



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 6, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

10th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 Kings 3:5-12](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119b CW

Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 6:17-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:44-52](#)

The Christian Seeks Spiritual Wealth

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

You're probably familiar with this account of God coming to Solomon and Solomon choosing a discerning heart; literally a heart with ears. We'll talk about what that means in a little bit. Have you ever thought to yourself if God would have come to you, what would you have asked for? I don't know what I'd ask for. I don't think God ever would ask me. But I'm pretty sure that young Randy, when he was about 10-years-old, wouldn't have asked for wisdom.

Back when I was anywhere from 7-10, I can't remember because I have a ton of 1970 football cards and a ton of 1974 football cards, so it's one of these years when my allowance was a quarter every week and if we got to Hemlock, I'd get to the Rexall Drug and I'd buy a KitKat for a dime and a pack of football cards. I thought I was living the high life when I had a KitKat and a pack of football cards. That was a good day.

One week we were in church on Sunday morning and I had my quarter and we hadn't gotten to Hemlock. I think I got my allowance every Saturday morning and I had it there with me Sunday morning and the offering plate came by and I put it in the offering plate because I thought "I don't need a KitKat and a pack of football cards this week so I'll give it to God. This is how I can show my love for God." Dad saw it. So when we were going to Sullivan's (I'm guessing because that's where we always went for lunch on Sunday after church), he said "Was that your allowance you put in the offering plate this morning?" I said "Yes." He said "Why did you do that?" I said, "Well, because I love God and I want to honor God." He said "The Lord takes care of those who are His own, and he gave me two quarters." So little Randy was pretty happy! "I've got 50 cents now. Think of all the KitKats and football cards you can get for 50 cents! Now we're living good!"

So here is what I did. I didn't spend it on KitKats and football cards. I went the next week to church with both quarters burning a hole in my pocket and I couldn't wait to put it in the offering plate because I was already spending a dollar in my mind. I put the 50 cents in the plate with a big smile on my face, look up at my dad, beam at my dad, and dad looks at me and doesn't say anything. On the way to Sullivan's he says, "Did you put both those quarters in the offering plate this morning?" I said "Yep." He said, "That's nice," and we kept driving.

Dad taught me a pretty good lesson that day, whether it sunk in right away or not. I probably pouted for a while. What he taught me is that you don't manipulate God. You worship God. You honor God. You don't manipulate Him for things. You just trust Him to bless you. What is really important (and it took me a while to figure this out) wasn't the money I might get from dad or the money I put in the offering plate. What was really important was this message that my God loved me even when I did stupid stuff, like trying to get an extra 50 cents out of dad. God loves me and forgives me and He loves all of us.

This is the pearl of great price, that hidden treasure of great value that when we have it, when we see what it is, that our God loves us in spite of what fools and idiots we are at times, there is nothing more important in our life. There is no wealth or anything else that can touch this. Our God loves us! He shouldn't. By His own Word, He shouldn't. But He does because He sent a Savior to live and die in our place, to be perfect in our place, to take the punishment of our sins. He sent the Spirit into our hearts to give us this gift of faith just because He is an amazing God of love. This is the greatest wealth we'll ever have. It's this spiritual wealth.

But I think we wouldn't always necessarily recognize it as such. It's really easy to get focused on the demands that we have every day, the challenges that come with daily life, the frustrations, the anger, the disappointment, the grief, the heartache and forget to go to that spiritual wealth in every single one of those situations. The devil is always right there trying to point us in a different direction except back to God's love for us in Jesus. So one of the marks of the Christian is that we seek, we don't just have it but we seek and cling to and hold on tight to and keep going back to over and over again this spiritual wealth that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is in essence what Solomon asked for when he goes through the whole thing.

