

Third Advent Service

The First Three Kings of Israel

Text: 1 Kings 11:1-13 (NIV)

¹King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. ²They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. ³He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. ⁴As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the



detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. ⁷On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. ⁹The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. ¹¹So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. ¹²Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Theme: Solomon, The King Who Desired Wisdom

In our Advent services this year we have looked at the first three kings of Israel and compared them to the King of Kings, our Savior Jesus Christ. Each one of them began with good intentions, but none of them were perfect. In fact, they all failed miserably. Saul began his reign humbly, but he exalted himself. David sought a pure heart, but he fell into grave sin. Tonight Solomon desired wisdom, but his foolishness divided the kingdom.

I. The wisdom of Solomon.

When Solomon first became king, the Lord appeared to Him at Gibeon. He took His responsibility seriously, and prayed for wisdom to lead God's people in the right way. God was pleased with this request. He didn't ask for wealth, riches or honor, but the ability to rule the people wisely. God granted his prayer. Our second Old Testament reading speaks of how he was the wisest of all people

at that time. We don't know much about the people, who are listed. Ethan the Ezrahite wrote Psalm 89, but that is all that we know of him. People came from far and wide to hear Solomon's wisdom. 1 Kings 10 speaks of how the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon and marveled at his wisdom. Sheba might be modern Yemen, but no one is quite sure where it is today. The most famous story of Solomon's wisdom is when two women with infant boys came before him. One of the women had rolled onto her son in the night and suffocated him. When she saw what she had done, she switched the boys. The other woman sought an audience with the king to get her son back. The women began to argue. Then Solomon said, "*Bring me a sword!*" He order that the living child be cut in two and half be given to each woman. It was at that moment that the real mother of the child shouted, "*Please, my Lord giver her the living baby! Don't kill him!*" But the other woman said, "*Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!*" It was then that Solomon knew who the real mother was. (1 Ki 3) It says in 1 Kings 10:24,25, "*The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift – articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.*" He wrote most of the Proverbs which exhort us to find wisdom in the word of God. For instance Proverbs 4:5 says, "*Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do no forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.*" This wisdom is to fear the Lord and to understand and walk in His ways. There are especially many proverbs against adultery and sexual temptations. For instance Proverbs 7:21 says, "*With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter.*" Despite his warnings, that was Solomon's own pitfall.

II. The folly of Solomon.

In Ecclesiastes 2:8 he writes, "*I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singer, and .a harem as well– the delights of the heart of a man.*" The wise king began to pursue happiness in wine, women, and song. He fell in love with many foreign women. It says in 1 Kings 11:3, "*He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods.*" He worshiped their gods and built altars for them. He even built an altar for the "detestable" Canaanite Molech to which people sacrificed their children. It was because of his folly, that the kingdom was split after his death. Rather than ruling over the entire nation of Israel, Solomon's descendants would be reduced to ruling over just one tribe, the tribe of Judah. Solomon's folly would almost ruin God's entire plan that a descendant of David would be the Savior.

III. Jesus, on the other hand, never abandoned His wisdom.

Luke's Gospel speaks of His wisdom even as a child. After His birth, Mary and Joseph went to Nazareth. It says, "*And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.*" (Lk 2:40) The next story is when He went to the temple at the age of 12. His parents found him discussing the law with the teachers, who were amazed at His understanding. The story ends with these words, "*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" (Lk 2:51) After he began His ministry, He preached in Nazareth. The people were amazed and asked, "*Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?*" (Mt 13:54) But they took offense at Him and drove Him out of town. Throughout His ministry, the people were often marveling at Jesus teaching because He taught as one who had authority. As Jesus says in tonight's

Gospel lesson, *“One greater than Solomon is here.”* (Mt 12:42)

That was probably shown best when He was suffering and dying on the cross. He began with words not of condemnation, but of forgiveness, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”* He remembered His mother and made sure that she would be taken care of. He promised paradise to the repentant thief. He had the whole world in mind when He cried out, *“It is finished.”* Jesus was filled with the wisdom of God because He delighted in following God’s Word, even though it meant that He would suffer and die to save us. But His Father did not abandon Him. He raised Him, and as Solomon received glory, riches, and honor for His wisdom, Christ has now ascended to heaven where this song is sung, *“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.”* (Rev 5:12) He reigns from His throne in heaven in glory and wisdom for the good of all of His people.

