

Trinity UMC May 22, 2022
Resurrection Shaped Life: Wisdom
Rev. Geri Hamlen 6th Sunday of Easter
Mary Slagle information



Prayer of the Day

Christ, you came to the world as a baby boy in a faraway place and time.
Still you are with us, here and now.
Receive the prayers of your people who call upon you,
and grant that we may know and understand what you would have us do.
We give thanks for your grace and power to learn and grow
and accomplish your will in this world. Amen.

Scripture Reading 1 Kings 3: 1 – 15

Proclamation of the Word

‘Resurrection Shaped Life: Wisdom’

Preaching for college students is different than preaching for their parents or grand-parents. I haven’t had a lot of practice in preparing a message for that age group but I’m always willing to try! I asked myself: What do I want you to know as you enter into your college years and how does the story of Solomon’s dream give me some good material to work with. So let’s see how this goes...

You’ve heard the Children’s SS interpretation of King Solomon’s dream so now that the kids are gone to SS...let me tell you the more Grown up version! This is background info that you can find for yourself if/when you have time to read the preceding and following chapters of the 1 Kings but I’ll fill you in:

- Solomon was the Son of King David who had **8** wives and 20 sons and only 1 daughter. Solomon was the 10th son named in the Bible. So how did he get to be king? Well, it’s pretty common in the Bible for younger brothers to receive God’s favor over the older brother but there’s more to it than that for this family.
- Solomon’s Mother was Bathsheba who begged King David and insisted that Solomon be the king after King David died. Yes, there were a LOT Of political intrigues going on.
- When King David died, Adonijah – the 4th son-- took over the throne. I won’t even get into what happened to the first 3 sons...talk about drama.
- Long story short. Solomon had to kill his older brother—Adonijah—in order to claim himself King. Yes, this is not the first time a brother kills a brother in the Bible!

- And then...Solomon also had to kill **Joab** Military commander who had served King David for decades.
- Married an Egyptian princess...not for love but for prestige and glory, to prove that he was a player on the international stage, like his father or even better perhaps.
- The problem being that God didn't want Israel to have a **political alliance with Egypt**, Dating back to the time of Moses when the Pharaoh of Egypt would NOT let his people go.
- And, as if that wasn't bad enough, God wanted Solomon to build him a temple in Jerusalem but Solomon decided to build his own house first.
- Built not only a Temple but also a wall around the city.
- And God wanted the Temple to be the holiest place on earth
- Solomon still went to the older places...High places...to worship and bring offerings to God...even AFTER the Temple was built.

Can I just pause and tell you that the 'high places' don't refer to marijuana parties. In the ancient world, many cultures, similar to Native Americans in North and South America, worshipped outside, up on mountains or on the top of hills. Stone altars or wooden figures might be there with some kind of priest or shaman to accept the offerings and lead the worship in whatever form that might take. In the centuries prior to Solomon, big name Israelites—Moses, Joshua, Samuel went to the high places to encounter God but at some point, around the time of Solomon, God said that the Temple in Jerusalem would replace the 'high places' and was the one most Holy Place for God's people to worship and bring their offerings. The point at which the Jewish religion, the ancient faith of Jesus himself moved inside.

So you can see that we wouldn't want to boggle the minds of little kids with all that detail. As much as I love that we do SS and VBS with the littles, when you go to college, I want to be sure you know that for every SS story you ever heard in your life...there's probably a whole lot more going on than we ever told you!

I want you to be able to say...Yeah, King Solomon was a Wise Guy but...he was also a human being who did some stuff that was kind of creepy. And yeah...King Solomon didn't always do what God wanted done...but God still came to him in a dream and offered him good stuff.

You may have people ask you at college...So you're a Methodist---what do they believe? And because the United Methodist Church is in the news periodically as we figure out how to divide and multiply...I want you to be able to say this with all integrity:

We Methodists believe that the Bible is a multi dimensional masterpiece inspired by God who designed it so brilliantly that it can be understood by little children and by people in all different stages of life. And the more you read the Bible and the more you read ABOUT it, the more the Holy Spirit of God will reveal deeper and more beautiful **wisdom** and **understanding** of what God wants us to know in our minds, hear in our hearts and discover about the difference between good and evil.

The Bible is like a perennial plant or bush or tree that comes back after the winter cold, into the summer sunshine with more branches and more flowers and more shade and more amazing room for birds to nest and owls to live.

