

Bennochy Church 19th August 2012

If you had just won the Euro millions jackpot I wonder what would you spend your money on? Just think about that for a moment, enough money to buy whatever you wanted for the rest of your life! Since no one here has actually won it, not that I know of anyway, our answers will always have a huge element of 'non reality' about them, for I am sure if we had actually won the money, our answers would be different!

Share African proverb / story of man who is asked, 'what would you do if you had '... two cars, two houses (keep one and give one away) or two chickens (keep both), why; because I have two chickens! It is easy to be generous when you have nothing!

Would your life be different if you won 'X Factor', 'Britain's Got Talent' or an Olympic gold medal? Fame and fortune change most people, there is no doubt about that. Would we be any different, immune from their influence on our lives? We would like to think so, but for most of us, it will never be our experience. We can dream about such things, but what if it was reality?

In ancient Israel, Solomon is now king, anointed in 961 BC. The temple that would bear his name was not yet built, so goes to offer sacrifices at the famous altar at Gibeon, North West of Jerusalem. During the night God appears to Solomon and asks the million dollar question, '*what would you like me to give*

you?' This is God speaking; he asks Solomon, '*what would you like me to give you?'*

The passage hints of no delay in Solomon's response. He doesn't need 50:50, 'ask the audience' or 'phone a friend'! His response begins by describing the relationship between God and his father David, and how God's love has been further demonstrated to David, by giving him a son, who now rules Israel. There is seen here an important connection between David and Solomon. Only then, does Solomon go on to express just how he is feeling under the burden of leadership. Maybe unable to sleep, going over and over in his mind the responsibilities now laid upon him. So God speaks to this young man, chosen to be king, who acknowledges his inexperience to rule. Not just any people, but the people of God.

We sometimes find ourselves in situations where, for whatever reason, we do feel inadequate for the task that lies before us; whether it be new responsibilities at work, a new job, the challenges of bringing up a family, coping with illness, unemployment, unanswered questions about the future, difficult choices or tough decisions that need to be made.

Where Solomon was, we have been. Yes, the context is very different, the responsibilities are not so great, but we have all felt the burden of wondering how we will cope. When we have felt like that, what is our response to the question given by God to Solomon, '*what would you like me to give you?'* When it

becomes our question, what do we say? What do we want God to do for us?

Solomon knew that the responsibility of leadership was his. It would not be taken away. This was his calling from God. The apostle Paul faced exactly the same dilemma, in the crisis moments, facing the difficult questions and decisions of life; he believed that God would not give him more than he could endure. (1st Corinthians 10: 13) The promise is, not to have tough choices and decision taken away from us, but that we will not be over whelmed by them.

Solomon asks, *“So give me the wisdom I need to rule your people with justice and to know the difference between good and evil. Otherwise, how would I ever be able to rule this great people of yours?”* (v9)

Think of the temptation that Solomon must have faced. He was after all king of a powerful nation. It would not have come as any surprise to others for him to have asked for long life, riches or the death of his enemies, to cement his new rule. But Solomon comes across as a good guy, asks for what is right and just, and God was pleased. You do wonder what might have happened, in the history of Israel, if his response had been different?

In seeking what is right, we can be tempted into thinking that God will simply give us what we ask. *Ask and it shall be given*

unto you... Matthew 7:7-8, or “And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven” .(Matthew 18: 19) So what a great gift to seek, the wisdom of God! Wisdom to discern what is the right thing to ask for.

After the dream comes the famous story of the disputed child, in which the wisdom of Solomon is put to the test and recognised as the wisdom of God. If wisdom was now guaranteed, we are told the rest also falls into place. God says, what you have not asked for, I will give you, all you need to do is obey.

In those moments of life when decisions and choices need to be made, let us not be afraid to ask God the question, which is right? In those times when we face tough challenges and the way seems unclear, let us not be afraid to listen to God? And when speaks to us, *‘what would you like me to give you’?* ; may our answer, echo with the wisdom that can come only through the Spirit of God. Amen.