

Are Your Wants What You Really Need?

1 Kings 3:5-12 (Pentecost 10)

Have you ever felt like you had the same conversation with your children over and over? In my house or in stores, I think I've had numerous conversations with one of my kids that generically went kind of like this. "Dad, I really want that." "No, you cannot have that right now." "But Dad, I really like it. I want it. I need it." Perhaps you have had similar conversations where a child has equated something that they really wanted as something they needed even though it clearly was just a want.

This doesn't just happen with children. It happens all the time even to you and I. We just may not say it quite the same way. Things of this world that we might want are sometimes thought of as something that we need. "I want a big beautiful house. I want the best job that I can get. I want to take a vacation and see the world. I want my children to have everything that I didn't have and to do all the things they want to do. I want to be able to retire comfortably." We want some of those things so bad that even if they aren't really a "need", they become needs to us. Then every plan, every decision, every thought becomes set on doing all that we can to obtain them. When it comes to things of this world, our wants and our needs often messed up. As a result we lose sight of what really is needed. So I want you to think about this question today: Are your wants what you really need?

Today as you think about that question, we focus our attention on one account recorded for us in the life of King Solomon. Solomon is most known for his wisdom as he wrote the wisdom literature of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. He is also the king who oversaw the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. But at this point in his life, none of that had happened yet. His father, the great King David, had died not too long before this. Solomon himself is a young man who had just become king. Some say that Solomon may have only been fifteen years old when he was made king, but I don't think we can say for certain. No matter how old he is, Solomon is just a young man placed on the throne of Israel. You can only imagine how he might be feeling especially when the kingship transition was not very smooth.

God came to him one night in a dream with a very generous offer. God essentially gave King Solomon a blank check that he could fill in as he wanted. "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." What would you have asked for. If anything in the world could be yours, what would be your request? The quick reaction of an immature and inexperienced young man in Solomon's position might be for earthly wealth and things of this world. Yet Solomon did not hesitate to respond differently than what we might expect. He knew what he wanted because it was what he needed. Solomon prioritized what he needed. As a result what he wanted was actually what he needed as he began ruling over God's people. Today as we focus on Solomon's response to God's very generous offer, his response guides us so that our wants are truly what we need.

First, in Solomon's response we see him look to the past recognizing God's mercy and faithfulness to his father David. **"Solomon said, 'You have shown great mercy and faithfulness to your servant, my father David, just as he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart toward you. You have shown this great mercy and faithfulness to him and have given him a son who is seated on his throne to this very day.' (vs. 6)** David was called "a man after God's own heart". God rewarded that faithfulness. For forty years, David reigned over Israel and now David's son succeeded him. However, King David was not a sinless man. He needed God's mercy and faithfulness. God showed him mercy and faithfulness by forgiving him of his sins when he fell, allowing him to reign over God's people, and finally in passing his throne on to Solomon. Solomon recognized all that God had done for his father in the past. He recognized this generous offer was God showing him the same mercy and faithfulness as his father David.

Just as God was merciful and faithful to David, so that same mercy and faithfulness has been shown to us in the past. When we look to the cross of Jesus and the forgiveness, life, and salvation won for us there, that was God's mercy and faithfulness. On the day of your baptism, God's mercy and faithfulness washed your sins away giving you the gift of life all through Jesus. God has continued to show that same mercy and faithfulness to you every day of your life. When we look into the past, we can't help but see it. Valuing that, as Solomon did, guides us in knowing what it is we need now as we look at our life and the various roles we have. That is where Solomon saw a need realizing just how inadequate he was to fulfill the role that was in front of him. **"O LORD my God, now you have made your servant king in the place of my father David, but I am a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And I, your servant, am among your people whom you have chosen, a great people, who cannot be counted or numbered because they are so many."** (vs. 7-8)

Solomon sees himself as the Lord's servant, but he also realizes the weight of his office. The kings of Israel held a special position among the rulers of the entire world. This was God's nation of the promise - the nation from which the promised Savior would come. When Solomon thought about the present, he knew his own weaknesses. As a young man, perhaps in his late teens or early twenties, he felt unprepared and inadequate to serve in this important position as king.

Just as God placed Solomon in his position as king of Israel, so he has also placed us in various roles. We want to serve him in those roles, but how often do we see our own weaknesses? As a husband or wife, do you often see your own personal weaknesses affecting your marriage? As a Christian parent do you feel inadequate knowing that you make mistakes? As a student or someone just getting started in a new career, do you feel unprepared to face the challenges of the future? Look at every role that God has placed in your life ultimately to serve him. Do you see weaknesses and inadequacies simply because you have a sinful nature and could never carry out those roles exactly the way God wants you to?

Understanding God's mercy and faithfulness in the past which continues even today as well as seeing your own weaknesses just to live every day, you begin to understand what it is you truly need. It isn't things and the wealth of this world, but something more than that. Your wants become what you truly need. That was what Solomon asked for in response to God's gracious invitation. **"Now give to your servant a perceptive heart to judge your people, to distinguish between good and evil, for who is able to judge this great people of yours?"** (vs. 9)

As leader of God's people, he would receive advice from a variety of sources about large and important affairs of state or about lesser matters. Solomon sought a practical gift. He desired a heart that hears with understanding. He wanted the ability to listen, understand, and then make the right decision determining right from wrong. Solomon prioritized this need over anything else he could have asked for. His want was for what he truly needed. Solomon saw a perceptive, listening heart as being of more value than something like earthly wealth, long life, or even the death of his enemies.

Look at the weaknesses of our own life to live the various roles God has placed us in. Understanding God's mercy and faithfulness shown to us in the past through Jesus, we know Jesus is what we truly need. We begin to see Jesus as what we truly need today and tomorrow and every day. Jesus is the one who faithfully and mercifully takes every one of our weaknesses, our inadequacies to live exactly how God wants us to live on his cross. His power overcomes our weaknesses so that we are strengthened to serve him every day despite our weaknesses which come from possessing a sinful nature.

Instead of spending your life seeking earthly wealth and the things of the world, we see the value of spiritual wealth, the value of treasuring Christ Jesus and the good news of the Gospel in our everyday life. That

treasure then becomes the priority of our heart - the need that our hearts want. The things of this world may hold some needs for our daily life, but they no longer hold the same value anymore compared to knowing Jesus.

What Solomon saw he needed. In response to God's generous offer that was what he wanted God to give him. Solomon's needs and wants were the same. God was pleased with Solomon's request. It was not selfish. It was not vindictive even though Solomon knew what it was to have enemies. Just look back at the opening chapters of 1 Kings and you see his trouble with opponents especially within his own family. Solomon sought God's glory and the good of others. So God granted Solomon's request in a way that not even Solomon probably was expecting would happen. **"In the eyes of the LORD, Solomon's request was good. So God said to him, "Because you have asked for this, and you have not asked for a long life, nor have you asked for riches, nor have you asked for the lives of your enemies, but you have asked for discernment to reach just verdicts, therefore I will act according to your words. Yes, I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you before you, nor will anyone like you rise up after you." (vs. 10-12)**

We have our needs and we have our wants. I asked you to consider this question today: Are your wants what you really need? Certainly there are things of this world that we could say are needs and they are. As God's people we trust that he does provide them for us. That's next week, but today we recognize that our true need every day is Christ. He is a valuable treasure that we want more than anything else this world could possibly offer. Amen



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