

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

...as follows in Jesus' name:

And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward You. And You have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give Your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern Your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this Your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. ^(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

People loved by God,

Can you imagine having this opportunity? Like finding a mythical genie in a lamp with one wish.

What would you wish for?

To win the lottery? To have a happy life without worry or care?

To be famous... or at least to be popular, maybe even influential...

or just not to be bothered by anyone?

How about... to be good at your job?

Not necessarily even the best... just good, diligent, and faithful?

And not so that YOU can have a good reputation and become famous,

but so that you can simply serve the Lord and your neighbors well.

In a sense, that is what Solomon requested.

As he considered the great responsibility that he had inherited, ruling the nation of Israel, he felt inadequate... like **a little child**, who did **not know how to go out or come in**.

In other words, he felt inexperienced in how to conduct the affairs of God's people.

He knew that it was only by grace that he had been given the throne (though others tried to take it).

He knew that it had been because of a promise God made to David while Solomon was yet a baby.

So it wasn't like Solomon had earned or deserved or demonstrated military prowess to become king.

And yet, he did not shrink from this great responsibility.

He asked for God's blessing, for wisdom, to be able to bear up under it and to do it well.

And God was pleased with his request.

Both 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles record how richly the Lord kept His promises to Solomon, of his wealth, power, influence, and industriousness throughout his long 40-year reign. The books of Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and even a few Psalms, demonstrate his wisdom. And through King Solomon, the Lord also provided rich daily bread for His people Israel.

In 2 Chron. [1:15] it says that Solomon **made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone**. So we can get a glimpse of what M. Luther was getting at when among the blessings of daily bread we pray for in the 4th Petition, he lists *faithful servants and rulers, good government... peace*, and the like.

...

Like many people starting off at a new school or in a new job, as a new spouse or first time parents, Solomon started off very conscientiously, feeling the weight and seriousness of his responsibilities. He was humble and receptive, diligent to use his many gifts and resources for God's glory. God's wisdom served him well, laying down a foundation that allowed God's people to flourish. But as "life happened" (as "life happens" still today), the newness & his conscientiousness wore off, as did his undivided dedication to the Lord.

As the Lord continued to bless Solomon more abundantly, his attention drifted from pleasing God to pleasing himself. Though he had been given the ability to **discern between good and evil**, he unwisely allowed his blessings to distract his attention away from the Lord.

Solomon seems to confess this in the book of Ecclesiastes where he reflects on his waywardness.

He **applied his heart to search out by wisdom man's lot in life... an unhappy business.** Ecc. 1:14

He lived for pleasure... with all the entertainment and delights he could afford.

"It is mad," he said. 2:1-2

He was industrious and built great buildings and planted beautiful gardens. 2:17

He labored hard and was given great success... yet found it all **a vanity, a striving after the wind**, as he realized the futility of having done all this... but to what purpose?

In other words, he realized how empty all those earthly provisions were, without peace with God.

He said it this way: **There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God.** 2:24-26

What wisdom God gave to Solomon... and then recorded it for us!

So that, being wise and understanding, knowing and discerning good from evil, we do not need to make the same mistakes as Solomon.

So that we can learn wisdom from him and recognize, as he did,

that we are more than just the physical provisions that capture our eyes and attention; ...that our life isn't just a rat-race, trying to accumulate stuff for ourselves or our heirs, or simply trying to live with the most comforts and entertainments we can afford, or having the most athletic prowess, or being the most influential on social media...

Just look around... or maybe even look inside... and consider what you see and experience: in a time of such great prosperity, with comforts greater than the world has ever known, how is it that we suffer such high rates of depression, even suicide?

Apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

This is true for everyone... for you... for your kids... for your family... for your neighbors.

If you do not have peace with God...

if your conscience is weighed down with guilt and shame...

if you constantly fear the loss of your earthly wealth because you do not trust the Lord's provision...

if you are uncertain about what will happen to you after you die...

What joy in life can you truly have?

Eventually, even the entertainments and diversions can't distract you enough from the emptiness.

...

But the Lord gives wisdom to all those who seek it.

You don't need to be the King of Israel to ask the Lord for wisdom to discern good and evil.

You already have His ear just as Solomon did...

He listens to you pray because you are His own dear child, baptized into Christ.

You can pray for an understanding mind... a perceiving heart,

that listens to discern the true, good, and beautiful from the false, evil and foul...

that listens to the Lord's wisdom, recorded for you in His word (more precious than gold that perishes).

And with that wisdom comes peace, as you consider what is true.

Like wise Solomon, you can recognize your folly and sin, discerning the evil...

you can acknowledge and repent of your faithlessness in your duties and responsibilities,

you can openly confess your fears and indiscretions to the Lord,

because you also know that David's greater Son than Solomon, one infinitely wiser has already come to reign in your heart and over this world so that you may have peace with God.

Jesus Christ, God's Wisdom from on high, came to earth solely focused on your salvation.

He not only discerned the good from the evil... distinguished the pure from the unholy...

but He kept it in thought, word, and deed, living a perfectly righteous life on your behalf.

He did not shrink from this great and weighty responsibility, but bore up under it in perfect faith.

Even when it led to His death on the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world...for your sins...

He wisely trusted in the Lord who always keeps His promises,

committing Himself into His Father's hands so that He could bring and give your heart peace.

And where there is peace, there can be joy, even in the weighty responsibilities of your vocation,

as you serve your Lord and your neighbor with the wisdom given by God,

knowing that through Christ, the Father is pleased with you.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria