

1 Kings 3
Sermon Outline for May 29, 2011 at the Village Church of Lincolnshire
Michael Mauriello

Introduction: One of my favorite movies is *A Man for All Seasons*. I was, of course, devastated to find out that apparently the life of Thomas More was not as it was portrayed in the film. But I like the Thomas More of the film—so I'm going to pretend that is the real Thomas More.

- a. More was on the council of King Henry VIII of England as he was contemplating divorce from his first wife, Catherine.
 - b. More argued against it on theological grounds. Cardinal Woolsey, chancellor of England, argued for it on grounds that England needed a male heir to the throne.
 - i. In a private argument: Woolsey chides More for his theological commitments.
 - 1. You would like to govern a nation by prayers, wouldn't you?
 - 2. Yes I should.
 - 3. And you will not forsake your conscience for the sake of your public duties?
 - 4. I think those who forsake conscience for the sake of public duty lead their country by a short root, to chaos.
- I. Getting up to speed:
- a. Now, it says at the very end of chapter 2 that the kingdom was firmly established in Solomon's hands."
 - b. Which apparently took a bit of work...
 - i. This is a summary statement of a dangerous time in Solomon's reign.
 - ii. He cleans up the remainder of his father's messes.
 - iii. Dispenses justice where David could not or did not.
 - iv. In doing so, he's already proven himself a capable and shrewd ruler.
 - c. But he has a lot of work ahead of him in his reign to firmly establish the people of Israel as a stable people.
 - i. Solomon appears to have a few problems...
 - 1. He is coming off a rough and occasionally bloody beginning to a reign
 - a. He has justly, it seems, slain his brother
 - b. His commander in chief
 - c. And another political enemy
 - 2. He has made a geo-political alliance with Egypt
 - a. Perhaps as a way of staving off an Assyrian or Mesopotamian threats
 - b. He has sealed it with a marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter
 - c. Both of which seem forbidden by God.
 - 3. He has yet to improve his capital as the seat of his power...
 - a. No palace...
 - b. No wall...

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- c. And, most importantly for the heart of the people; no central place of worship.
 - d. And yet, Solomon follows his Father's example of loving the Lord.
 - i. Solomon showed his "love for the Lord";
 - 1. HOW: By walking according to the statutes of his Father David.
 - 2. EXCEPT that: he offered sacrifices and burnt offerings at the high places.
 - e. This statement sets the stage for the coming story:
 - i. The King goes to Gibeon (because that is the most important high place)
 - 1. He makes a huge sacrifice: 1000 burnt offerings
 - ii. God graciously appears to him in a dream...
 - 1. "Ask for whatever you want me to give to you."
 - 2. We all dream of this...
 - 3. Notice how open ended it feels. NO LIMITS—it's a short statement, a gentle invitation to ask.
- II. **First Point In the Sermon Notes:** Solomon's Request
- a. The kindness of God towards David,
 - i. Because he was faithful, righteous, upright of heart.
 - ii. **(A) Wisdom begins in a right relationship to God.**
 - b. God's kindness continued to David
 - i. Solomon is the partial fulfillment of a great promise to David.
 - ii. By giving him a son to sit on his throne, God upholds his everlasting covenant of love to David.
 - iii. No pressure, right? The recent movie, the King's Speech, makes this sort of royal pressure very clear.
 - c. The request:
 - i. You have made your servant king in David's place.
 - ii. "I am only a little child"
 - iii. The people are numerous, and great.
 - iv. Therefore:
 - 1. Give your servant a discerning heart
 - a. to govern your people
 - b. to distinguish right from wrong
 - 2. Who is able to govern this great people of yours?
 - v. **(B) Wisdom rules the people of God.**
 - 1. Solomon is right to point out his weakness, "his childhood."
 - 2. Our inherent sinfulness, our own selfishness, short-sightedness, make us all unlikely candidates for rulers.
 - a. Solomon is just ahead of the curve.

