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The Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of God

(Eighth in series, *Christian Wisdom for Life, Ten Easy Verses*)

*Strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. –Matthew 6:33–*

(Supporting text: II Chronicles 1:7-13)

It's a wonderful story about Solomon, one which I remember from boyhood. I think I tried to identify with Solomon and thought to myself that being a King would be a difficult job. So, if I was Solomon, for what would I ask? An interesting thing about Solomon's request is that it implies that Solomon already possessed that for which he asked. Think of it this way. If he was not already wise would he have asked for wisdom? Maybe the situation here is a bit like the one Jesus had in mind when he said: *For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. –Matthew 13:12–*

But, now, what do you think? Do we need to be Kings in order to identify with Solomon here? Would not the question which God posed to Solomon be one which we might think of God asking us all whatever our vocation or situation? *Ask what I should give you*, God said to Solomon. But Jesus also said to the crowds gathered on the mountainside, *Ask, and it will be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you, who if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him? –Matthew 7:7-11–*

Jesus' promise that God will grant us what we ask includes a proviso, doesn't it? God wants to give *good* things to people. As a matter of fact, could God give anything but good things to people? To give bad things to people would be contrary to the nature of God. Thus God was pleased with Solomon's request for wisdom, because it was for a good thing. To govern in the way that is good for the people, a political leader needs

wisdom. Maybe that's why God then also gave Solomon wealth and power. If Solomon was wise he would use them well. Solomon had his priorities straight. He sought first things first.

Here is a spiritual fact of life. If we are going to receive from God that for which we ask, then we need to ask for good things and good things only. But now we might see a problem. Do we always know what the good is? As Paul wrote, *For now we see as in a mirror, dimly...* –*I Corinthians 13:12a*–

Just a few months ago Debbie and I did some Christmas shopping for our grandchildren. One of our two grandsons was then about ten months old and the other about one year eight months. So we went to Toys R Us. I was really excited. This was going to be fun. But let me say that we are determined not to spoil our grandchildren. I don't get the idea I hear some grand parents express sometimes with a gleam in their eye that they are going to spoil their grandchildren, as if that were just some innocent mischief. And then the grandchildren have toys for Christmas up to the chair rails. Grandchildren who want for nothing might never learn to live within limits. Does not everyone need to accept no for an answer sometimes in order to be successful and happy in life? Debbie and I decided that we would buy each grandson one big toy and one small toy each and one especially educational present. (I think Debbie snuck some clothes in there as well. I guess she gets some special dispensation for that. Did you ever walk through a children's clothing store with a grandmother? *Isn't this cute?* And, of course, it is. Every full set of clothes that is only two feet high is cute!) Since we were limiting ourselves to one large toy and one small one for each child and one especially educational present we wanted to choose each gift well, and that was the challenge. Which is just the right toy to get a child, one which is not behind the child's level of development nor too advanced of it? I once learned that the best toy to get a child is one level advanced from where he or she presently is. That way the toy might stretch the child intellectually or physically but not frustrate the child by requiring capabilities far beyond what could soon be developed. Trying to choose just the right toy is not easy. It took us hours to choose those four toys and the two educational presents. When grandparents want to give only good things to their grandchildren, they may need, like Solomon, to be wise enough to pray for wisdom.

There is a humorous maxim which you may have heard, be careful for what you pray, you might get it. Well, fortunately for us we don't really need to be concerned about that. God will not give us what is not good for us. But that being the case, if we dare ask God for something we had better trust in the goodness of God before we make our request. Otherwise, if we do not receive that for which we ask we might question the love which God is supposed has for us. When God does not grant our requests, we need to know that the reason is a lack of wisdom on our part to know the good for which to ask, not a lack of love on God's part. We need to know before we pray that if our prayer is not answered the way we think it should be the reason is that God's understanding is

far beyond our own, that it is like Isaiah wrote, *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.* –Isaiah 55:9–

So, here is the point. It is such an important point. We so do not want to miss it. We need to have confidence in the divine love and wisdom **before** we ask God for something, **before** we ask. We might then do a better job of asking for only good things in the first place, but even more importantly, as sooner or later will inevitably happen, and God turns down our request, we might conclude that the mistake was ours, and keep our faith.

*Strive first for the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* There is the wisdom of Solomon.

Remember the story of Martha and Mary. Martha was in the kitchen getting supper ready for everyone but Mary her sister was in another room listening to Jesus teach. Martha wanted Jesus to tell Mary to help out in the kitchen. It was only fair that Martha not need to do all the work and prepare the meal by herself. But Jesus chastised Martha, not Mary. Remember? He said, *Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.* (Luke 10:41,42) The one thing. The better part. It will not be taken away.

*Do not be afraid, little flock,* Jesus said on another occasion, *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* –Luke 12:32–

What should we pursue before everything else? What is the most important thing for each of us to do in order to live a successful life? For what shall we ask of God who will only ever give us good things? We do not need to be a King like Solomon in order to ask, nor a young person like him. For all of us this is the first day of the rest of our lives. What will be the priority we choose? What shall we ask God to give us first for our remaining time here?

If we are wise we will ask for more wisdom. If we have faith we will ask for the faith we still do not have. If we are hopeful we will ask for more hope. If we have love we recognize its value and will ask for even more. In other words, we will ask for the kingdom and we will not be disappointed in our prayers. Then we will receive from God all for which we ask, and everything else that is good for us.