

Today we conclude our sermon series on the early kings of Israel. We have read through lots of stories from the Old Testament books of Samuel and Kings. We have read through stories about Saul, David, and we conclude with Solomon.

Last week we read how Solomon prayed for great wisdom. After his prayer, he was confronted with a situation in which two women claimed to be the mother of the same baby. Solomon shrewdly told the women that he would cut the baby in half and when one woman was willing to sacrifice her claim in order to save the baby he knew which one was the mother.

Through the next several chapters of the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel we hear stories of how different kings and queens from the area marvel at the wisdom of Solomon. One of these accounts is the visit to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba. She had heard how wise Solomon was and she came with lots and lots of questions.

Upon hearing his responses she concluded that he was a very wise king. She then presented him with lots of fine jewels. Other kings also presented Solomon with lots of gold and jewels.

So during the reign of Solomon Israel was at its height as a regional political power. Solomon was able to use the tremendous wealth that he accumulated to build a Temple to God. It took about 20 years and 30,000 workers to build this huge Temple.

If you go to Israel today you can still find a portion of the Temple although what exists now is part of what was rebuilt after the Temple that Solomon built was eventually destroyed. That portion of the Temple is now called the wailing wall where people place their prayers in between the huge boulders that were used to build the Temple.

God provided Solomon everything that Solomon could have wanted. Solomon was a powerful king. He had lots of wealth. He completed the building of a beautiful Temple to God. Solomon had the admiration of his colleagues. I don't know if this is a good thing or not but Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. So one would think that Solomon would live out the rest of his life in contentment. But that is not what happens.

Like so many before him and like so many after him, Solomon becomes discontented with his life. He feels like there is something out there that will provide him with something that he feels as though he is missing. Solomon begins to covet other gods.

We are told that among his 700 wives are lots of wives who worship other gods. Solomon becomes interested in their gods and begins to seek after them. Yahweh God is not pleased with Solomon for pursuing other gods. Yahweh God, the God of the Israelites, seems to believe that Solomon should be fully devoted to God and not to these other gods.

### **Read I Kings 11:9-13**

God then raises up an adversary against Solomon. And then another adversary is raised up against Solomon. These adversaries conspire against Solomon and a plot begins to take shape to take over the kingship of Israel. But God promises that a portion of the kingdom will remain under the authority of one of Solomon's sons.

### **Read I Kings 11:41-43**

After the death of Solomon a split occurs in the country. Most of the former country of Israel comes under the control of a man named Jeroboam while only a small remnant remains under the control of Solomon's son Rehoboam. The great and mighty and united Israel is broken apart. This split is due to God punishing Solomon for his disobedience.

So we are presented with one way to conduct ourselves when we have been given everything that we could want. We can always want more. The man who is described as the wisest man in the world was not satisfied and he wanted more. And when he wanted more than what God provided God was not pleased. As a result of seeking more and more he lost what he had and the united and powerful kingdom of Israel became no more.

Contrast Solomon's actions with the Scripture we read earlier from John. The text we read in John comes after Jesus has outed Judas as the one who will betray Jesus. Jesus has given his disciples everything that they could have asked for and now it is approaching the time for his departure. And this is what he says to them as the key to the way they are to live their life after he is gone from them.

### **Read John 13:34-35**

I recently read an article written by my friend Mark Tidsworth in which he uses this passage of Scripture as an evaluation form of our life. In other words, Mark uses this Scripture as the guide to determine how well we are doing as a disciple. Mark notes that this passage of Scripture from John is the only commandment that Jesus gives in all of Scripture. The only commandment that Jesus gives us is the commandment to love one another.

Since this is the only commandment that Jesus tells us to follow, Mark Tidsworth suggests that we ask ourselves the following types of questions when evaluating our lives. He encourages us to ask ourselves:

-Am I am more loving now than I was at this time last year?

-Are my interactions with others more loving now than they were one year ago?

-Is what I believe about God making me a more loving person?

-Are my internal attitudes and thought processes influencing my behavior toward compassion more now as compared to this time last year?

-Does my participation in this faith community influence others here to be more loving?

-Do others look to me when there is a need for a loving response in our community?

So we have choices in responses to the blessings that we see that we have been given by God. We can never be satisfied and keep looking for something else. We can pursue the other gods that are out there that we can chase after. Money, fame, and fashion certainly are gods which are pretty prevalent in our culture.

Or we can follow the one great commandment that Jesus gave us and that is to love one another.

As you contemplate your belief system and as you contemplate your life, what is most important? According to Jesus there is one great commandment. That great commandment is that we love one another.

How well do you think that you are doing at loving others? AMEN.

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-Tidsworth, Mark,

<http://www.pinnaclelead.com/church/resources.html#resources>

-Given: September 6, 2015 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)