Be wary, my good people, of those who claim that there is only one way to read and explain the Bible. The truth is that each one of you will have your own personal experience of the Bible and when that experience is informed by the Holy Spirit, it probably will not be exactly the same as anyone else's because God grants wisdom and discernment that is individually and uniquely suited to the reader, each reader.

Yes, claiming to understand the Bible can be dangerous. You can be mis-led by your own minds and opinions and interests but when you read the Bible in community with others who are also abiding in the Holy Spirit, attending to the teachings of Jesus...wow...a wonderful garden of insights can be shared.

Another thing I want you to know as you head off to college: You will find lots and lots of people in the Bible like King Solomon who are sometimes good and sometimes, not so good. It's like the story of the wolves...have you heard this one: It's an ancient Native American teaching...attributed to a variety of different tribes. Not sure which one is accurate:

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other wolf is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

*The old Cherokee simply replied, "**The one you feed.**"*

This is an ancient wisdom that acknowledges the same reality we see in Holy Scripture that no human being is all good and no human being is all bad. I've heard this described as having an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other. Which one is going to win? **The one you listen to.**

We don't get to choose our personalities and our talents, our weaknesses, our limitations...but we all have them. And I hope you go to college knowing that God made you just exactly the way you are...in God's own image. Think of God Saying that you are good. Not just 'Good Enough' but Good and very Good. And now go and do something good with all that goodness. Yes there will be struggles and temptations but...

Another thing that we Methodists believe, Wesleyan wisdom, is that God's plan is for each of us can grow and learn and listen and feed the goodness in us. We can become the people God made us to be when we trust that God's grace and peace and love is with us and when we pray for guidance. Not all by ourselves, of course, but in community and fellowship with others who are followers of Jesus—we can listen for the Holy Spirit and learn how to be fed by the wisdom of Jesus who loves us all.

Maybe King Solomon's life would have been better if he had a group of friends to help him, to remind him of God's gifts to him so he could see where he went wrong. Because he did, in fact, get way off the track by the end of his life. Yes, God gave him wisdom which he used to the benefit of many. Yes, Solomon finally built the Temple...at what cost to the laborers we will never know.

Yes, he inspired a number of the books of the Bible but there were some really disastrous consequences for his other actions—when he was feeding the wrong wolf and listening to the wrong voice in his ear.

Personal obsession and compulsion even in that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines/girl-friends. I doubt if that was a case of the more the merrier...can you imagine? And many of those wives were from foreign countries and they brought their foreign religions with them and Solomon worshiped their foreign gods. Not a good thing at all! Political chaos...yes, there's a whole lot more to the story of God's action in the life of Solomon...and the people of Israel that I won't go into.

But...if you can take the long term historical view...eventually, out of the descendants of Solomon, for all of his chaos and disobedience, came the birth of the baby Jesus. Yes, the Bible is also a family saga that leads us through the centuries of ancestors right up to the miracle of God coming to live among us in the person of Jesus.

That's one more Methodist thing that I want you to take to college with you from out of this King Solomon story. We truly believe that in and through Jesus Christ, something good can come out of the worst case scenario.

The challenge, and some would say the tragedy, of our lives is that we don't always live long enough to see the good that God creates out of the messes we humans make. But is that a tragedy? Or is that an opportunity for faith, hope and trust? The followers of Jesus from those very earliest days of his ministry... wondered and feared and even betrayed him. But his crucifixion and resurrection are at the very center of our understanding about God's project on this earth.

Yes the bad stuff will happen...no matter how careful or lucky or privileged we may be. But the story never ends there, whether we live to see it or not. The resurrection of Jesus on that third day after his death, the appearances of Jesus to his friends as told in the Bible, the teachings and Acts of the Apostles tell us over and over again that God's miracles are trustworthy and true. And a Resurrection shaped life is marked by courage and loyalty and character and wisdom. And there will be mistakes, errors, poor choices but there will also always be Forgiveness through the love and grace of Jesus Christ—forgiveness for you and for the people who may do you wrong.

Resurrection shaped living means that we know: Eternal life is not just something that happens when we die. We are living eternal life right here and right now as the baptized followers of Jesus who live in him. We abide with him and with his people and his story is our story. His victory over death is our victory over death. His promise to us that he is the Way and the Truth and the Life is our way and our truth and our life.

Kings and kingdoms will all pass away...but the gracious love and the healing power of Jesus is with us always. And with those we know and love. And yes, even with those who we call enemies and impossible to live with. That is what Resurrection living looks like for those who call themselves Followers of Jesus. Jesus. And that is wisdom that you can totally take to college with you and into every chapter of your life. Amen.