

Series: Micah 6

Sermon: To Walk Humbly With Your God - Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

I Kings 3:1-15

Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the Lord, and the wall around Jerusalem. The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the Lord. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

“Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream.

He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.

Sermon:

It was on the afternoon of July 11, 1944, that General Dwight D Eisenhower opened up his wallet. This was 35 days past D-Day. Tucked among other papers, he found a hand-written note that he wrote just over a month before. It was written on June 5, 1944, 60 years ago yesterday. He called in his aide and gave it to him to read. It said, “Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or

fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.” That next morning, June 6, the largest armada in history would cross the English Channel, landing nine divisions of sea and airborne troops in a sweeping assault upon Nazi-occupied France that put the Allies on the road to victory. Ike declared to his commanders, “This operation is planned as a victory, and that’s the way it’s going to be. We’re going down there, and we’re throwing everything we have into it.” When he said everything, he meant everything. 11,000 aircraft, 6,000 naval vessels, and two million men and women. He wrote a letter to be given to every soldier in the assault. “You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory! Good luck! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.” June 5 was supposed to be D-Day. But gale force winds and sheets of horizontal rain delayed the attack. Eisenhower set a new date: June 6. At noon on June 5, he sat at a portable desk and assumed, in writing, any failure upon his shoulders alone. The outcome of D-Day rested upon the wisdom and leadership of General Eisenhower. The outcome of the war rested upon the success of D-Day. The future of the world rested upon the Allies winning the war. The fate of the world to be resting on your decision is a task that most of us would avoid. And to place the responsibility on your shoulders should you choose poorly is a rare quality in today’s leaders. The future generations will look back either with reverence or with contempt - based upon the decisions that are made. Because of the success of D-Day, General Ike is considered one of the best commanders we’ve had - and his success gave him the presidency several years later. Should D-Day have failed, there was none but him to blame.

As we come into Election Season, we look at the candidates who have decided to run for office -to represent us and make policy on our behalf. We look at their past record, at their character. Fortunately, the opposition to the candidates gives us all the dirt and skeletons in the closet of those running in the higher offices. But in the end, most of us want to know - are they a good person? Are they honest and respectable? We can almost overlook any character flaw if we know, deep down, that they are good in heart. And we pray for our leaders, we pray that they have wisdom and knowledge to run things right.

The events leading up to the scripture lesson today is a unique look into the bloody politics of ancient days. King David old and was about to die. He has two powerful sons, Adonijah and Solomon. Both of different mothers. Adonijah was the oldest and Solomon the youngest. But Solomon was from Bathsheba, his favorite wife. Adonijah gained support from the high priesthood and Joab, the commander of the army. He anointed himself king over Israel before his father could object. Solomon and Bathsheba went to King David to request his blessings upon Solomon as King - which David did. Everyone abandoned Adonijah and threw their support behind Solomon. After King David died, several assassinations and banishments took place, including Adonijah, Joab and the high priesthood. Funny how that happens. To back the wrong horse in those days was quite a risky venture. King Solomon was now secure on the throne with no other enemies to claim it from him. But now that he had the throne which we sought with blood and cunning, would he be able to keep it? He was young. Quite young, in fact. He was around 29 in age when he had a dream. It was in the town of Gibeon. At this time, there was no temple in Jerusalem in which to offer sacrifices. That was to be Solomon’s charge later on, but for now, they had to go to other high places in which to offer an appropriate sacrifice. These places were ancient and well used, not only by the Israelites, but by the religions and peoples that preceded them. Now, there were relics of the nation at this site including the tabernacle and an ancient bronze altar that was in the folklore of the people from the time of Moses. Solomon sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings on the altar, seeking God’s intervention and blessings. And God does not disappoint Solomon. At night, God came to Solomon in a dream and inquired of him, “Ask for whatever you want to me to give you.” What a question! What an opportunity! To ask for whatever you want from the creator of the universe, the maker of all that is! What do you want? And Solomon responded that he wanted wisdom and a discerning heart, to distinguish between right and wrong. He wanted to learn how to govern. I find it interesting to note that in God’s question, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” Nowhere does God say that he would give it. It’s almost a trick