IV. Today it is a wise heart, which trusts in Him and desires to follow His ways.

It is amazing when you read Solomon’s proverbs, how many of those temptations still apply today. It is tempting to discount the Word of God without ever trying to understand it. It is tempting to find the good life in wine, women, and song. It is tempting to look out for ourselves, no matter how much we need to lie, cheat, and deceive other people to get what we want. Tonight’s epistle lesson speaks of such things when it speaks of envy and selfish ambition. (Jms 3:16) But God’s Word fills our hearts with wisdom. Jesus Himself promised, *“I will give you words and wisdom.”* (Lk 2:15) What is this wisdom? Paul writes in 1 Cor 1:24, *“Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”* The wisdom of God is to trust in Christ as our Savior. It is to confess our foolish sins, and to trust that Christ paid for them all. The world looks at the cross as foolishness. We see the cross and know that our salvation was accomplished there. True wisdom begins with trusting in Christ as our Savior.

But it is also living like Jesus. James also writes, *“The wisdom that comes down from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”* (Js 3:17) The world will tell us that nice guys finish last, but when we are kind, humble, and forgiving, as Jesus was, we find that God raises us up. He gives us a wisdom that no one can stand against. (Acts 6:10)

My grandmother used to kid with me when she said, *“Do as I say, not as I do.”* That fits well with Solomon. His Proverbs are so wise, but he didn’t listen to his own wisdom. He sought joy in his sinful passions, rather than God’s Word.

Who is the wise man? It is the one who trusts in the Lord and walks in His ways. That is what Solomon teaches us in his Proverbs. May God’s Spirit give each of us such wise and understanding hearts.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
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OPENING HYMN - LSB 374 - "Gentle Mary Laid her Child"

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: The Spirit and the Church cry out:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: All those who await His appearance pray:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: The whole creation pleads:

C: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Psalms 111 (NIV)

¹ Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

² Great are the works of the LORD;
they are pondered by all who delight in them.

³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds,
and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.

⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works,
giving them the lands of other nations.

⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸ They are steadfast for ever and ever,
done in faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹ He provided redemption for his people;
he ordained his covenant forever— holy and awesome is his name.

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

COLLECT

P: The Lord be with you,

C: **and also with you.**

P: Let us pray,

C: Most merciful God, You desire everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Grant that by the preaching of Your Gospel we may be given that wisdom that leads to salvation. By the working of Your Holy Spirit keep us attentive to all the teachings of Your Word. Enlighten our minds, control our wills, and purify our desires, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - 2 Chronicles 1:7-13 (NIV)

⁷That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."⁸Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place.

⁹Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people,

for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" ¹¹God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, ¹²therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have." ¹³Then Solomon went to Jerusalem from the high place at Gibeon, from before the Tent of Meeting. And he reigned over Israel.

SECOND OLD TESTAMENT LESSON - 1 Kings 4:29-34 (NIV)

²⁹God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. ³⁰Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³²He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

EPISTLE LESSON -James 3:15-18 (NIV)

¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

HYMN VERSE - LSB 357, vs 2

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel!**

GOSPEL LESSON - Matthew 12:38-42 (NIV)

³⁸Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." ³⁹He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

SERMON HYMN - LSB 367 "Angel's from the Realms of Glory"

SERMON - 1 Kings 11:1-13 "The King who Desired Wisdom"

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO THE LORD

HYMN - LSB 370 "What Child Is This?"

THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN - "Watchman Tell Us of the Night" (TLH 71)

1. Watchman tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are.
Trav'ler, o'er yon mountains height, See that glory beaming star.
Watchman, doth its beauteous ray Aught of joy or hope foretell?
Trav'ler, yes; it brings the day, Promised day of Israel.
2. Watchman, tell us of the night; Higher yet that star ascends
Trav'ler, blessedness and light, Peace and truth, its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams alone Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Trav'ler, ages are its own; See, it bursts o'er all the earth.
3. Watchman, tell us of the night, For the morning seems to dawn.
Trav'ler, darkness takes its flight; Doubt and terror are withdrawn.
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease; Hie thee to thy quiet home.
Trav'ler, lo, the Prince of Peace, Lo, the Son of God is come.

Welcome to Benediction Lutheran Church! Our Advent theme this year is "***The First Three Kings of Israel.***" They all had traits much like Jesus, but unlike Him, they all had their failings. Today we will look at *King Solomon, the King who Desired wisdom.* We wish our guests a special welcome. Please sign our guest book and introduce yourself to Pastor Hougard.