course he isn’t the first person to ever find himself questioning the point of it all... wondering if life is worth living or if all the things we do and stuff we acquire is really the answer we’re looking for. Some of you today have maybe been there at times, or you know someone who has... But there is someone we heard about in the Bible today that I’d imagine could really identify with a guy like Jim Carrey... at least to some degree... a guy by the name of Solomon who once wrote near the end of his life: **“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).**

Solomon was a man who reigned for forty years as the king in Israel. And prior to him uttering those words about everything being meaningless he was a man who seemed to have a very meaningful life – a life that had it all: he had fame, he had wealth, and maybe most memorably – he had *wisdom*... and I’m not just saying he was good at riddles or crossword puzzles... this was a guy that the Bible describes as: **wiser than anyone else (1 Kings 4:31).** He was so wise people would come from all over the world just to hear him speak.

And Solomon would blow people away with his wisdom. He settled disputes that saved the lives of babies. He spoke so masterfully to a queen who asked one tough question after another that she was overwhelmed... to the point where all she could do was just praise the Lord for Solomon's wisdom.

Solomon was wise. He was wealthy. He was famous. And why? Well... you heard why in our first lesson today. Shortly after Solomon became king, God appeared to him in a dream and told him this: **"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."** (1 Kings 3:5).

Now can you even begin to imagine being given that opportunity? To ask for *anything* you wanted!? Where would you begin? How would you decide? I mean, if you could wish for anything... *anything* in the world... what would you ask for? Bigger bank account? Dream job? Dream house? To look better? To feel better? To fall in love? To live longer?

What would you ask for?

If you put *me* on the spot right here and now I don't know what I'd say... what I'd ask for... but I can tell you this – I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have asked for what Solomon asked for. Solomon's request blows me away. It's awesome isn't it? He said to God:

"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?" (1 Kings 3:7-9).

Give your servant a discerning heart... Wow... what a response, right!? The Hebrew word used there literally says: **Give your servant a listening heart...** Solomon asked for a heart that listened... that listened to the people... that could listen to counselors... and by listening to those around him... by hearing their problems, their questions, their advice... well, Solomon would be able to choose the right path... and govern God's people. To distinguish between right and wrong. To be a just and honorable king who was worthy to lead God's nation.

But in order for that to work Solomon's heart would also need to listen to God. And really isn't that what Solomon's asking for here? He wanted to do God's will. He knew these were not his people, they were God's people. He knew that if he wanted to be wise and distinguish between right and wrong... if he wanted to administer justice as king... well, he'd need to have a heart that listened to the Lord.

And early on in his reign it seems like that's just what Solomon had. We hear a little later in the book of 1 Kings that Solomon wrote thousands of proverbs – wise sayings. One of those recorded for us in the book of Proverbs said: **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:7).** Solomon knew where true wisdom came from... it came from knowing the LORD. That was a treasure beyond any gold or silver he could amass. It was worth more than his ability to govern... more than his fame... to fear, love, and trust in God was where it had to begin and end, or else everything would prove to be... meaningless.

Now some of you know what happened next in Solomon's life I suppose. After he made this great request... after he build God's Temple... after he became this wise and wealthy and powerful king... after all that... the listening heart Solomon had asked for started to listen to other voices besides God's.

We're told Solomon **had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God. (1 Kings 11:3-4).**

Solomon would write about his foolishness toward the end of his life when he said: **I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly... I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to**

water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves... I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me... I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure... Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:3-11).

And even his great wisdom which God had given him provided no relief from this meaningless outlook. He would write **I thought in my heart, “The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?” I said in my heart, “This too is meaningless.” For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die! (Ecclesiastes 2:15-16).**

Wives, wealth, idolatry, greed, more, more, more, - - - he would find all this to be a chasing after the wind... because without God in the center of his life... the center of his heart... none of it mattered... life just became one meaningless day after the next under the sun.

Have you ever felt like that? Felt like Solomon felt? Maybe you can't relate to the crazy wealth or fame... but have you ever felt like you're caught up in the rat race and the relentless pursuit of good grades, good jobs, nice things, more money, more friends, more... whatever... has it all started to feel, well... meaningless? Pointless? Empty?

You see, that's one of the real dangers that all of us face when we think too much about the gifts God gives in this life and not enough about the one who gave them. I mean ultimately in this life what is the one thing we need? The one thing worth asking for? The one thing worth more than anything else?

Well, Jesus talked about that today in the Gospel, didn't he? He said the kingdom of heaven was so valuable that if you could truly measure its worth, you'd do anything to make sure you possessed it. Like the people in his parables who sold all they had to possess the priceless treasures they'd found...

Paul said something similar when he told Timothy in our 2nd lesson: **Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God. (1 Timothy 6:17).**

God really just wants you to know that in the end there's really only one thing you need... one treasure worth having... one thing, that if God came to you and said: "Ask me for anything" – well, there'd be just one thing that would be worth asking for. And that's to be a part of God's kingdom... or in other words: to belong to God... to be a child of God... to believe in Jesus and one day get to see him face to face in heaven... and to live in heaven, in God's kingdom forever.

But the amazing thing is that you don't even have to ask God for this... he's already given it to you. Because the fact of the matter is if you asked God what he wanted more than anything else in this world... do you know how he'd answer? He'd say: "You... I want you." But since God knew that none of us could make that happen for him... we can't turn our own hearts to God... we can't save ourselves from our sin... from our death... and so if God wanted us to be with him in his kingdom forever, well... he'd have to find a way to do it all by himself. And that's just what he did.

He reached out to people who were running away from him... hiding from him... looking for ways to forget him... he did this from the very start with Adam and Eve... he did it with the nation of Israel... even with king Solomon at the end of his life... he did it as he spoke his Word and made his Promises... Words that warned of the danger of sin and yet offered real hope to sinners... Promises that spoke of rescue and redemption and full and free forgiveness...

And God fulfilled his Word... he kept his Promises when he became a man, and lived *as one of us, for all of us*... and then allowed himself to be killed to pay our debt of sin... all because the thing he wanted more than anything else in the world was you. He wanted you to be forgiven, you to know the heart of a Father... you

to feel the love of a Savior... the embrace of a brother... the peace of the soul that comes from being at peace with God.

If you could ask for anything in the world, what would you ask for? Well God already asked for you and he made sure he got you. And so, you have something better than anything you could ever ask for... you have the love and forgiveness of Jesus. I pray that this fills your hearts with peace... and turns your hearts into hearts that listen to God's Word... hearts that long to live in God's heaven... and hearts that understand that while everything in this life may be meaningless without God... with God? Well... with God your heart can be at peace knowing you have everything you could ever ask for or imagine. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7).