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Give Your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge Your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of Yours?" 1 Kings 3:9 (NABRE)

The [reverent] fear of the LORD is the beginning (the prerequisite, the absolute essential, the alphabet) of wisdom; A good understanding *and* a teachable heart are possessed by all those who do *the will of the LORD*; His praise endures forever. Psalm 111:10 (Amplified Bible)

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How do you cope with 'change'? What are some of the areas in your life you have experienced 'change'? In what ways has 'change' brought you blessing and joy? In what way has change brought you 'anxiety' and even led to 'fear'?

There are so many ways we could look at the theme 'change'. When we think of 'changes' in our world we could think of change in technology (eg: horse and buggy to cars with digital technology; rapid healthcare changes in last 100 years; telephones from 'party phones lines' to 'mobile phones'). We could also look at the theme 'change' in terms of our own perspectives on life – from when we were a little child to an adult (whatever our age may be). Of course, there is also another way of looking at 'change' when it comes to our experiences of illness, family problems and death. And there are other areas of 'change' as we think of 'changes' within society (morals, lifestyle choices, etc), or 'changes' in the world (through things like war, conflict, droughts, etc), or what is happening in a work environment, and so many other ways.

How do you cope with 'change'?

In our Scriptures this day we have the account of what is often called "Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom" (1 Kings 2:10-12,3:3-14 )

As this book begins, David is an old and infirm man, with a circulatory disorder. His days as king are over. As his death is drawing near a struggle for the throne erupts. Adonijah, his oldest living son, hopes to become king, but the choice of successor is David's (1:20). Adonijah's candidacy is backed by Abiathar (for the priesthood) and Joab (military commander). Perhaps Adonijah follows pagan ways (1:9). Solomon is supported by Nathan (prophet to David), the priest Zadok, and Benaiah (leader of the Philistine forces who served David). Bathsheba, David's wife and mother of Solomon, tells David of Adonijah's plot, sacrifices and revelry; Nathan confirms them (1:21-27). David announces that Solomon is his successor (after Bathsheba reminds him of his oath to make Solomon his successor). David orders Nathan and Zadok to make his choice visible to the people, and to anoint him king. Solomon declines to punish his opponents (1:28-48). David instructs Solomon to "keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways ... keeping ... his commandments"

(2:3) per the “law of Moses”; if he does, David’s lineage under God will continue.

Now David dies and is buried in Jerusalem. He conquered the city in the seventh year of his reign as King of Judah (2:11). Solomon firmly established (2:12) his kingdom by killing or banishing Adonijah and his supporters (2:13-46). The era of Solomon begins. He walks in God’s ways, worshipping (before the Temple was built) at “high places” (3:3), on mountains. “Gibeon” (3:5) was 6 kilometres north of Jerusalem. As elsewhere in the Old Testament, God appears to Solomon in a dream (3:6). Solomon shows humility (“only a little child”, 3:7): he needs God’s help in all that he does. And so he asks God for a “hearing heart”.

How will Solomon deal with a great change in his life, given all that has gone before him in becoming King (including his conception through Bathsheba)? Solomon seeks out a ‘high place’ and ‘receives God’s wisdom’. The wisdom Solomon received through his dreams is the same wisdom we can receive every night through our dreams. The Hebrew word for what Solomon asked for and received is *shama*, which is a “hearing” heart (see 1 Kings 3:9,11). He asked for a listening heart, one that could clearly hear the Lord’s direction and guidance. He seeks a ‘hearing heart’ in relation to the Lord. Solomon needed his heart to be equipped to hear God. Accordingly, the Lord granted him wisdom. From this passage we learn that wisdom comes from a “hearing” heart intent upon listening to the counsel of God when we are called to His service.

This thought of a “hearing heart” is profound, for at its heart it is about receptivity and passivity.

There are many people today who wonder why Christians do what they do, especially in a more ‘traditional’ church. All we seem to do on a Sunday in this hour or so is “sit and do nothing”. To many, this whole ‘church thing’ seems like a waste of time. Surely it can be more ‘exciting’, more ‘engaging’? But is that what true Christian worship is all about – having one’s ego or emotions stimulated so one can get some sort of ‘spiritual high’ to ‘keep you going in life’ so you can ‘cope with life and all its changes’?

