

East Hartford  
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1 Kings 3:1-15, Psa 119:126-136, Matt. 13:44-53

### Priority One

Summer time and the livin is easy - summertime and tomatoes are here

Summer is upon us in all its glory - the tomatoes are beginning to ripen up. We've had 6 Sun Sugar cherry tomatoes so far.

We usually buy most of our tomato plants from Tricounty Greenhouse out on 44 in Mansfield for two reasons. First they always have a huge variety of tomato plants. Secondly, they are staffed by a goodly number of folks with some mental handicaps so our plant purchases are not BOGOS, rather they are twofers - two benefits with one purchase. I get wonderful plants, and our business helps create jobs for folk with some pretty significant handicaps.

The head guy, Chris is a pretty amazing man - he is super skilled and knowledgeable about plants, and, super skilled and knowledgeable about creating a really successful work experience for his staff.

I had to stop by the greenhouse just recently I got to talking with Chris about new variety of tomato plant that we are trying this year, called "Banana Legs Tomato" - sort of a yellow paste type. Chris said, "Yup. We always plant a few of those every year. One of the guys who works here gets a tremendous laugh - it's just a real thrill for him to transplant them."

"Why?" I asked.

"I dunno exactly what tickles him so - just the name I think. Every year I ask him to transplant the Banana Legs cuz he just laughs and laughs and laughs. He really loves doing it. So I keep ordering Banana Legs tomatoes just for him."

“Chris,” I said, “you’ve got your priorities in perfect order. Priority One bringing someone joy and delight.”

Another quick story. I suddenly became aware that I was watching the complete and utter destruction of a neighborhood - panicked residents were scattering in every direction. Some much more slowly than others. The slow movers were carrying something. They bore precious burdens, the youngest of the neighborhood.

Those slow moving residents had their priorities in perfect order: rescuing the most vulnerable among them. You see, I was digging into the side of a massive mound of dirt and had inadvertently managed to totally destroy a whole colony of ants. Priority One, for the slow movers was to carry the eggs that would be the whole next generation of the colony.

I believe that God speaking through the scriptures calls humanity to make our relationship w God Priority One in our lives. After all are we not called to love God and neighbor? Are we not called to seek first the kingdom of God?

I believe every single one of us struggle in some ways to do just that. Isn't that part of why we become church - a people with the common interest in making God Priority 1 in our lives. And I wonder if others are like me, and feel just a bit clueless about what it means, what it really means to make God Priority One in our lives and living.

Today's scripture lessons are about ways of God being Priority 1 for someone. Take the story of Solomon for example.

Solomon, son of Israel's greatest king, David made a political alliance by marrying a daughter of Egypt's Pharaoh - and apparently kept peace in the house by going to Gibeon to worship and make the ritual sacrifices. As the scripture puts it, he loved the Lord and walked in the ways the Lord had given to David, as well going to Gibeon and the high places.

As the story goes, God appears to Solomon in a dream, asking, “What should I give you?” to which Solomon answered *I’m here, your servant, in the middle of the people you have chosen, a large population that can’t be numbered or counted due to its vast size. 9 Please give your servant a discerning mind in order to govern your people and to distinguish good from evil, because no one is able to govern this important people of yours without your help.”*

*10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had made this request. 11 God said to him, “Because you have asked for this instead of requesting long life, wealth, or victory over your enemies—asking for discernment so as to acquire good judgment— 12 I will now do just what you said. According to your word, I hereby give you a wise and understanding mind.*

God and Solomon together in a dream, what is Priority 1 for each?

God - the Almighty and Holy is all about growing this young Solomon into someone with wisdom, understanding, and discernment. God’s Priority 1 was about building up. God could have been all distressed about Solomon’s political alliance by marriage and worshipping in the outlying and high places, rather than in the presence of the ark of the covenant - but no. Solomon’s becoming a man of compassion and wisdom, a King fit lead to God’s people is God’s Priority 1.

And Solomon’s Priority 1? Likewise. At this point in his life Solomon is all about becoming the king that God dreams he can become - a man of compassion, wisdom, discernment.

And the psalm - what is Priority 1 for the Psalmist in this, the longest psalm in scripture - this portion like the entire psalm is focused upon the psalmist’s longing for the Law, the commandments, the word of God and God’s promise.

Then the Gospel. That collection of those possible and impossible puzzles.

Today we hear that the kingdom of heaven 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 the field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he sold everything he had, went, and bought it.

On the one hand Jesus says that kingdom of God is like a treasure - a treasure so valuable that securing the treasure becomes Priority 1 for the finder.

On other hand, the kingdom is like a highly focused merchant who, when he discovers a marvelous pearl, makes securing the pearl Priority 1, by selling everything else so as to become able to buy that fine pearl.

Making God priority 1 in our lives means living in those ways that align us with God's purpose, God's interest. God is about creating life and being love.

That's why ants rescuing the most vulnerable among them are aligning themselves with God's purpose and interest.

That's why Chris getting Banana Legs tomatoes every year simply because they bring such joy to a staff member is aligning himself with God's purpose and interest, creating life and being love.

That's why we, going about our daily lives and living, doing what we do, loving who we love, caring about the vulnerable and the least, sharing laughter and joy, are already making God Priority one in our lives. We don't have to be jumping through extra spiritual or religious hoops. We don't have to become some kind of spiritual or theological giants or super stars. When we love a child enough to help them blow their nose or to brush the dirt off their skinned knee, we are making God Priority One. When we stick a geranium into a flower pot and tend it well enough so that its blooms bring a bit of color and joy into the world, we are aligning ourselves with the purpose and interest of God, making our God Priority 1.

Sure there's always room and opportunity to do more, but I want to

remind us: who we are and what we are right now is enough to bless and delight the heart of our God. We are already making God Priority 1 and God continues to make us God's Priority 1.

Remember that and give thanks that it is so.