Solomon had gone to Gibeon that day and offered 1,000 sacrifices to God. One thousand animals slaughtered, blood drained, gutted, burned on an altar at Gibeon because the temple hadn't been built yet. At this time the Israelites were still worshipping in the high places, not where God had told them to at the tabernacle and then later in the temple, which Solomon would build. But God, in His mercy, received

their imperfect worship, just like He receives our imperfect worship, and He comes to him that night and says to him, "Ask for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

Here is the thing about Solomon. A king at that time asking for the death of their enemies would be a natural thing. A king at that time asking for great wealth so they could extend the kingdom would be a natural thing. But "Give to your servant a discerning heart. I'm only a child"? He was a little over 20-years-old at this time. His father, David, had ruled for 40 years and now he is going to step into dad's shoes. He understands the task is going to be greater than what he is able to do, so he asks for a "heart that has ears" literally is what the Hebrews says; a heart with ears. A heart that listens but not just listens and gains knowledge. He asks for a heart that takes that knowledge that it has and applies it with wisdom.

Wisdom is using the knowledge the right way at the right time. You and I can often be exactly right in what we are saying, but we don't always do it in a wise way, do we? If someone else is caught in a sin, we can tell them that it is a sin, but we can do it either in a way that they can hear us because we do it with gentleness and respect and out of love (as God says), or we can be harsh and abrasive and better than thou. And even though we are right in what we say, we aren't very wise. We don't have a heart with ears at that moment.

The story right after what I read to you as it continues on in the chapter is the two women and the baby and Solomon says to cut the baby in half and the one who is the mother says "No, don't do that." ([1 Kings 3:16-28](#)) You can see him using wisdom in that story. You can see him putting it into practice.

It's a great prayer that Solomon prayed. "Lord, give me a heart with ears." But it's also a great prayer for you in all your different roles in your life, isn't it? If you're married, do you wish your spouse had a heart with ears that was wise in what they said all the time, not just some of the time? If that's what you're thinking, remind yourself that your spouse is probably thinking the exact same thing. It's what "I can do." That "I take this knowledge of God and His will and I live it in a wise way." If you're a child, ask the Lord for a heart with ears so you can be wise in how you interact with your parents and your siblings (if you have any). If you are a co-worker, ask for a heart with ears so you can be wise in how you interact with your co-workers.

That's one of the things we talked about yesterday at our Friendship Witnessing Workshop. How do you earn the right to be heard? How do you speak in such a way so that you share the greatest wealth you have? It isn't this next Tuesday's Mega Millions numbers, 1.5 billion dollars or whatever it will be, that is the greatest wealth any of us will ever have. The greatest wealth we have is that we have a God who loves us, and He loves others! He loves everyone! Earning the right to be heard and figuring out how to say that is wisdom. Sharing the spiritual wealth that God has given to us freely and fully,

sharing it with wisdom in a way that is heard, in a way that doesn't put up walls between us and others, in a way that doesn't come across as better than thou, that's a challenge!

I'll tell you in our Barnabas Ministry we talk about it all the time. We talk about it all the time. When you are reaching out to people you haven't seen in worship, you have to go the extra mile to do so in love because people are going to think, whether you are smiling and talking nicely or not, that you are yelling at them for not being in church. That's not what we are doing. We just want people to be close to Jesus because we want people in heaven with us. We're doing what God has called us to do. He said to encourage one another, teach one another, admonish one another ([Colossians 3](#)) and now are we supposed to say "No Lord, we aren't going to do that because I have this worldly wealth and wisdom that says 'Don't say that to someone else. They'll get upset'"? If you're going to get upset at us because we say we love Jesus and we want you to be close to Jesus, who really has the problem?

Seek spiritual wealth. It's found here—from water connected to God's Word. It's found here—in the Word of God. It's found here—in the body and blood of Christ in, with and under the bread and the wine, for the forgiveness of your sins. That's spiritual wealth. As a Christian, God calls us to seek it. God calls us to grow in it. ***Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*** ([2 Peter 3:18](#)) Grow and keep on growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Treasure this wealth because as you heard, it said many have departed from the faith because of worldly concerns (Second Lesson).

It isn't once saved always saved! I don't care what anyone else says, God right there just said to us this morning many ***have departed from the faith.*** It might have been worldly wealth. It might have been worldly cares, worldly concerns. But God calls us to encourage, teach, and admonish those who know Jesus and share the Gospel with those who don't know Jesus for one simple reason. We know we are going to heaven and we want them to be there with us. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#)) Amen.