question. “What do you want me to give to you” does not imply, “I will give you what you ask for.” But Solomon must have answered wisely, for God granted him his wish and then some. Because he did not ask for long life, death to enemies, wealth, he was granted all these things and more. Today, Solomon is remembered for his wisdom and his wealth. He was king during the golden age of Israel. Trade and commerce flourished, and he took Israel to the national level. It was never a world power, purse, but he put them on the map.

What would you ask for? If God came to you and asked, “Ask for whatever you want me to give to you”. What would be your answer? On the surface, we probably would say things like “peace on earth” or “for happiness to abound” or something chivalrous as that. But secretly, what would be our one wish of God? I’ve seen people in prayer as they buy their lottery tickets. Hunched over, letting the “spirit of something” move their pencil over the numbers that they hope will hit. Go down to a Husker game when we’re losing by a field goal and you will see many people who would love to have God ask them for a wish. Too many times, our secret wishes are for ourselves, our wants, our desires. I’m guilty of this as well. Too many times I’ve hoped for the right weather, the right stock to buy, the right church to be located at, the perfect spouse, for good health, for wealth. All me driven. Here’s a scary example: You’re at home, your spouse or child or whoever is out and about. They said they’d be home at a certain time and that certain time has just expired. You’re not nervous yet, but then an hour goes by. The clock keeps ticking. You pace around the house, trying to keep busy, but your mind starts to wander. What happened? Are they OK? Why are they late. And then you start thinking of worst case scenarios. They’re lying in a ditch somewhere, their out of gas, and then ugly thoughts enter your brain. Maybe their dead. Today’s Tuesday, the funeral will be on what day? What am I going to do? What’s going to happen to me? How will I make it through this? Even with the most ugliest scenarios going through my head, I still think about myself. My mind might have come up with the worst tragedy possible, and yet I am preoccupied with “How am I going to handle this, how unfair it is to ME”? I’ve thought more about myself than the person I had pictured in a car wreck. Our secret desires mostly revolve around our self. In my prayer life, which turns out to be my wish list from God, I would hardly ask for wisdom or a discerning heart, I hardly ask for the benefit of others - unless of course, there is some sort of kickback to me. What would you ask for?

Solomon wanted to lead God’s people the best way possible, and he wanted God’s help in doing so. He asked for good governing skills. Not for his benefit, but for the benefit of the nation. What would a doctor’s best wish be? You could think of some examples, this kind of car, this kind of house, freedom from frivolous lawsuits, but in reality, I would hope that most doctors would wish for wisdom and discretion as they care for their patients. What would a lawyer ask for? You can insert your own lawyer jokes in here, but the best lawyer would ask for justice to be done - regardless of the bottom line. What would a teacher ask for? That a child or youth might learn and grow. What would you ask for? Hopefully, hopefully it would be something along the lines of being a faithful disciple. Using whatever God has given you to His glory. Using the talents that we already have been bestowed with to further His kingdom. As a minister, what has been my wish? I’ve prayed for this church. Make it grow, make it matter for others, let it be a place where lives are changed, hearts are warmed, faith is nurtured, love is found. And I have to remind myself, not for my benefit, but for this place, this church, for the people who come through our doors. Becoming faithful disciples in all areas of our lives. That is our Great Crusade as Ike would put it. The eyes of the world are upon you. That might sound very unlikely, but maybe, just maybe, someone is looking at you to see what it means to be a Christian. Maybe, just maybe, someone has come through our doors just to see what a church is like. Maybe, just maybe, you might be the one to change the world in some small way. What would you ask for? I pray that God gives us what we need to suit His purposes. Amen.