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3. So he asks for the ability to govern.
 - a. To distinguish right from wrong.
4. This week, Rob Blagovich is standing trial. The charges are very serious. And yet, he is acting very much like a child. In fact, it seems he cannot tell right from wrong.
 - a. But there's really nothing unique about him.
 - b. He's just like the rest of us, without any ability to rule.
5. Wisdom, is therefore, needed to rule well. Wisdom, God's ability to see, is the necessary to rule God's people thoughtfully.
 - a. Now, in the church, pastor's are shepherds, not kings.
 - b. The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ rule their people. But we appropriate the knowledge to act by wisdom.
 - c. In Ephesians 4; Paul tells us: "Be careful then, how you live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, for the days are evil." "Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

III. **Second Point In Sermon Notes:** God's Pleasure

- a. Since you have asked for this:
 - i. And not for
 1. Long life
 2. Or wealth for yourself
 3. Or for the death of your enemies
 - ii. But for discernment in administering justice...
- b. I will do what you have asked.
 1. I will give you a wise and discerning heart,
 - a. So that there will never be anyone like you,
 - b. Nor will there ever be.
 2. **(A)Wisdom is the gift of God.**
 - a. If we are children, and if we are aware of our inability to act in justice, in a way which is just, and right, and fair...
 - b. Then we must realize that just as the righteousness that comes to us through Jesus is "alien"—coming to God to us...
 - c. Then so it is with wisdom. The Holy Spirit makes wisdom known to us—he enlightens us to what exactly it we need to do—and more importantly, who we need to be.
 - i. Wisdom ought to change us to be more Christlike.
 - ii. William Wilberforces comment: I would change myself first, reminds us that...
 3. **(B) Wisdom works in the human heart.**

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- a. I will give you a wise and discerning heart...
 - b. The heart looks in three directions...
 - i. It looks at self.
 - ii. It looks at God to see self correctly.
 - iii. It looks at others.
 - c. A wise and discerning heart, in order to see well, must see God as he actually is—in order to live well.
 - d. It must apply wisdom to itself first, before it can apply wisdom to any other circumstance or situation.
 - i. Corrie Ten Boom tells the story of meeting a Nazi guard who worked at the concentration camp where she was imprisoned.
 - ii. Lord, she prayed, I cannot forgive this man. You must give me the strength to forgive him.
 - iii. She was one who saw God rightly.
 - 1. God is merciful
 - 2.
4. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for
- a. Both riches and honor
 - b. So that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings
- ii. If you will walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.
- 1. Note the condition.
 - 2. (C) Wisdom upholds the revelation of God.**
 - a. This is an extremely important point.
 - b. If we will not honor the instruction and the truth of Scripture, we cannot expect to live in any genuinely wise way.
 - c. Contextualization is not the absence or the negation of truth—it is merely its application.
 - d. To zero out a part of God's word, to nullify it, is to deny the foundation upon which any wisdom can come to us.
 - e. Both scripture and wisdom are from God—they uphold each other. To deny one is to deny the other, and to deny the God who sends both.
 - 3. Perhaps this is why Jesus is so keen to point out that he does not intend to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.
- c. A quit point: What about the rewards? Don't they point to a prosperity gospel mindset?
- i. I think the rewards are parables of God's intent.

