

The Deal

1Kings 3:4-15

The Second Sunday after Christmas, December 27, 2009

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The Father came to the Son and made the Son an offer, "Ask what I shall give You."

Jesus did not ask His Father for wealth. He certainly could have asked for wealth. Jesus deserved great wealth. He did not ask His Father for wealth. If Jesus had asked His Father for wealth, He would have been a little wealthier than He was.

Instead Jesus lives off of the generosity of others. People make donations and gifts to His ministry just like gifts are made to the ministry here at any typical congregation. Jesus had a treasury. Jesus had a treasurer. It was Judas Iscariot. The ministry of Jesus, therefore, also had some financial troubles. Jesus was not wealthy. He did not make a lot of money doing what He did.

Jesus was not born rich. With Jesus that really means something. He and the Father could have arranged a different birth for Him. They did not. They arranged a birth into the new working class of the Roman Empire. While the Jews admired hard work and rewarded it as well as they could, economically speaking in the Empire working class people were not wealthy among and under the Romans. They were a new class of people to the Romans and had to prove their worth before they received a reward. After all if you wanted labor done and you were a Roman, go buy a slave. That is a long historical way of saying that Jesus was born into a poor family. This was a deliberate choice on His and the Father's part. After all Jesus did not ask the Father for wealth.

Jesus did not ask the Father for long life. He did not ask His Father to live a long time. If Jesus had asked the Father for a long life, Jesus would have lived a little longer than He did.

Luke's Gospel tells us that Jesus began His ministry at about the age of thirty. John's Gospel mentions what is believed by most people to be three separate Passovers. That is where the age of thirty three comes from that you hear people bandying about as the age when Jesus died.

Jesus died young. He died young by our standards. He died young by ancient standards. The Jews permitted you to comment on the Scripture as soon as you underwent your Barmitvah, but that was only a formality. They didn't really let you comment on the Scriptures until you were fifty. That is why in John's Gospel the Jews complain that Jesus is not yet fifty years old and He is going around telling people what the Scriptures mean. Jesus fell short of fifty years by only a couple of decades. To some of us that isn't all that long. He could have waited. He could have lived that long, but Jesus did not ask His Father for a long life.

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed really hard. He does not want to die. Who could blame Jesus? If I were in His situation, I would be praying for my life also. The funny thing is that Jesus could have gotten out of the situation. The Garden of Gethsemane is on the Mount of Olives. He could have escaped on the east side of the Mount of Olives into the plain near the Jordan and the guards never would have found Him in the dark, but He didn't.

Jesus could have appealed to the injustice of His trial. Jewish trials were not permitted at night, but His was held at night. They were not permitted unless most of the Sanhedrin could be present. Most of the Sanhedrin was not present that night. Jesus could have appealed to these Jewish practices to point out the fact that His trial was a sham. He could have revealed the false witnesses who were brought against Him. Jesus does not.

Jesus could have appealed to Pontius Pilate. He could have pressured Pilate to make the charge of His innocence stick. He could have struck some kind of deal with Pilate that would get Him off without starting a riot. Jesus didn't.

Jesus did not do any of these things. Jesus did not ask for a long life.

Jesus Himself says that He could have called upon twelve legions of angels. He tells Peter to put his sword away. Peter was just trying to save His life. Peter was just trying to keep Him from dying. Peter was simply trying to prevent His arrest. Jesus tells him to put his sword away. "I can call upon My Father in heaven and He will at once send Me twelve legions of angels." Well, why didn't He do it? We have seen Him command the wind and the waves, why not that? In fact in John's Gospel when they come to arrest Jesus and they ask for Him and Jesus says, "I am He," they all fall over backward. Jesus can rebuke them with a word and never mind the twelve legions of angels. Why doesn't He ask His Father in heaven for the angels? He and His Father in heaven have a prior arrangement. The Father offered Jesus anything that He wanted. The Father told Jesus to ask what He would give Him. Jesus did not ask for long life.

Jesus did not ask for the death of His enemies.

