



Daily Manna

Word and
Devotions for
Members and Friends of
Bethlehem Lutheran
Church - Grand Marais MN

Wednesday

July 22, 2020

Prepared for you by

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FIRST READING: 1 KINGS 3:5-12

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today." ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give 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?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "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, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you."

When you think of King Solomon you will most likely think of the Wisdom of Solomon, maybe the riches of Solomon, and even the glories of Solomon's Temple. But doesn't wisdom usually come to mind first? So we think of Solomon the Wise. But if being wise means that a person always makes the right decisions, then King Solomon's story points to his failings. Even this story, beginning as it does at Gibeon, whittles away at the character and wisdom of Solomon. According to commentaries Gibeon was the principal high place of worship not directed to the worship of God. High places would become synonymous with idolatry. Later in the Bible and already in Deuteronomy such high places were frowned upon and eventually destroyed by a descendant of Solomon, King Josiah. Yet it was there at Gibeon that Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings. So we can see early in the story of Solomon weakness and the beginnings of the trouble his reign would eventually bring to the people. And here is what I find fascinating today, it was at Gibeon that YHWH appeared to Solomon in a dream. Now the dream, and the answer God gave within the dream is very important. Solomon asked for an understanding mind (or as translators literally suggest a "listening heart") and God granted such a gift to be used for the sake of others. Service toward others was the main point of this theophany. But that it happened at the location of Solomon's extravagant worship practice at a cultic high place tells me that God came to him where he was even though it was a questionable place to be and gave him a new calling. Does it ever happen in ordinary lives that God interrupts someone at a questionable place in their lives and asks a revealing question? Much of Solomon's life is not held up to us as a role model, but this prayer of his, offered after God interrupted him in a dream, is the exception. The greatest wisdom comes from a listening heart that has learned to serve. This truth comes to us where we are in this confusing world where a thousand questionable idols call for thousands of "burnt" offerings. We may not get it right all the time. After all each of the Biblical kings made their mistakes and committed their sins. But I find in this story the assurance that God will find us where we are and that God's Word will speak to our listening hearts and lead us to serve one another in love.