

Sunday, August 16, 2015
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – "What Would You Ask For?"

If God showed up in your dreams, or at your doorstep, and asked you what you would like, what would you say?

I want you to think about it for a minute. *Pause.*

What came into your mind first? Was it something for yourself, your family or your community?

We'll explore that a bit in a few minutes.

When I ruminated on this question earlier this week, the answer that came to me was that I would like the ability to truly uphold all of God's commandments.

I would like to be able to live in such a way that my life reflected total commitment to loving, honoring and serving God.

I would like to be able to turn away from cultural idols.

I wish that I could always keep a Sabbath day and honor my parents.

I don't struggle much with the order not to kill, steal or be adulterous, but I would like to have the ability to move our culture from one of violence to one of peace and love.

I would like to go through life without coveting my neighbor's goods or my colleague's success.

I believe that these are the things that we strive for.

I find it intriguing that God could be so 'on point' with the commandments.

They completely speak to our human frailties – really everything is covered.

Wisdom, I think, is knowing that yearning for these perfections is a way of life, rather than an individual event or finite accomplishment.

I do believe that if we could get everyone in the world to try to follow this simple code of behavior we would be living in God's kingdom.

Our Old Testament reading this morning excerpts a small passage of the story of ancient Israel and their desire for a king.

King Solomon is most often remembered for his wisdom, a gift that God granted at the beginning of his reign when he asked for help with governing the people wisely and well.

He didn't always act wisely through the years of his reign, but history has mostly remembered Solomon as a wise ruler.

While Solomon was encouraged to emulate his father, King David, we are reminded that both of them were human with weaknesses of their own.

Interestingly, both were led astray by their lust for women.

David with Bathsheba and Solomon with the unnamed 'foreign women' who led him to worship false gods.

The frailties of these two great heroes of the bible remind us that no one is perfect and that God chooses who God wants to lead the people.

One author pointed out that "As we search for wisdom in our own lives and world we sometimes mistake wisdom as something that happens in our heads.

Wisdom often does include an insightful mind, but there are many very intelligent people who have little wisdom at all."

Wisdom is a way of life.

Solomon realized that he would need God's help if he was to live with any wisdom at all.

The message to us today is "Be careful how you live. Make your choices wisely."

This carefulness is a key to wisdom.

Carefulness is about slowing down, noticing what is going on around us and within us, and doing the work of reflection that enables us to respond well.

When we practice this carefulness, we are more easily able to discern what is wise, and to live accordingly.

In one of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he says that wisdom is making the most of the opportunities with which we are presented.

It's about acting with thought and soberness, and allowing God's Spirit to fill and guide us.

It's about encouraging and celebrating with one another, and it's about being thankful.

These habits are powerful guides for life that free us from the snap judgments and unthinking reactions that cause so much pain.

Wisdom then is living your life in such a way that you are deliberate and intentional in your actions.

It is also living in constant relationship with God.

Those who are wise know full well that they cannot survive on their own.

The wise understand that they were created by an all-powerful and loving God.

The wise look for ways to serve their creator.

The wise look to God, through Jesus Christ, for bread that nourishes and sustains.

The wise turn to God first in all things.

Let's work at being wise.

Let's take a look at what came to your mind when I asked the question earlier:

1. What would you ask for?
2. Where is wisdom found in our world today?
3. How can we live more fully in covenant with God?