

Pastor Jon's Sermon from the July 26, 2020, online worship.

Text: 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 3:5-12 Solomon's prayer for wisdom.

“Decisions, Decisions, Decisions”

How many of you have noticed that you are making more decisions lately? And they aren't easy decisions. Every time you choose to leave the house we have to assess the risk to ourselves and others. Some decisions we make are as simple as how many times or when you go to the store. To see family or not? To travel or not? To wear a mask or not? To dine in or do curbside? To go to church or not? To send your kids to school or not? To venture out or not? Decide who is in your bubble? I feel like there is a whole new layer of stress on everyone right now that comes in the form of having to make so many decisions. You can't just relax. As a parent and spouse, each person in the house has different needs and different risk tolerances. Just navigating that is enough to drive you crazy. In fact, I worry about all of our mental health right now. Thank goodness for all these new online options for mental health through our insurance companies, EAP's, telehealth, hotlines, etc.

Are you feeling any of this?

As I studied the scriptures this week, I was moved by King Solomon's prayer for wisdom, in 1 Kings 3. Solomon is King David's Son. Solomon just experienced his father's death and burial. Now, as a boy he is anointed king of the throne for the Israelites. He was vulnerable in his prayer. He said, “I am only a child; I do not know how to go out or come in.” Solomon is sharing with God his anxieties and worries about his ability to govern. These are some powerful words to hear a king say... I don't know.

I seem to be saying this more and more. I don't know. So much has changed with no clear end in sight. I often don't know how to navigate the daily changes to life. I keep wondering if I am doing the right thing as a pastor. Am I the best husband I can be right now, or father? Chances are the answer is no and possibly yes. Ask my spouse or my kids. Ask our parishioners.

But thanks be to God, something we can hold onto right now is the power of prayer. Paul says in our Romans lesson, we do not know how to pray as we ought. I will pause there. Thank you Paul for putting this in scripture. It is gracious to know that I am not the only one who struggles with how to pray at times in my life. Many of us would admit we don't know how to pray as we ought. But Paul says the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words to express. In other words, our imperfect prayers, when prayed in the Spirit, sync up with God's hope for our lives and for the world. This is the most gracious scripture about prayer in the Bible.

Second, Solomon's prayer. He prayed, "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

God was pleased with this prayer and Solomon's humility. God said, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind."

Solomon was known as one of the most if not the most wise person in the Bible. The proverbs are written by Solomon.

This is what we need right now... wise and discerning minds. We need humility. We need to not think only of ourselves. We need to look at the data, the science, the scriptures, our Christian ethics and make informed decisions. We need to ground ourselves in scripture as the psalmist writes, "Order my footsteps in your word." If we are grounding ourselves in the news, we will be utterly lost.

But there is grace for us. Romans 8-31-39 is pure Gospel. Good news of Jesus Christ. We will not always make the wisest decisions. We will be foolish and act selfishly. We will let the happenings around us throw us into despair. But Paul continues in the Romans Lesson that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation.

This is such good news, because the things present seem to be overwhelming. But God's love for us, everything now and whatever is to come. We aren't going to get it just right, and God has gotten it right for us. Our future with Christ has already been secured. The things out of our control right now do not and cannot change God's love for us.

You are ok and I am OK.

May we have wisdom and discerning minds to navigate this pandemic and everything else happening in our world. May our faith be strengthened in this time of adversity. May our marriages get stronger. May our kids become more resilient. And may our thoughts not lead us into despair, but may we hope in a God... who according to Romans 8 would not and did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?

God will see us through this. God journeys with us in our grief and sorrow. God the Spirit intercede for us with sighs too deep for words.

Our job is to pray for wisdom... for the world, for our leaders, for our families, for our churches and communities. As God was pleased with Solomon's prayer, may ours be pleasing to God as well.

Amen