

Sunday Thought

15th August 2021 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

1 Kings 2: 10 – 12, 3: 3 – 14

Psalm 111

Ephesians 5: 15 – 20

John 6: 51 – 58

Length or Quality?

The opening of today's lesson from the Old Testament reads like a notice on the Jerusalem Palace gate – *King David has died. Long live King Solomon.* Solomon's reign began with a personal interview with his King! God appeared to him in a dream and offered him one gift he would like to receive with which to mark his coronation. Solomon did not ask for what the crowds outside were wishing him. Instead of 'long life' he requested *wisdom* to help him rule with the justice and honest goodness of his father David.



It is still traditional in many countries to wish a new sovereign, or a new-born child long life. There are many in countries like Afghanistan at the moment, who with the rapid encroachment of the Taliban forces are just asking for *life*, for today and tomorrow never mind the length. Any longer would be a bonus. Spending a night listening to spasmodic gunfire and shaking with every unexpected bomb dropped from the sky they are grateful for life in the morning as they gather up remnants and begin the search for food and safer shelter. I think their request will be for wisdom – to make the right decision for the future for themselves and their families. We must hold them in our prayers. For us in more affluent, safer circumstances, long life may not be the best choice either without wisdom to plan well for it and offer the prayer, '*Lord, spare me from too many years in heaven's waiting room!*'

In modern terms Solomon was saying, *Never mind the length. It's the quality!* He was not asking for wisdom as we often picture it – leaning on the gate with neighbours in serious conversation about 'the good old days.' Solomon was really asking for what Jesus was offering in our Gospel reading – '*Eternal Life*'. That is longer than long-life, but it starts now and refers to a quality of life.

The king's God-given wisdom throughout his reign brought him far greater material wealth than he could have imagined or asked for in his dream, but the gift of wisdom gave him so much more than that. It assured him of a deep personal relationship with his God. From the story of the creation and throughout the scriptures, *wisdom* refers to the spiritual dimension of life which Christians came to know as life in the Holy Spirit – a new and deeper life indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus. There can be no greater quality of living.

The gospel reading follows on from last week's *Sunday Thought* when Jesus spoke of himself as the Bread of Life. That resulted in controversy from the religious literalists of the Capernaum synagogue. He invited all who believed in him to share his life like eating bread. They were to open themselves to the same Spirit who was in him – God's spirit – wisdom, truth, love. It meant living in what we often call the 'thin' place where the two dimensions of material and spiritual merge and where heaven breaks into daily experience. That is real life – the life of *eternity for eternity* – plus all the riches of Jesus Christ sharing it with us. Far better than living just in one dimension or *walking around half alive!*

Let the apostle Paul have the last word – '*Be careful how you live. Be wise people. Find out what God wants you to do – and go on to make a difference for his Kingdom of love in the day to day life of your world.*'

A Prayer (based on Psalm 111)

Thanking God Together

Lord God, together with all your people on earth and in heaven
we thank you for everything.
As we think of the wonders of your creation
and the cost of our salvation
we take in something of your great majesty and pure holiness.
We find joy and peace in trusting you,
and proving your never-failing promise of eternal life.
We are aware that we live in a world where good and evil mingle;
Give us wisdom to know
how we should live in these days,
to go on making a difference in the world,
until your kingdom spreads through all the earth
and Jesus reigns as King of kings in all his glory
In his Spirit we pray.