He could have asked for the death of His enemies. His enemies certainly deserved to die. Unknowingly His enemies put an innocent man to death. Not only do they put an innocent man to death, they wind up putting the Son of God to death. Not only do they put the Son of God to death, they put the incarnate God to death. They put Him to death! What a crime! Jesus had every right to have them put to death. Jesus could have asked the Father to avenge His death. But Jesus did not ask for the death of His enemies. Instead Jesus asked the Father to forgive them for they did not know what they were doing.

Jesus did not ask for long life. Jesus did not ask for wealth. Jesus did not ask for the death of His enemies. Instead Jesus grew in stature and in wisdom and in favor with God and man. Jesus must have asked for wisdom. Jesus will need wisdom if He is going to judge His people.

Jesus judges you. I don't mean that Jesus judges you at the end of time. He does judge you at the end of time, but that is not what I am talking about. What I am talking about is the fact that right now in the present moment, Jesus judges you.

By judge I mean that Jesus makes some kind of pronouncement on your life. What Jesus asks His Father in heaven for is the wisdom to make sure that when Jesus makes His pronouncement on your life that His pronouncement is a good one and the right one. Jesus is going to need all of the wisdom that He can muster for that task.

Solomon had only one case that is recorded for us. It is the tale of two prostitutes. They lived in the same house. Both of them were pregnant. They both gave birth about the same time. During the night one of the prostitutes rolled onto her baby and smothered it. When she realized what she had done she switched her dead baby with the other prostitute's living baby while the other prostitute slept. When the other prostitute awoke, she initially thought that her baby had died, but upon closer inspection in the light she realized that it was not her baby, but the other woman's baby.

Some of you may know the story. The two women go before Solomon. The innocent woman presents her case as I have described it. All the guilty woman has to do is stand there and deny it and claim that the living baby is hers. There is no way for Solomon to tell the difference.

Solomon commands that a sword be brought to him. He offers to cut the baby in two and give half to each woman. The guilty woman agrees to this plan figuring that way neither one of them would have a live baby. The mother felt compassion for her child and offered simply to let the other woman have her son in order to make sure it lived. Solomon awarded her her child.

Jesus makes no judgments like this one. Solomon is clever. He is smart. He deals out justice. He had also asked the Father for wisdom. The Father had given Solomon wisdom. But Jesus has a wisdom that is so great that there was never a king like Jesus, nor will there ever be a king like Jesus.

God the Father answered the prayer of Jesus. He gave Him wisdom so that Jesus could make judgments on the great people of God the Father, the human race. Jesus makes His judgments: On that day many will say to me, "Lord, lord, did we not teach in Your Name? Did we not cast out demons in Your Name? And I will say to them, 'Away from Me, you evil doers. I never knew you.'" Or take another one of His judgments, "Many will come from east and west, from north and south, to sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven, but you yourselves will be cast out." One of Jesus' more terrible judgments went this way, "Woe unto you! Hypocrites all! You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. You tithe mint and rue and cumin, but you neglect the weightier portions of the law, justice and mercy."

Jesus makes judgments unlike anything any other king has ever made. Consider some other judgments of Jesus. "Is there no one here to condemn you? Then neither do I condemn you." Jesus makes judgments like, "I would like to come over to your house to have supper tonight." Another judgment of Jesus includes, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." Another common judgment of Jesus runs this way, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, but do not count yourselves blessed because the demons submit to you. Rather you are blessed because your names are written in heaven." "Repent and believe in the Gospel!" "With man salvation is impossible, but with God all things are possible." "A slave has no place in the household, but a son belongs to the household forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." "We had to celebrate, this my son was dead, but is alive again! He was blind, but now he sees!" "There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent." "I tell you this man rather than the other went home justified that day." "Never even in Israel have I seen such great faith."

Like all kings Jesus had a record made of His judgments so that we might learn from Him what His judgments are for us. These records are contained in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is the record of a king. There was never a king before Him like Him. There has never been a king like Him since. Jesus prayed for wisdom. God the Father gave Him wisdom.

God the Father was so pleased that Jesus asked for wisdom in administering justice and God has been so pleased with the judgments that Jesus has made on you and me since then, that God has given Jesus the things that Jesus has did not ask for. God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Jesus at God's right hand. The Father has given Jesus both glory and wealth. And since Jesus has kept the statutes and commandments of the Father, the Father has also granted Jesus a really long life.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.