

**Sermon - 08-15-2021**  
**Ps 111; 1 Ki 2:10-12, 3:3-14;**  
**Eph 5:15-20; Jn 6:51-58**  
**Live Really Well**

The Bible history book, 1 Kings, records David's reign as forty years long. We must return to the book of 1 Chronicles to learn that David had nineteen sons, born to six wives. Our passage for today records the first days in power of the son who took the throne of Jerusalem when King David died: Solomon, born to Bathsheba. Bathsheba is mentioned again in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter one, in the lineage of Messiah Jesus, born in Bethlehem, David's hometown. Recall that Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem when Caesar Augustus commanded a census of all the people for tax purposes.

Last Sunday, we looked at another of David's sons, Absalom. When we compare his career with that of his younger brother, Solomon, what a difference! Absalom was filled with ambition for political power. He struggled to undermine the reign of their father, David, in the gates (or the courts) of Jerusalem. He was banished for murdering his older brother. By contrast, Solomon prayed to the Lord for wisdom in governing the people. God blessed Solomon with prosperity and peace for his whole reign. Where the older brother, Absalom, went from bad to worse – Solomon went from good to bad. Absalom led only a faction in Jerusalem. Solomon led the whole nation – ruling effectively. And he lived what we call the good life, enjoying many pleasures.

We do not have many details about the personal life of Absalom. He was handsome and charming and persuasive. But we know that King Solomon built the first temple to God in Jerusalem. A great accomplishment. It was splendid with cedar wood, gold, silver, bronze and fine decoration. Solomon kept the peace with the nations around Israel, and his people lived in unity. His reign was forty years long, like his father's, under God's blessing

Solomon wrote the wisdom books of the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are attributed to him. His long reign was grand, and he sealed his peace treaties by marrying wives from all the neighboring nations.

By all standards, King Solomon lived well. His table at court was filled with good food and drink, and he generously invited all his generals and chamberlains and their families. All the table service of his house was made of gold. Solomon loved and feared God. But he continued to add wives to his household. The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings says, "He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray." (1Ki 11:3) He allowed his wives to set up pagan shrines and temples. He even attended worship services in them, while continuing to observe the feasts and worship in God's temple.

The great wealth and pomp of Solomon's court weighed heavily on the people. They were taxed in grain, livestock, fruits, vegetables, wine, labor and in gold and silver. Solomon failed to give back to the people the justice and mercy that a good ruler must give. Late in his reign, there were factions that demanded relief from the burden of taxes and forced labor. Soon after Solomon's death his son, Rehoboam, split the nation by refusing to lower the tax burden on the people. And Jeroboam, who had been a leader in Solomon's administration, became king of the northern tribes. Rehoboam was left two tribes in the south. So, Israel split from Judah and Benjamin.

Solomon allowed evil to multiply by ignoring the groaning of his people under the burdens he demanded they bear. He lived the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Ironically, he wrote about wisdom, but was unable or unwilling to turn back to God from his pleasures and idolatry.

Solomon's father, David the shepherd king, learned to abide with the Lord. He studied the Torah, he prayed, he praised and worshiped God. His third from eldest son, Absalom, was a reckless power-hungry man. Solomon slid gradually into a godless existence. He charts his decline in the Book of Ecclesiastes – the writing of a bored, over-indulged worldly man who longed at the end for a simple life – a truly good life, but he was trapped in a world of material pleasure.

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How does this flesh and blood (our body) enter into the life of God? How do we abide – how do we experience our whole being fully within the circle of God’s love? We partake of Christ’s Being. There is a transformation. The Being of God – in the flesh – enters our fleshly temple.

Jesus gives us the answer in this sixth chapter of John’s Gospel. When the people heard Jesus’ words, they were shocked. Many turned away because they understood Him in physical, not spiritual terms. If you are inclined to intellectualize everything – that is, if you are a person of cool, detached reason – you won’t get it. King David understood. King Solomon did not.

The meaning of consuming Jesus – of taking Christ into ourselves – is to surrender to God’s all-sufficient Being. God can supply all things because God has everything and needs nothing. God is infinite, God never grows weary. God’s holy presence is eternally sufficient to meet all our needs (Ps 23:1)

We experience this more sharply when we turn from earthly eating – when we fast either partially or completely. We experience this ultimately when we make the journey out of this earthly life – when we are dying. We turn toward eternity. We turn to our God who is without beginning or end. Remember how we talked about distractions last week – the day-to-day things that hijack our focus and our faith.

Here, in Christ’s presence, is the genuine Good Life – absolute life – meeting Jesus and spending time with Him. Glory be to God whose power working in us – can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Amen.