

And Jesus Requested Wisdom

1Kings 3:4-15

The First Sunday after Christmas, January 2, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus did not ask for wealth. If He had He would have been wealthier. He had poor parents. They could not afford the regular sacrifice for Mary's purification at the temple, so they took advantage of God's sliding scale and offered a pigeon and a dove. Joseph could not afford to bribe the inn keeper in Bethlehem. Joseph was part of an emerging worker class in the Roman Empire. Jews admired hard work, but they did not get paid much for it. If Joseph really wanted to make a mint in the ancient world he would have farmed. They were poor. They made the best living that they could. Jesus did not ask for wealth. If He had He would have been born in a more prominent family.

Jesus did not ask for long life. If He had, He would have lived a little longer. Immediately after His birth Herod the Great wants to kill Him. The first assault on His life is made when He is still a baby. Jesus lived a risky life. People threatened to push Him over a cliff. People threatened to stone Him. People plotted against His life.

If Jesus had asked for a long life, He would have gotten along with people a little better. He would have been a bit more diplomatic. If Jesus had asked for a long life, He would not have said things that got people riled up. If Jesus had asked for a long life, He would not have risked His life. He would have been nice to people. He would have said things that were more in vogue with popular belief.

If Jesus had asked for a long life, He would not have died so young. Estimates of the age of Jesus based upon the Gospels run about 33 years of age. According to Luke He started His ministry when He was about thirty. According to John's Gospel He celebrated two or maybe three Passovers. If that is the case He was thirty-two or thirty-three give or take a year or two when they crucified. He was not old at all.

If someone that age died now His funeral would be filled with all of the people who knew that person. They would have interacted with so many people. Funerals are big when those who are young die. When the elderly die many of their friends are already gone or have forgotten them.

Jesus did not ask for long life.

Jesus did not ask for the life of His enemies. It certainly would have saved Him a lot of trouble if He had. If Jesus had asked for the life of those people who tried to throw Him over the side of a cliff and if God had given Him their lives, people would have feared Him. They would have known that to threaten Jesus is to risk one's life. People threatened Him before and they died. Don't threaten Jesus if you don't want to die. That is what would have happened had Jesus asked for the life of His enemies.

Jesus would have rescued Himself if He had asked for the life of His enemies. It was His enemies who had Him put to death. If it were not for His enemies He would never have gone to trial before Pontius Pilate. Pilate never would have heard of Jesus. Pilate would never have sentenced Him to death. And under Roman occupation the only people who could sentence people to death in Judea was Pilate. He was the Roman authority. So if Jesus had requested the life of His enemies, there would not have been anyone there to turn Him over to Pilate.

Alternatively Jesus could have asked for Pontius Pilate's life. That certainly would have garnered Him some respect. Granted it would have been temporary respect lost in the annals of history and subject only to the interest of historians like so many other ancient usurpers who were important to their followers at the time, but about whom we know nothing and even if we do know something only university professors would care. But Jesus could have done it. The Father would have granted Him

twelve legions of angels. Why not the life of His enemies? The life of His enemies would almost be simpler than the twelve legions of angels. Either that or the twelve legions of angels would have done the job for Him. Angels can be a pretty tough crowd when you get them riled up.

Jesus could have asked for the life of the soldiers who crucified Him. That would have put the crucifixion to a stop. But Jesus had not asked for long life so why would He ask for the life of the soldiers who crucified Him. Jesus did not ask for the life of His enemies. If He had, His life would have been more pleasant.

Instead Jesus asked God for wisdom in administering justice. That is a strange request for Jesus.

At Christmas time it always gets emphasized that Jesus is God. Jesus is God! Jesus is God in the flesh! Jesus is God with us! Jesus is Immanuel! God has been made into flesh! The Word became flesh and the Word was God. We are post Niceno- Constantinopolitan Christians which is an historians way of saying that, "Jesus is God!"

Folks, Jesus is God. I am not disputing that, but Jesus is also human. And on the day after the celebration of His birth one could say that on this day Jesus is an infant. He is a baby. I mean where are all of those divine powers of Jesus when Herod comes knocking in Bethlehem to kill Him? Why couldn't Jesus have waved His divine infant hand and knocked all of Herod's soldiers to the ground. He did that when they came to arrest Him. Is it only adult Gods who have the power to knock soldiers down and not the little Ones? When Herod came to kill Jesus the reaction was that God sent a dream to Joseph to take the child and His mother and flee to Egypt until Herod was dead. So that is what they did. No miracle. They did just what anyone would do who had a little divine insight from on high.

