

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

⁶ 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.

⁷ “Now, O 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. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ 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?”

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹ So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. (NIV 84)

Theme: What do you Choose?

As most of you probably know, the great actor, Robin Williams died this past week. For most people my age, one of the first times we were exposed to Robin Williams was in the Disney movie Aladdin. I’m sure many of you remember the movie. It is based on an ancient Arab folktale. In the movie Aladdin gets a hold of a magic lamp; and when he rubbed it, a genie, voiced by Robin Williams pops out. The Genie gave Aladdin three wishes. And only with a few stipulations, he could ask for whatever he wanted. It’s a big decision—Aladdin wanted to use his picks wisely, and didn’t want to waist any of them.

I can’t help but think of that movie when I read our text for today. Of course, I’m not saying that God is a genie. He is much more than that. He does not exist simply to grant our wishes. But we see in this instance some similarities. God told Solomon, **Ask for whatever you**

want me to give you. No stipulations or restrictions—but only one wish. Solomon could ask for anything he wanted, and the Lord would give it to him.

Here is Solomon. He’s a young king. He’s only been ruler for a few years. And he’s been put in charge of an entire nation. He has his enemies and supporters. He has advisors and helpers. He grew up in the palace. He saw his Father David rule the land. But he was still a little clueless. He didn’t know what to do. He said, **I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.** He wasn’t literally a child—he had children of his own by then, but he was a child of inexperience.

Solomon continued, **Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.**

Solomon was in charge of a great nation. Millions of people relied on him to lead the way. He was also their commander-in-chief. And this wasn’t just any group of people. These were God’s children. These were the people God chose to be his very own. So God chose Solomon to be the leader of his own dear children. Who is equal to such a task? So Solomon asked for, **a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.**

Solomon’s wanted to better serve God and his people, so he asked God for wisdom.

Foolish? Many might think so. Solomon could have asked for anything. He could have asked for love. He could have asked for a long life—to live forever. He could have asked that all his enemies be destroyed or suffer for ever. He could have asked for all the wealth in the world. You name it—he could have had it. Money, riches, power, fame—anything he ever wanted, could have been his.

But Solomon wasn’t concerned about himself. He didn’t ask anything for himself. He didn’t want anything that would make his life better, or more convenient, or happier. Would he benefit from greater wisdom? Sure. But that wasn’t his motivation. His motivation was serving God. His motivation was serving God’s children. So instead of being selfish and choosing something for himself, he asked for something that would benefit God and his people. He put God and others first—ahead of his wants and desires.

What if you were in Solomon's sandals? What would you ask for? Just think of all the great things you could have. You could have anything you have ever wanted. You could have all the wealth in the world. Or be the most powerful person on the face of the earth. You could be as tall as you want, with as much hair as you want, or as athletic as you want. You could be popular, successful, and even famous. You could ask for x-ray vision, the ability to fly, or the gift of reading minds. You would never have to work again, go to school for the rest of your life, you could spend the rest of your life out on the lake fishing if that tickles your fancy. You could ask that the people you don't like would suffer and die. You could have it all and you wouldn't have to lift a finger. How great would that be!

But truth be told, we'll never be in Aladdin's position—there is no such thing as a magic lamp or a genie. And chances are, God isn't going to come to us in a dream and promise to grant us one wish. And yet, this story still resonates with us. Because life is all about choices. What you choose shows your heart. So, what do you choose? I'm not asking what you know you should choose, or what you hope you would choose. But what do you choose on a regular everyday basis? Sadly, we are often selfish in our choices. It's often not God and others first in our lives, but ourselves. We want to be happy. We want fame and fortune, and power and skill. So we choose what's best for us, or what makes us happy, or what makes our life easier. We choose our own wants and desires. And these choices often come at the expense of God and his Word. It's not even for all the riches in the world that we turn down God's Word, but for paltry over-time hours. Or it's for a little extra in the checking account that we shave a little off our offering. We don't have God granting us a wish—this isn't a one time decision during which we made a big mistake. But on a daily basis we choose money, fame, lust, the downfall of those that hate us, and much more.

Think back to Solomon's choice. Look at God's reaction. **The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.** God was pleased that Solomon didn't ask for selfish things but put him and others first. So God gave him great wisdom. In fact he made Solomon the wisest man to ever walk on the face of the earth. He gave to Solomon exactly what he wanted—wisdom to better rule over his people. But that wasn't it—God gave him more. Because he was pleased with

Solomon's request he also made Solomon one the richest people of all time. His annual income was 25 tons worth of gold. God was gracious to him just as he was to David. God didn't need to pick David, but he did. He didn't have to forgive David after he committed adultery and tried to cover it up with murder—but he did. He didn't need to continue David's line on the throne of Israel. Yet he chose Solomon, David's Son, to be the leader of his people. And he came to Solomon and gave him anything he asked for. God did this out of the graciousness of his heart. He chose to give blessings to his children because that is who he is and what he does.

That is the grace of God. We see it again and again. You see it in the fact that he chose you. He didn't need to, but he did. He chose you to be his own dear child. And he chose you to be saved through faith in his son.

And he has given you even more. He has placed you in the best country ever. You have the freedom to worship and practice your religion as you want. He has blessed you with abundant wealth when compared to the rest of the world and the history of the world. You never have to worry about whether or not you'll be able to eat today, if you will have a roof over your head, or any clothes to keep you warm. God has graciously given you many blessings. The best of which is spiritual wealth—the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

And those come to us through the gift of his Son. Jesus Christ showed us what selflessness truly is. He chose to give up the glories and riches of heaven to come down and live on this earth. As God he is all powerful, yet he chose to give up full use of that power. He willingly let himself be arrested, beaten, flogged, and crowned with thorns. He even gave up his life on the cross when he was crucified. It wasn't as if this was pleasant for Jesus. It caused much excruciating pain. Not to mention the pain and agony of hell as he was forsaken by his Father. And he did it—willingly. Because he knew that through it we would be saved.

Christ didn't choose for himself. He didn't do what was best for himself, or what would make his life more convenient. He didn't do it to receive glory and praise. Instead he chose us and what we needed. He chose to save his enemies. Life is all about choices.

We have eternal life because of the choice Jesus made to save us.

So what do you choose? You don't just have one choice. Or three. You have countless choices each and every day. What do you choose to do? Should you pick temporal blessings or eternal ones? Should you value the things of this world or the things of God? Follow Solomon's example. He knew what true wealth is. It's not found in all the wealth of the world. It can't be grasped through all the power or happiness the world has to offer. It's found in God's Word. It's the forgiveness of sins and eternal life won for us by Christ. And it's faith which receives all of these gifts.

So follow Solomon's example and live spiritually wealthy. To choose God first doesn't mean that we have to live like poor monks. It doesn't mean that we have to forgo all earthly treasure. It means that we value God and his Word more than anything else. It is the pearl of great price. It is more precious to us than anything else on the face of this earth.

You have great wealth—spiritual wealth. So spread that wealth. Do what you can so that others may be spiritually wealthy as well. Spread the gospel. Tell others about the one who saved them from their sins. And that through Christ alone we have eternal life.. Use your worldly wealth to spread true spiritual wealth. So that by the Power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel others may become spiritually wealthy as well. You won't ever find a magic lamp; God probably isn't going to grant you one wish. But life is all about choices. Choose spiritual wealth—for you and for others. And that is a wish that God will certainly grant. Amen.