

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 24, 2005  
10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
1 Kings 3:5-12  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 1 Kings 3:5-12  
Psalm of the Day: 119b  
Second Lesson: Romans 8:28-30  
Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

## **Equip Me to Carry Out My Duties**

Have you ever had a task staring you in the face and thought to yourself, "I can't do this. There is no way I am going to be able to get this done. This just isn't going to happen. I can't do this. I don't have that ability. It's not going to work." I imagine for some of you that is probably what you thought right before Examination Sunday before you got confirmed. "There is no way I am going to be able to answer those questions."

I remember when I was ordained and installed in the first congregation and sitting and listening to the sermon and hearing the readings and the Words of God. I was sitting in the middle of the isle thinking to myself, "What am I doing here? I can't do all this stuff they are saying I am supposed to do. I know what I am like. I can't do all that."

In various areas of life, I think we all have that at one time or another, don't we? Whether it is when your first child is born and you hold that child and you say, "I am now responsible for this precious thing? My goodness! What was the Lord thinking?" Whether you look in your spouse's eyes as you exchange your vows and you think to yourself, "How am I ever going to love, honor and cherish all the time like I just said I would?" Your work, as an employer or an employee, maybe tasks come and you say, "How am I going to do this?"

We are each and every one of us to various degrees going to face things that make us say, "Lord, I don't know if I can really do this. You have asked me to do it. You put it in front of me. You brought it into my life of service to you, but how am I going to do it?"

That is exactly the setting that we find in our reading this morning that we are talking about, isn't it? Solomon is now King in place of David and he looks and says, "I am not David." The Lord said, "Ask whatever you want and I will give it to you." He considered all his options and said, "I'm nothing. I can't be my dad." So he said, "Give me a heart of discernment. Equip me for carrying out this duty of being King that you have asked me to do."

You and I may never be asked to be King over the children of Israel, but our God does ask us to do various things, and Solomon's request to "equip me to do your duties" is one that we would do well to remember as we face uncertainty, as we face worry, as we face anxiety. So this morning we consider this Word of our God and think about how God will equip us to carry out our duties and remember that we ask this just as Solomon did, as a humble servant. And then listen intently to God's answer.

The Kingdom of Israel at this point in time—the borders had been extended, David, the Warrior King, had extended the borders and things were going well as far as that goes. David was also known as a man who walked in the path of the Lord, who loved his Lord and served his Lord. Yes, he sinned. Yes, he made mistakes and did things that were foolish at various times just like you and I will. But he walked in the path of the Lord because he always returned to God and said, “Lord, forgive me. I have sinned.”

Solomon knew that, and Solomon had seen how his father had ruled. He saw the mistakes. He saw the successes. Now as he is considering it he is thinking to himself, “I don’t know if I can do this.” So God comes and knows no doubt what is going through Solomon’s mind. He comes to him with this promise. He says, “*Ask for whatever you want me to give you.*” “I will give it to you.”

Just last week I heard on the radio a question that was posed to the mayor of Las Vegas. Have you ever played this game—if you were going to be stranded on a desert island, what would you like to have with you? It’s kind of along the question—ask for whatever you want and I will give it to you—along the same lines. The mayor of Las Vegas was talking to a group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders and one of the kids asked him, “If you were going to be stranded on a desert island, what would you like to have with you?” It’s kind of the same question. You know what he answered? Did you hear this at all? “Gin. Plenty of Gin.” It’s kind of a foolish answer when you stop and think about it. It’s a silly answer. But sometimes because we are sinners we ask for silly, foolish things.

But look at Solomon who, acting in humility, focusing on God and the task God had given him, asked for something that wasn’t foolish or silly. He didn’t ask for wealth. He didn’t ask for the death of his enemies. He didn’t ask for ten more wishes. Instead he said, “I am nothing. I can’t do what you are asking me to do. I am not my father, David. I am only a child. Your people are too numerous. Your people are too great. Your people are too important because the Messiah is going to come through them, so whoever governs those people must govern them well so the Messiah can be born.” It’s tied up even in his salvation. He says, “Lord, give me a discerning heart so that I can administer justice, so that I can do what is right in your eyes.” Not just give me knowledge, but give me the wisdom to apply the knowledge in the right way at the right time as every situation comes up, because they are all going to be different.

