

Sunday, July 26, 2020 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 3:5-12 (NRSV)

⁵ At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶ And Solomon said . . . ⁹ "Give your servant an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil." . . . ¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.

How would you respond if God were to say to you, "Ask what I should give you"?

James 1: 5 – "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you."

A prayer for wisdom is a prayer that God has promised He will always answer with a Yes.

What have been some of the times and circumstances in your life when you have most grown in and gained wisdom?

Immediately following, Solomon is faced with the challenge of the two women who claimed to be the mother of the same child.

Cf. those early days in ministry when I thought, "I must have missed that class."

Psalms 119:129-136 (NRSV)

¹²⁹ Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.

¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

¹³¹ With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments.

Psalm 119 – 176 verses – eight verses beginning with each of the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet – in order – all essentially saying the same thing – "Lord, I love Your Word." Someone must have really liked repetition and structure.

Cf. "Monk" – "See, I really am not so bad."

Some scholars think that this Psalm might have been written by Ezra – the Jewish leader who restored the covenant community after the return from exile.

Ezra 10: 9 – "Then all the people of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days . . . All the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain."

Romans 8:26-39 (NRSV)

The closing fourteen verses of Romans 8 contain so many wonderful, inspiring promises. What is your favorite? What are among your favorites? How do they speak to you and your life?

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. *Cf. Joseph in the book of Genesis*

³¹ If God is for us, who is against us?

³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?

³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. *Cf. Romans 8: 1*

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. *Cf. 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28*

⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 (NRSV) – Four more parables about the Kingdom of Heaven

It will begin small, but will become great and mighty

³¹ It is like a mustard seed . . . ³² the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

³³ It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

It should be valued above all else

⁴⁴ It is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

A parable is designed to make one point. Do not try to make too much of every detail.

God values us above all else

⁴⁵ It is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

It will gather in a wide variety of people

⁴⁷ It is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

First century A. D. fishing – casting nets (Mark 1: 16) – dragnets – trammel nets (Luke 5: 1-7)