For many people, Christian worship is seen as a waste of time. And so some may say, “I prefer to worship God at the lake. After all I am surrounded by his creation. And the creation is beautiful. I mean isn’t great to be able to worship God out in creation.”

But the Bible urges us to look at worship in a different way. In our Psalm for this day (Psalm 111:1) the psalmists says to us:” *Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.*” The Psalmist urges people to seek out other people who have true faith in God, and to gather together in worship. But why? Is it not to receive true wisdom for life, certainly in the face of life’s many changes...?

The thought here is the same as Solomon repeatedly put to his children in the book of Proverbs, namely, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (9:10; cf 1:7; 15:33; Psalm 110:10).

How do you cope with ‘change’?

We live in an amazing era. We are surrounded by more information than at any other time in human history—literally at our fingertips! There is virtually no fact or information that you cannot look up on the internet. On-line encyclopaedias, which were once frowned upon, have become wonderful learning tools.

But it seems that we are unable to translate all that information into making our lives more meaningful. Many struggle with ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ to life. Indeed, the question of our ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’ is not a question you can “Google” or look up on the internet and expect to find answer in 30 seconds or less.

The Psalmists says (Psalm 111:2): “*Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.*” This word for ‘study’ or ‘ponder’ means ‘to visit often’.

What are these ‘works of the Lord’, and how shall we ‘visit them often’? We do so when we recall, and rejoice in, God’s incredible gift of change for us in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

This morning, in the Holy Gospel (John 6:51-58), Jesus directs us to words that are about incredible ‘change’. He is speaking to the incredible change He gives to life itself through His very own ‘body and blood’. There are many who struggle with these words of Jesus. What does it mean to ‘eat His flesh’ and ‘drink His blood’? There is a certain point where we take God’s Word as it is written, and on face value.

Jesus wants to give us a true ‘life-transfusion’. He wishes to bring profound change into this world, and into our lives... into your life...

The reality is that we live in a world where there are many ‘changes’ that are incredibly difficult. Some may look at the drought in our land, others may reflect on their own illnesses and difficulties, and others may truly feel a sense of ‘sin’ and ‘failing’. Deep down, everyone usually wants something to ‘change’ in their life. But God wants to give far more than we could ever hope for or imagine. His desire is to give His very self to us all. And in the end, we know that even Solomon failed, for he sought the desires of his own heart, his ‘flesh’. But in all this, God’s love remains the same...

The Psalmist said (Ps.111:3) “Full of splendour and majesty is His works”. Many times the word ‘works’ is used. For the psalmist this may be the work of redemption from lands of slavery, and all the mighty acts of God that brought about such redemption (such as freedom from slavery in Egypt – and this is a Psalm recited at Passover time).

For us who live in the light of the cross of Jesus, we know something far more powerful and far more gracious and far more liberating. The Psalmist says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practise it have a good understanding.*" This 'understanding' is not simply about 'doing what is right' or 'making good decisions'. Rather, it is to know God is with us in every circumstance of life.

If there is one inevitability that exists in this world it is that change is going to happen to both you and me. And the change God seeks to bring is truly radical and life-changing.

There are many who live life with a sense of fear. Much of this fear is based in experience on account of the terrible things that have happened, and the terrible things people have done to you. Indeed, we live in a world that cultivates that fear, and even harvests it to sell products, or to motivate towards a certain behaviour. But the works of God are faithful and just (Psalm 111:7).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Friends, the honour, the fear, the attentiveness, the will for God's word is the beginning we need.

Can we begin our days with Solomon's prayer. "Lord, give me a listening heart today"?

In Jesus, wisdom has come to us, with His wise counsel, His forgiveness, His deep concern and compassion for us. God has drawn near to us in Christ Jesus our Saviour. We come into this time of worship, and we live our lives together, in the sure knowledge of His love. What a beautiful change God has given us in Christ our Saviour. Amen.