

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: 1 Kings 3:15-28 (OT page 338-339)

Background to the reading

Solomon was David's second son with Bathsheba, the first after their legal marriage. He succeeded his father on the throne in early manhood, probably about sixteen or eighteen years of age. His father chose him as his successor, passing over the claims of his elder sons. During his long reign of forty years the Hebrew kingdom gained its highest splendour.

In the verses before our reading God appeared to him and said: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon asked for "a discerning heart to govern the people and to distinguish between right and wrong." God was so pleased with his answer that He gave Him everything he did not ask for like honour and wealth. The Lord promised him a long life if he obeys His commands like his father David did.

When he awoke he realized it was a dream. But he was grateful to the Lord. In those days they would not have doubted any dreams or visions as they lived in a pre-modern world where everything could be possible - even the unseen.

So when he awoke, he wanted to give thanks to God for His mercy and loving kindness.

So he returned at once to Jerusalem to celebrate the momentous event with sacrifices and a feast before the ark of the covenant. Although he has been to the *most important high place* at Gibeon, to offer sacrifices to God, it is clear that it was not adequate. During his reign there was a tension between his "superstitious almost idol beliefs and his belief in the Almighty God. But because he came to Jerusalem to celebrate and offer

sacrifices to God in the vicinity of the ark of covenant, it was clear sign that he was sincere and determined to keep the covenant. God's approval of Solomon has finally been clarified

Solomon's new gift of wisdom is immediately demonstrated in the well-known story of the two prostitutes arguing over a baby. Prostitution, although it was condemned, were common in biblical times. They often referred to foreign women as "prostitutes".

Israel's kings were sometimes called upon to settle particularly hard cases, and this situation is quite perplexing. Two prostitutes have had babies. One woman quite carelessly smothers her child in the night, then switches babies while the other woman sleeps. Now both women claim the living child as their own. Without other witnesses or evidence, Solomon must devise some way to solve the case.

The king uses his wisdom to test love, the love of the real mother. Calling for a sword, he orders the child cut into halves, with each woman getting an equal share. The real mother, who has already cared enough for her child to plead her case before the king, acts out of "compassion for her son." She begs Solomon to give the baby to the other woman. In startling contrast the careless, dishonest woman is willing to take her "half." Her cruelty has been revealed, just as the other mother's love have emerged.

Solomon can now give a just verdict. The woman who loves unconditionally, who is willing to give away her son just so that he can live – she is the real mother. Love cannot be faked.

When this verdict became public knowledge, the nation was in awe of the king. The nation was convinced that he received wisdom from God to rule as a just king.

Sermon

The text verse is from verse 26: " The woman whose son was alive was filled with compassion for her son and said to the king, "Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!"

In our reading there are one message that is as clear as daylight namely that God is the ONLY one who can give wisdom because He is the ONLY one who knows everything in comparison to the idol gods of Solomon's time who did not even exist.

And God's wisdom made Solomon see the difference between someone who loves and someone who fakes love.

It must be our lesson too. We must realise that we cannot fake love. Love can always be tested and only real love will pass the test.

We experienced real love from God when He sent his only Son to die for us on a cross, was resurrected and ascended to heaven. We are the receivers of God's sacrificial love and nothing can come between His love and us. God's love was indeed tested when Jesus suffered on a cross. A theologian once said God knows suffering because He suffered as God because His children will never obey him fully because of sin and as a Father to sent his only Son to die on behalf of his children.

And Jesus said that we have received this love to share with one another. We are part of His triangle of love, if we love God, we can love ourselves and one another. If we do not love God, one another and ourselves unconditionally and sacrificially, we have no love. Then we need to know that his TRIangle of love will become something like the Bermuda triangle full of calamities and tragedy in our lives.

Can you imagine the tragedy if the real mother of the baby did not have any love?

The same must be true of you and me. We must love to avoid tragedy and hopelessness. And to love means to face tragedy, difficulties and brokenness but what other option is there?

At least we know because God is love we have a true destiny and a true faith and a living hope. And because God is love, we can know whatever happen to us or our loved ones, He will protect and guide. He will do what the mother in our story did. He will protect us with his life which He already did.

Maybe this is the reason why so many Jewish children did not die but survived. Why? Because their parents had love, and because of their love tried everything in their power, to protect them. Yes we know that some even gave their children away to strangers just to give them a chance.

And even on this morning we are aware of two parents and grandparents, who are standing beside the bedside of their wee one, desperately holding on because of the love of God - a young family that is bounded in God's love.

And so are many other families who had to say goodbye to their loved ones but because of their love could let them go into God's merciful keeping.

Love helps you and me to survive, the love that God showed for us.

May we be as wise as Solomon to always discern between real love and fake love – and if you love and it hurts, then you know it is certain, true and real. Let us love one another and let us not hold back when we share our gifts and talents... and above all thank God every day for His love.

Amen