That is how Jesus lived His life. He lived His life like we live our lives. He was baptized and everything. He was tempted and everything. He prayed and everything. And what the incident between Solomon and God tells us is that when Jesus was out there praying in the wilderness or wherever, He was praying about you. He was praying for wisdom in administering justice to you.

Jesus knew His Bible. For Him it was the Old Testament and He knew it really well. He knew it not just because He was God, but He knew it because He spent time studying it. He knew His Bible really well. He knew what it said. He knew what was important about what it said. He even impressed the teachers in the temple when He was a small boy. You don't have to be God to know your Bible. You don't have to be God to know what it says and be able to apply it. You simply need to ask for wisdom.

Knowing the Bible really well is what gave Jesus the wisdom to administer justice to His people. He told the Pharisees that they were hypocrites. This is a judgment that Jesus rendered. He told them that they tithed mint and rue and cumin and ignored the weightier portions of the Law: mercy and justice. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.

Jesus knew that the main parts of the Bible were mercy and justice. He knew that because He knew His Bible. He knew that because He had asked God for wisdom.

You need a lot of wisdom to administer justice and mercy the way that God wants it done. To the penitent Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven." To the hypocrite He pointed out their hypocrisy. To those who trusted in their own righteousness, He condemned them with the righteous requirements of the Law. To those who beat their breasts over their sins He pronounced justification. To those who repented of their sins, He pronounced salvation. He did with the Spirit and with the wisdom that He had received from His Father in heaven.

Jesus requested the ability to say the right thing at the right time to the right person. That takes a lot of wisdom right there. He received that ability. Then He went around saying just the right thing to the right person at just the right time.

It got Him killed. It also brought salvation to many.

And in spite of the fact that Jesus did not request wealth He obtained it anyway. God the Father was so pleased that Jesus had requested wisdom that He gave Him wealth anyway. We could talk about the obvious wealth of someone who sits at the right hand of God. He has all dominions and principalities and powers under His reign. That means He owns them all. He owns the White House. He owns the Kremlin. He owns all of the gross domestic product of the nations of the world. That is His obvious wealth sitting at the right hand of the Father to say nothing of all of the wealth of heaven. But look at what people are willing to give Him. I realize that it is all His already, but look at what people are ready to give Him. He gives them their wealth to support their lives. Out of what they have to support their lives, they still give back to Him! They still offer an offering to Him! They still give their wealth to Him! Look at all of the wealth that is administered in the world in His Name! So even though Jesus did not ask for wealth, God gave it to Him.

In spite of the fact that Jesus did not request a long life, He has received one. After He died He rose from the dead. He rose from the dead. He has the longest life of any one human being. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He has an indestructible life. He cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over Him. He has mastery over death. His life goes on and on forever.

In spite of the fact that Jesus did not request the life of His enemies, His Father in heaven will give Him the life of His enemies. The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son. The Son administers that judgment on the Father's behalf. The Son does and speaks only as He sees the Father do and speak. On the Last Day Jesus will sit upon His throne. He will judge all nations. It is destined for all of us to die once and after that to face the judgment. This includes the enemies of Jesus as well. They will face Him also. They will stand before Him. Their eternal fate will be in His hands. He will decide where they spend eternity. Their life will be in His hands. At that moment God the Father will have given to Jesus the life of His enemies. Jesus may do with them as He pleases.

Now all of these gifts of life, victory over enemies and wealth are given in proportion to the life of Jesus.

Solomon had asked for wisdom also. God gave Solomon wisdom. And for Solomon's time he was the wisest king of them all. But God did say that the length of his days, along with the other gifts, were dependent upon how well Solomon kept the statutes and the commandments of God. Solomon did this for a while until the foreign women that he had married led his heart astray after other gods. Once that happened, Solomon died. The length of his days ended.

Here is where Jesus is the Son of David that the Old Testament prophecies about. You can talk about Solomon being the Son of David and even though He is David's literal son, He does not measure up to the task. Jesus does measure up to the task. He has length of days that are proportional to the way in which He kept the statutes and commandments of God. Perfection yields eternity. Jesus accomplished it. He did it.

What was true only provisionally for Solomon is eternally true for Jesus. There has never been a king like Him. There will never be a king like Him after Him. No one has ever or will ever keep the commandments and statutes of God. No one has a life like His, one which can be bestowed upon others. No one will judge the way that He judges: forgiving the sinners and sifting out the hypocrites.

No one makes sacrifices the way that Jesus makes them. He offers Himself. No one prepares a feast the way that Jesus does. At first serving Himself and then later serving eternity.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.