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1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 and John 6:51-58
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In our first scripture reading, God told Solomon to ask for what God should give him, and Solomon asked for wisdom and God was greatly pleased.

Why was God pleased? Well, many kings saw being king as a way to benefit themselves. Perhaps they were raised in a royal family and had a sense of entitlement about their position and believed they deserved to be served by the people. Some kings came to power because of a coup, and either were power hungry for the sake of their own egos or came to power with a particular agenda of their own. Many kings, however, they started, eventually got caught up in the luxury of the life - building great castles for themselves, taking many wives, raising taxes, fighting battles without enough care for the lives at stake. There were plenty of corrupt, vain, selfish, arrogant kings. Kings who thought they were in control. Kings who only paid lip service to God. Kings who only served God when they thought it would benefit them. It's not all that unlike today - those in power and those who seek power are unfortunately too often caught up in selfish motives.

But in Solomon's request for wisdom, God heard Solomon's genuine desire to serve the people well, to lead well, to care for the people. Kings had to serve as judges over disputes among their people. Kings decide when to take up arms and fight. Kings put in place laws and set taxes and make decisions about who the people will worship. And the wiser the king, the better off his people will likely be. Solomon could have requested all kinds of things - power, military might, great riches, but Solomon asked for wisdom so he could make good decisions in all the situations he would face as King. Solomon believed he was not King just

for his own benefit, but that God had given him the responsibility of being King to serve God and the people. And what he wanted most was to be well equipped for that work God had set before him. Solomon wasn't paying lip service to God but really wanted to be in relationship with God for the sake of the people.

Solomon's request for wisdom indicated that the first and foremost desire of Solomon's heart was to be of service, of use, to God. He wanted to fulfill the call on his life well. And so, he knew he would need greater wisdom. Wisdom would help him to navigate the tricky and complicated situations he would find himself in daily. Wisdom would help his people trust and respect him. Wisdom would allow him to know the difference between good and evil and not become power-hungry, greedy or corrupt. Wisdom would allow him to discern God's ways. Wisdom was an excellent choice for a king.

And while none of us are kings or are currently tasked with leading a nation of people, one of the most audacious and amazing tenants of our faith is that God listens to all our prayers - king or not. "Ask what I should give you." That's what God said to Solomon. Ask for what you want from me. And as people who believe in prayer, we may not hear God say it out loud in the same way as Solomon did, but prayer is an invitation to share with God our own desires. To ask from God for the things we want.

So let's take a moment and imagine God inviting you, asking you: Ask what I should give you. Does something come up for you right away? Do you feel like you need to sit and think about that for a while? Is it hard to choose just one thing because there are so many?

There are a lot of compelling answers. A lot of possibilities. But this is where Solomon's example gives us an opportunity to rephrase the question a bit. What if instead of thinking about it just as the question God asked: "ask what I should give you?" we changed the question to the one that Solomon answered? Something like: "what do I need more of in my life in order to be of the greatest service to God, to best be able to fulfill my calling, to truly be able to use the gifts and opportunities God has given me to the best of my ability?" If that's the question, would it change your answer?

Each of us may have a different answer to that question. We have different gifts, different callings for our lives, different opportunities to serve. Some of you may ask for wisdom or money or time; others of you may ask for more patience, forgiveness, courage, tender-heartedness, compassion; still others of you may need help discerning God's call on your lives – more guidance, discernment, direction. And, what you need most may change over time as your call, your opportunities, your gifts, change.

Our gospel reading today offered us a suggestion. This is the fourth of five weeks in the lectionary that has us reading a section of John's gospel where Jesus keeps talking about bread and being the bread of life. It started with the feeding of the 5000. Jesus gave them all bread. It was a miracle. And the people liked being fed. So when Jesus left, they followed him. They wanted more bread. Many of them were very poor and following someone who could provide their food was likely very compelling. But even those who weren't poor, a guy who can pull food out of thin air is interesting. Either way, they wanted more. But now that he had their attention, Jesus was ready to tell them the real good news. He isn't just a magician getting them bread for one supper. Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus, himself, is the bread that will nourish their souls and give them eternal life,

not just a full belly. Jesus wanted them, and us, to understand that just like we need bread to survive, to live life fully, we also need God.

And Jesus says whoever eats the living bread will abide in him and he will abide in them. And Jesus says this is what they should really want. That they should stop asking for physical bread and start asking for spiritual bread. In other words, they should be asking for more God. Asking to know God more deeply; to feel God's presence more in their lives. Asking for more God. And when they were filled up by God, all the rest would follow.

This isn't to say our basic human needs aren't important to Jesus. Jesus still fed the people literal bread to fill their stomachs. Jesus fed people all the time. He healed people. He showed compassion to people who were hurting. He argued against laws which oppressed and impoverished people. He spoke up against the mistreatment of the Romans to the poor. And he understood, as perhaps a few of you do, that when you are truly, deeply, physically hungry, it is hard to think of much else. So, Jesus did care about our basic human needs.

But Jesus also believed that when we abide in him, in God, we have something more eternal, more precious, more life-giving than bread alone. Jesus wants us to know the kind of life that is secure in knowing that whatever happens, we still have God's love, God's peace, God's strength. Even when we are hungry. Even when we are suffering. Even when we are sick. Even when we are grieving. Even when we are dying. And that even then, especially in those moments, we can still ask for more God, and God will hear us.

One of the early Saints – Julian of Norwich – has a saying that applies which is “all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” She said as she was going through a near-death experience. She was gravely ill. She was likely to die soon. But the depth of her relationship with God, her confidence in God’s promises, meant that regardless of her physical body, she knew her spirit would be well.

When we ask for more God; when we think of our lives as an opportunity to serve God, our perspective shifts. What we think we want and need shifts. When our hearts are full of the bread of life, the fullness of God, a peace and contentment in our spirit, our priorities and desires change, and we can say "all will be well" in more and more situations.

So, what will you ask God for? You may have something specific in mind that will help you be of service to God. There may be something you know you need more of to do the work you are called to do in the world. But if you ever aren’t quite so sure what it is you need, you can always, always ask for more God. Amen.