St. Matthew's Lutheran Church & School – Oconomowoc, WI
Sunday – Year A
1 Kings 3:5-12
July 26, 2026

Sermon: 1 Kings 3:5-12
"What Do You Want?"

It happens every summer. We take a road trip. Sometimes it's a long drive in the car. Sometimes it's a shorter drive. This summer we went north to the Eagle River area for a few days. It's not too long of a drive north, about 4 hours. Often times what happens when going on a road trip somewhere along the way it means pulling into a fast food restaurant to grab something really quickly to eat and get back on the road because you have vacation to get to and minutes spent in the parking lot of a fast food restaurant are not minutes spent relaxing on the lake up north as you soak a line in the water. Prior to arrival at said fast food place you ask an important question to everyone in the car, "What do you want?" My kids have a very practical understanding of what that means when that question is asked. When pulling into Culvers they know it doesn't mean they can order a double butterburger with cheese basket, a four-piece chicken tenders basket, cheese curds, a concrete mixer, a two-scoop waffle cone in the flavor of the day, and a turtle sundae with a cherry on top. Not only would that be wasteful because they couldn't eat all that food, although they are getting closer to that accomplishment, but they know there is no way they could ever get away with orders that much food because I'm not paying for that for one person. "What do you want" does not mean "Get whatever you want." Why do they understand that in a practical sense? They know who is asking the question. They know I don't really get absolutely anything you want because I am not going to spend hundreds of dollars for one meal on fast food. There are limits to what I can do and what I am willing to do. When I ask, "What do you want?" I am not attaching a blank check to that question. At most, I am attaching a butter burger basket and maybe a concrete mixer if you're good.

That question is asked in our lesson today under very different circumstances. That question is asked by God to the man that was taking the throne to lead God's people the Israelites. This is early on in their time as nation having their own established kingdom, the capital city of Jerusalem, and a palace. God comes to King Solomon and asks him, "What do you want?" The force of what God says in the original Hebrew is more along the lines of, "What you ask, I will give it to you." This is a record scratching moment. What!? God basically extend a blank check and says, "Fill out the check however you want." This is the stuff dreams are made of. This is movie type stuff when the genie says I'll grant you whatever wish you want. What does God place before Solomon? Whatever you want, I will do it. You name it and I will do it, period. Let's consider the one who is making this statement to King Solomon. When we roll into Culver's and I ask the kids, "What do you want?" and even if I made the same statement we see in our lesson, "Whatever you want, I'll get it," they know they can't order the entire menu. They understand there are limitations to what they can order. When I say, "Get whatever you want," at Culver's even my kids know there are limits and I don't really mean that. We're not spending $1,000 at Culver's, sorry. Who makes the statement to Solomon. God. The God that said, "Let there be…" and there was. The God that breathed the breath of life in Adam and created a human being. The God that saved Noah and his family from the raging, destructive waters of the flood. The God that promised Abraham try to count the stars on a New Moon night, that's how numerous your descendants will be. The God that brought his people through the wilderness with the leadership of Moses and the God that was with his father David in his conquests to establish the kingdom. The God that says what he is going to do and does what he said. The God that set the universe on its course and makes the sun rise and the rains fall. That God came to King Solomon and said, "What do you want? I'll do it." There's no limit, no restriction on what he can or can't do. Solomon could not write a check that God couldn't cash.

Solomon isn't pulling up to the drive thru; he's pulling up to the palace and taking the throne after his father King David's death. What were the possibilities that Solomon could as for? What might have been on his mind as things that would be greatly beneficial for his reign? Could you imagine his dilemma? How would he choose what to ask for? How would he weigh what the greatest priorities were? What were the potential

greatest challenges to his throne? Observing hid dads reign Solomon was no stranger to war and conflict from other nations and threats within the kingdom. Absolom tried to steal the throne from his father. As Solomon begins his reign the throne is barely warm and he is already dealing with challenges from his older brother Adonijah. It would have made perfect sense for Solomon to request stability and peace from his enemies. Let everything be calm and no threats come from others or from within. He certainly saw too much of that during his father's reign. That would make perfect sense. Maybe another priority he could ask for is unlimited wealth. The saying is that money makes the world go 'round and it was no different back then. If financial stability and prosperity was the norm then what is good for the king is also good for the kingdom. Think of all the problems that can suddenly disappear when you throw a few coins at them. That would also make perfect sense if Solomon asked for that and all the Israelites could enjoy the financial stability. Oh, the possibilities are endless because they literally were.

What would you ask for? What do you want? Anything in the world is yours. You write the check, God cashes it. What are the pressing struggles and needs we have? Our family life is crumbling, restore peace in my relationships. Health is failing, grant a clean bill and good health. Friends are fleeting, make me more popular. Not in the spot we would like to be in life or regarded by our peers the way we wish, let me attain achievement—academically, athletically, aesthetically. Seems like it's hard to get by in life, give me the wealth and all problems will wisp away. What do you want? There are a lot of priorities in life to fill.

What does Solomon ask for? *"Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?'" (1 Kings 3:6-9).* Solomon does not request wealth, peace from his enemies, a long life, or all kinds of other things that could be useful in his kingdom. He asks for wisdom in governing God's people. He asks for a discerning heart to divide between right and wrong, when to use law and gospel. He asks for God to give him a heart to serve God's people in the way that honors and serves God, the God of free and faithful love and grace. Solomon recognized his shortfalls and he requests the ability to fulfill his role as a leader of God's people. God grants his request and says there has never been one like you and there will never be. Solomon recognized the greatest priority of his kingdom wasn't wealth or anything else of this world. It was spiritual. It was the great mercy of God poured out to him and his people.

What do you want? What is your greatest priority? What tops the list? There can be many priorities in life. Jesus in our gospel lesson today calls us out and says what's the greatest? What priority are you willing to give up all else for? What did the man do when he found the treasure in the field? It was worth getting rid of everything he had because that's how valuable the treasure was. What about the pearl of great price? Again, all else was sold to get the one thing. This is what the kingdom of God is like. God calls us in an uncompromising way to make an assessment of what really matters not just for this life, but the next. God's kingdom is worth everything. God teaches us today that his kingdom is worth more than all else. Yet, we are tempted to trade it for a few dollars in this life, a little more achievement, a little more standing on the social structure, a few more things that we want to make our lives on this earth a little more comfortable or convenient.

What do you want? God has given us a blank check for eternity. He gives us everything. He gives us true wealth. It is all ours in Jesus. It was a check that only God can cash in Jesus. The perfect life for us. The cost of his one and only Son. He gives us eternity that only he can give and he does. God gives us not 50%, 75%, 90%. God gives us 100%. He gives it all to us in Christ.

What do you want? There's no dilemma. There's no having to weigh our options and priorities and thinking them through in a systematic way for what is beneficial for us. It is Christ. Always. Every time. Forever. God in his great mercy has already given it to you. Amen.