It is a stunning request. It was a request that, as we see, the Lord was pleased with. Think of the requests that come through our minds at times when God presents us with an opportunity for service. Do you ever say, “Here am I. Send him.” Do you ever say, “Lord, why have you let this into my life?” Solomon could have said, “Why have you made me King? I am only a child. I can’t do it. Send someone else. David had other sons. Lord, put them there. I just want to go live the life of leisure.”

As you are faced with a challenge—maybe it is raising a rebellious child, maybe it’s dealing with a boss who is a jerk and you say, “God, I wish you would just take it all away from me.” Maybe we can learn this morning that a better request is, “Lord, help me to live my faith so that this person that I am dealing with can see my faith. Help me to be discerning so that I always live for you in whatever I am doing as a response to how you have taken away my sins. Let that move me. Let that guide me so that as I

live and deal with these other people, as I face this challenge or that challenge, as I struggle with sickness, as I struggle with guilt, as I struggle with worry—help me to focus on you. Give me the wisdom that puts you first and foremost. Help me to see that how I live in every one of these situations is going to reflect you to the people I am dealing with.”

I think sometimes we forget that, don't we? That you and I who bear the name, Christian, little Christ, that we are supposed to represent Christ in the world—we can see it when we are here and maybe when we are serving here at church, but when we get out in the world, we tend to forget it a little bit. “Lord, give me the discernment to see that whatever I do—spouse, parent, child, friend, neighbor, co-worker—I am doing as a reflection of the love you have shown me. Give me that kind of discernment so that everything I do flows out of your love and your forgiveness and that others can see that you have made me different, Lord. You have changed me. You have turned me from selfish and inward-looking to someone who puts the interests of others first. Let them see that you have made me a little Christian, Lord.”

Think about what Solomon asked for and then think about what God said. He said, “I will give it to you. Because you haven't asked for these other things, I am going to see to it that you will have the kind of wisdom and discernment that no one will ever had or will have since that time.” God answers our requests. God answers our requests with the best possible answer. In Solomon's case, it was “Yes.” In your case and my case sometimes it is going to be, “No. I am not going to take it away because you need to serve me by going through what you are going through.”

The Lord may well give us the answer that isn't necessarily the one that we want, but we can rest assured it is the best answer. Think about it as we serve our God. God's answer points us to the fact that he will always give us wisdom. Where is that wisdom going to be found? If we want to have a discerning heart like Solomon's to live our lives so that we reflect Christ in every part of it, where are we going to turn? Are we going to turn to someone with a nice southern drawl like Dr. Phil and have him teach us how to live in response to God's salvation? I don't think so. There are all kinds of people on T.V. and the radio that are going to tell us what is wise and wisdom and discernment and knowledge. That's why those people are making such a good living.

But for you and I there is a different place, and a place that really even helps us to filter all the advice you hear from all of these other voices that are out there in the world. That place is our God. Our God still comes and speaks to us. He speaks to us through his Word. He speaks to us through a splash of water and the Word connected to that water that promises it washes away our sins. He speaks to us through wine and wafer as his body and blood come to us. As we are saying, “Lord, I don't have the strength. I don't know if I can do it.” We come and kneel at his altar and he says, “Here is my body. Here is my blood. It takes away your sins. It strengthens you. It moves you. It changes you. It enables you to serve me.” As we remember his death and the love he has shown us, as we dig into his Word and Scripture on our own and with other fellow Christians, as iron sharpens iron, as we study God's Word together and speak of it, God gives us discernment.

We did it this past week with 99 different children in Vacation Bible School. We gave those children God's Word which gives them discernment. As we share God's Word, we grow. As we study God's Word, we grow. If you want God's help and God's discernment to get through the things that are challenging you, that are troubling you that you think you aren't able to do—the answer is LEAN ON THE LORD. He is not a crutch. He is the Savior. Lean on him in his Word. Lean on him in his Sacraments and know that he loves you and that he will never abandon you. That is why he lived perfectly in your place. That is why he died on the cross to take away your sins.

That is not pie in the sky by and by. That is the power for Godly living.