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1 Kings 3:5-12

A “HEART OF LISTENING” IS A WISE HEART!

The book of Proverbs says, *“Wisdom is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. It is more precious than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with her.”*

Young Solomon, the newly inaugurated king of Israel, asked the Lord for wisdom. In the EHV translation we are using it says, “a perceptive heart.” Literally translated, Solomon asked for a “heart of listening.” Not a heart of speaking. Not a heart of working. A heart of listening. This heart of listening God Himself praises as a wise and discerning heart.

A heart of listening recognizes that it isn’t sufficient on its own. A wise heart listens to God for what it needs. The Bible says, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* King Solomon’s stomach must have been tied in knots as he took charge of his father David’s kingdom. Besides the dizzying web of military, social, economic, and foreign affairs, what weighed most heavily on him was the uniqueness of the nation he was governing. God had chosen this nation to be the cradle of the promised Savior. The ramifications were global and eternal. It would all be impossible without God’s purposeful working.

Thus when God spoke to Solomon, Solomon was compelled to plead: *“I am only a little child.”* Likely none of us here have been kings or presidents, but haven’t we been overwhelmed often enough by expectations at work or at school or just everything with the family and the household? What will happen if I don’t get it finished, or I can’t compete, or I fall behind, or I embarrass myself or my family or I just can’t stay on top of it all? Each day is another exercise in desperation bordering on panic mixed with despair. Behind the scenes several demons are whispering to skew your perception so that the large looming things loom even larger and the help of God seems ever more meagre. Martin Luther knew what he was talking about when he wrote in his Small Catechism under “Lead us not into temptation: *“we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, or other great and shameful sins.”*

Solomon cried out, “I’m only a little child.” Jesus said, *“Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Well then, so that heaven may be ours let’s have hearts that listen to Jesus. Let’s become like little children. Let’s acknowledge that like little children we are helpless. We move from one crisis to another. Our whole life is a series of earthly crises. If we can’t deliver ourselves from inevitable earthly crises how can we expect to rescue ourselves from the death and the hell that come after that?

A heart of listening is a wise heart because it listens to God for what it needs. God speaks to us our greatest need: He speaks Jesus to us. Christ took on Himself the task of defeating death and hell. He shouldered all the labor and responsibility for earning and organizing our way into heaven. He suffered the anguish of the damned when the heavenly Father abandoned Him on the cross. So awful was it that the lights didn’t merely go out for Christ, the lights went out for the whole world. Christ went through all that in place of us so that God will not, forsake or abandon you.

But don’t listen to your heart for that good news. You won’t find it there. Rather, have a heart that listens to God’s Word when it is preached, when it is spoken by your parents, or Sunday School teacher or when you read it. Listen to His words in the Lord’s Supper: Here are my body and blood. I give them to you for the forgiveness of sins. I have not abandoned you. Far from it! I can not get closer to you than this!

A heart of listening is a wise heart because it listens to God's Word for what it needs. In fact, God supplies all our needs and answers all our prayers with His Word and promises.

For this reason, a wise heart is not only a heart that listens, but also takes to heart what it hears. Solomon did not merely ask God to give him ears for listening, but a heart of listening.

Solomon asked for this because it is something we don't come by naturally. A heart of listening is something only God can give. Many of us grew up singing this truth in our liturgy: Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me. What comes naturally to us is to have despairing hearts, cynical hearts, blind-to-all-good hearts, even unbelieving hearts. A listening heart can only be created by the power of God's Word. I wonder, if we did a little more taking to heart the Word of God—which is reliable and perfect because it is from God—and a little less taking to heart the latest Covid test results and reporting—which are inherently flawed because they are from human origin—I wonder how much more cheerful and useful servants of God we would be? How much more would we reflect His glory?

In fact, this is the blessing God promises to work in us through His Word. Through His Word and promises God the Holy Spirit comes to us. He fills us with faith, peace, love and joy. The Bible calls Him the Comforter. Therefore true wisdom, the kind that can only come from God, is to trust in Christ for our salvation in any and every situation, despite everything we see, hear and feel to the contrary because God's Word says so. The Bible says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."*

Look how gladly God kept that promise to Solomon. He gave Solomon not just the heart for listening that he asked for, but a greater wisdom than anyone else before him or after him ever had. God also flooded him with things He didn't ask for: unmatched wealth, world renown and national peace. Let the example of Solomon encourage you. Let it show us how delighted God is when we seek hearts that listen.

God will never give His Word and Sacraments to you without the Holy Spirit. You will never hear a Spiritless Scripture lesson, or a Spiritless sermon. You will never receive a Spiritless baptism or a Spiritless Lord's Supper.

A heart of listening is therefore truly a gift from God—one that God is eager to give us. When we listen to God for what we need and we take to heart what He says we can thank the Holy Spirit. Such wisdom is truly more precious than rubies.