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1. Solomon was apparently, according to the text, wealthier than any king of his time (not of all time).
2. But his wealth ensnares him.
3. He's granted long life; but it seems the longer he lives, the farther he falls from the God who has made him king over Israel.
- ii. The wealth is a parable of the glory of God—and the coming glory he intends for his people in relationship with him.
- iii. The long life is a symbol that wisdom is in fact, intended to bring life.
- iv. But these are not guarantees that all who are wise will live long lives or be wealthy people.
 1. The goal of wisdom is not to be powerful and live long.
 2. The goal of wisdom is Christlikeness.
 - a. And our life is hidden in him.
 - b. Very spiritual blessing is hidden in him.
 - c. Our treasure in heaven is hidden in him.
 - d. Our inheritance is him.
 - e. And resurrection life is hidden in him.
 3. All wealth and power belong to God, and he gives them to whom he wishes. And one day, when he gives everything to Christ, and puts all things under his feet, he will share these things with those who love him.
 4. But without him, they are simply snares and traps.
- d. Then Solomon, awoke, and he realized it had been a dream.
- IV. Solomon then returns to Jerusalem, and makes sacrifices before the ark of the Lord's covenant.
- V. **(Third Point In the sermon Notes)** And he is tested in front of the court
 - a. The test is given by two prostitutes. Now, there is something interesting, there in and of itself. They are never "taken to task" for their profession or life. And it seems likely, that they may even have lived in Jerusalem...though it can't be known for sure.
 - b. The problem is the question of a child...to whom does the child belong?
 - c. The story is frankly tragic...two woman, who for whatever reason, live unwise lives, now pleading for justice, one hoping against hope that the king can discern her child belongs to her.
 - i. Neither woman, it feels, deserve justice.
 - ii. And a child hangs in the balance.
 - d. **(A) Wisdom is open to anyone who needs it: especially sinners in grave trouble.**
 - e. As they argue, and grow more and more desperate...the king realizes that he is going to get nowhere listening to them argue back and forth, saying the same thing over and over again.
 - i. So, he tries something different.
 - ii. "Bring me a sword!"

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1. Now, so far, Solomon's reign could be characterized by the sword.
 - a. He has killed his brother.
 - b. He has killed his father's commander in chief.
 - c. He has killed his father's rival.
2. So, there is no doubt that people most likely thought, Holy smokes, he is actually going to do it. He is actually going to cut this child in half.
 - a. He is running a huge risk: will all of his justice be done with the sword?
 - b. And he runs the risk of brutality? Look what he does with a child.
- iii. He cannot discern the truth by the stories...they are identical. He feints an injustice to bring compassion out of the true mother.
 1. She is filled with compassion: Please, my Lord! Give her the living baby! Do not kill him! She is the mother.
 2. But the other said, "Neither you nor I shall have him. Cut him in two!"
 - 3. (B) Wisdom evokes the truth of our hearts.**
 4. Wisdom brings out the best in the wise and the worst in the fool.
- f. When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe!
 - i. Because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.
 - ii. **(C) Wisdom's daughter is justice—she prompts the fear that honors God.**
 1. And this is not fear brought about by the sword, but by holiness and righteousness.

Main Point: Wisdom is the gift to see as God sees—boldly ask for it to live justly.

As I said before, wisdom is necessary for the church to act well in the age and the world of evil. We do not rule, not in the same sense as Solomon did. But the Lord Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. And while we do not see him reigning, we do see him crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Jesus has received much higher glory, honor, and praise than Solomon ever did. And he is now crowned with life, in fact he is life itself, and has an indestructible life! If the flowers of the field are arrayed in more splendor than Solomon, how much more the true son of David, to whom all the promises of life have passed.

And we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places; our life is hidden in Christ and will be revealed when he appears. Consequently, he reigns in us now—he is enthroned in our hearts by faith—and he has given us his righteousness by faith—so that as we wait for our own life and glory in the coming resurrection—we may live for God now!

Consequently, we need to see as God sees so we may live now, making the most of every opportunity to make his glory known, his rule more apparent, and his gospel spread. Thus we live as wise as opposed as unwise, being filled with the Spirit of God.

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We want to live as wise people in the kingdom of God. And to live as wise to be a people who are just—for if the God who sends Jesus to be an atonement saves us to demonstrate his justice in Jesus—then those he saves must live with the justice of God transforming their hearts, their minds, and their lives. We must be just and transformed by justice, in order that we may act justly. We must have Jesus open our eyes—so we can actually see, and then when we see, act in concord with the truth of the gospel and the truth of wisdom.

We must see as God sees. We need his discernment to do so. We must be like the blind man in Mark 10—Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

We must be like the blind man of John 9: One thing I know, once I was blind, but now I see.

We must be like Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9: Brother Saul, the Lord—jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Oh, Lord Jesus, fill us with your Spirit so that we may see as you see—give us the heart of discernment that we may judge what is good and evil, right and wrong. Give us insight to evoke justice in the other—to draw out truth. And give us the moral courage to honor the conscience so that we as the body of Christ, bring glory to you, and lead ourselves not to chaos. Amen