GOD WORKS THROUGH HUMANS

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, *1 Kings 10:1-9*

This year, we have been exploring a theme chosen by several of our deacons – "connecting the 151st church family to Jesus, to one another, and its community." Last month, we started developing the third part of that theme, our connection to our community. We began by working through the 'good news' of the Bible's story – **God sent Jesus to administer His rule in a rebellious world by acting righteously and justly, mediating the reestablishment of the relationship God intended to have with insubordinate humanity**. But the commission God gave Jesus does not remove from humanity the task of representing Him that He entrusted to it in the creation (*cf. Genesis 1:26-28*). While the Bible's story focuses on the larger narrative of God's Jesus-centered plan, He populates that overarching storyline with smaller stories of individuals through whom He works. Those stories offer insights into the ways we can partner with God, representing Him and His larger plan through our everyday lives. In this lesson, we will consider the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and how the transformation God causes in the lives of those who submit themselves to His rule can be used to draw the world's attention to Him.

Solomon's fame

- While the exact identity of the Queen of Sheba remains unknown, she occupies a clear place in Solomon's narrative – her visit emphasizes the blessings God gave to Solomon.
    - Because "Solomon loved the LORD"[1] (*1 Kings 3:3*) and because he inherited the covenant God made with his father David (*2 Samuel 7:1-16; 1 Chronicles 28:1-8*), God appeared to Solomon and offered him whatever he asked (*1 Kings 3:3-5*).
    - Solomon humbly asked for "an understanding mind to govern [God's] people, that [he] may discern between good and evil" (*1 Kings 3:7-9*).
        - His request echoes Genesis 3 with a crucial difference; unlike Adam and Eve, who sought the ability to "discern between good and evil" by eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil (*Genesis 2:17; 3:1-6*), Solomon sought that discernment by requesting it from God.
        - Because of his humble response, God gave Solomon "a wise and discerning mind," unlike anyone before him or after him. He also gave to Solomon what he did not request – "riches and honor so that no other king [could] compare with [him]" (*1 Kings 3:10-13*).
    - The wisdom God gave Solomon had a specific expression – he was to "execute righteousness and justice" (*1 Kings 10:9; cf. 1 Kings 3:28*).
    - Although not perfect (*cf. 1 Kings 4:6*), Solomon's justice and righteous rule resulted in a transformed society (*1 Kings 4:20, 25*).

[1] All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- The Queen of Sheba's visit offers a crucial insight into the blessings of wisdom, wealth, and fame God gave Solomon – God intended those blessings to reveal His sovereign identity (*1 Kings 10:1*).
    - God established Israel's monarchy to serve as sub-rulers who would reflect the character of His sovereign rule through its administration (*Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8:1-9; 9:16; 10:1*).
    - The Queen of Sheba's comment about the reports she heard regarding Solomon evidence God's intention for the Jewish kings – Solomon's just and righteous rule manifested God's reality and goodness (*1 Kings 10:6-9*). For example:
        - His wisdom resulted in a society that captured aspects of God's Edenic vision for humanity (*1 Kings 4:25; cf. Deuteronomy 15:4*).
        - His wisdom, "which God had put into his mind" (*1 Kings 10:24*), demonstrated God's reality and wisdom (*1 Kings 10:1, 9*).

Application

The Queen of Sheba sought out Solomon because she heard about his fame and its connection to his God (*1 Kings 10:1*). Her story provides insight into an aspect of the life God offers to us through Jesus. God calls us to "not be conformed to this world," but "to be conformed to the image of his son" (*Romans 12:2; 8:29*). Consider how our transformation into Christlike people can attract attention like Solomon attracted the Queen of Sheba's attention.

In an echo of the wisdom He gave Solomon, God gives us wisdom through Jesus.

- God has given to Jesus "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (*Colossians 2:3*).
- God fills us with Jesus; his word/wisdom dwells in us (*Colossians 2:10; 3:1-2, 16*).
- Jesus' wisdom motivates us to act right, which expresses itself primarily through our proper relationships with one another (*Colossians 3:5-4:1*).
    - We "put off our old self" and its divisive, destructive practices (*Colossians 3:5-9*).
    - At the same time, we "put on the new self" characterized by righteous and just practices that reflect Jesus, whose identity shapes our new self and our relationships with those around us (*Colossians 3:10-4:1*).
- God intends our new self to attract the world's attention (*Colossians 4:2-6*). Our conduct attracts attention because it differs from the practices common in our world. For example:
    - It originates in God's Bible-revealed identity rather than cultural standards.
    - It entrusts itself to God's sovereignty rather than political processes, economics, or power dynamics (*cf. Psalm 127:1-2; Zechariah 4:1-7*).
    - It expresses itself through 'unreasonable' generosity that lowers one's status to elevate others rather than seeking to elevate others to one's status.
- The power of Christlike lives to attract the world's attention offers a crucial and influential component of our evangelism.
    - Our Jesus-changed lives demonstrate God's power and wisdom to the world.
    - God expects us to "walk in wisdom" by talking with people about God and Jesus, who create the change in our lives (*Colossians 4:5-6*).