

“What’s in a Request?”—1 Kings 3:7-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What’s in a Request?”, is 1 Kings 3:7-9 → *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?* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How would you respond if God gave you a “blank check” of sorts, commanding you to ask for anything you wanted? Such a command could prove rather challenging. It makes us “take inventory” of our lives to determine exactly what we want or need. In one sense, it’s not a foreign concept to us as we have just celebrated Christmas, where the frequently asked question “What do you want for Christmas?” opened up the unlimited possibilities of our “wish list”—at least in your dreams! Realistically, we know that people can’t give us everything we want in life, although we act like it sometimes.

Speaking of dreams, as Solomon was worshiping God he found himself in a very unique situation. Not only had he recently become the new king of Israel but *the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and . . . said, "Ask what I shall give you."* (1 Kings 3:5) Quite a command to receive from the LORD, don't you think?

How would you respond to such a command? I suppose it would be very natural for most people to respond selfishly. You might think of all those possessions which you "dreamed" about having in life. However, are you sure your list is complete enough so that you will not miss something in the end? Or you may see this as your chance to obtain those "mega-bucks" which you believe would solve so many of your problems in life. However, are you sure you'd ask for the right amount of money? Or maybe you'd immediately think of this as your opportunity to be completely restored to health! However, at what age would you limit your restoration and be willing to die, since death would be inevitable—unless perhaps Christ would come back again beforehand?

For some, sinful skepticism might immediately show its face. Then the "offer" would be questioned analytically: "Is God trying to test me? Why would He tell me to do such a thing?" Our minds might be flooded with all kinds of doubt, wondering "What's the catch?" Actually, this is most people's

perspective of God's grace in their lives. God may give freely but there's got to be an "angle" to it somehow. Somehow He's going to demand something from me so I'm not going to get involved!

Yet, how many times in our prayer life do we find ourselves making requests to God on our own terms, motivated by what we think we need or desire rather than by what God wants for us? It turns prayer into an act of manipulation rather than an act of submission in faith. James 4:3 speaks about combining selfish desires with prayer: *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* Humble faith submission in prayer is expressed in the desire for God's will to be done in our lives, as expressed in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, where we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Solomon considered his situation as king of Israel while recognizing his inexperience for such a task. His response in verse 7 says: *I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.* However, His response to God's command was made first and foremost **on the basis of God's great and steadfast love toward His people!** He recognize in faith that Yahweh is the great Promises Keeper, the evidence of which he was experiencing by succeeding his father David as king.

Notice the emphasis of Solomon's response in verse 8 → **Your servant is**

*in the midst of **Your people** whom **You have chosen**.* He recognized that the position of king, the people of Israel and even his own life belonged to God!!

He viewed his life completely on God's terms and from His perspective!!

Faith and trust in Christ recognizes that your entire existence is a result of God's creating and sustaining activity!!

In verse 9 of our text Solomon says: *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?* His response reflected an attitude of humility in connection to His responsibilities for leadership of God's people.

Humility is central to discipleship because it reveals total submission to God's plan for your life in the ultimate expression of His *great and steadfast love for you in Jesus!* Actually humility was central to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ for sinners who feel "entitled" to the benefits of God's grace. We even refer to His life from conception to burial as His "state of humiliation."

Entitlement is dangerous to the life of humility. We feel entitled to treat others in abrasive ways because of the money we've invested in a product. We feel entitled to treat others disrespectfully when we think we have "earned" the right to do so by longevity or seniority in an organization. We reflect entitlement whenever we view others self-righteously, thinking, saying or doing

things which intentionally humiliate them. The mixture of sin and entitlement is so serious that we even think everyone driving on the roads should be looking out for us and getting out of our way!!

Philippians 2:5-9 tells you that you should *have this mind among yourselves, **which is yours in Christ Jesus**, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Instead of using that to which He was “entitled,” He made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* If Jesus would have functioned with the same kind of entitled attitude which we display in our sinfulness we would be lost in our sins forever in hell.

Humility is also the key to repentance. When we are humiliated by our sinful actions in the sight of God and others it should lead us to our knees in repentance. Such humiliation places you by faith at the humiliation of Christ’s cross on your behalf so that you receive forgiveness of sins and are born anew by the Holy Spirit! Jesus put it this way in Luke 14:9 → *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* Forgiveness—that is being *exalted* or “lifted up” by grace—is for everyone because Christ *humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death*

. . . on a cross **for you!**

Solomon reflected the important aspect of Jesus' teaching on humility in connection to leadership. At various points during Jesus' earthly ministry His disciples would engage in discussions about the positions they would hold as leaders in the church. This prompted Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:42-45 → *You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.* And what does Jesus give as the motivation for acting so contrary to world's ways of functioning in leadership? *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* He points us to His own humiliation!

What would your response be to God if He gave you a "blank check" of sorts in your life? In one sense, we have been given the same command by Jesus in John 14:13-14 → *Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.* Sounds similar to the command which the LORD gave Solomon.

To ask for anything in the name of Jesus means you come to Him in humble faith, trusting in His Person and Work for the forgiveness of your sins! As you bring your requests, petitions and intercessions to the LORD in the

name of Jesus—as you are commanded to do—you do so in humility desiring God to *be glorified in the Son* with His answers. Thus its not simply about your own needs or wants being met but its about praising God, worshiping Him and giving Him thanks in submission to His Will for your life as you trust Him to take care of **all your needs!!**

So . . . what's in a request? From the LORD's perspective His "request"—His command—is the expression of His desire to give you all the blessings of His work in your life. He desires to "exalt" you by giving you forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus. His desire is to provide for you physically on a daily basis! In fact, He always gives much more than that to which you are entitled or deserve!! In our text Solomon received the wisdom for which he asked and much more as he considered God's desires and His people more important than himself.

So . . . what's in a request? From our perspective it is the desire to be used as the Holy Spirit desires to work through us to bring the forgiveness of sins in Christ alone to other people. It is a recognition on every level of our lives that we are not entitled to everything by everybody. It is a humble attitude which looks for the LORD to do His will in and through us each day as we offer ourselves in service to our neighbor. It is the desire for a humble faith which first and foremost seeks God's understanding and wisdom in Christ for our lives. Amen.