

Treasure Loving Kindness in Prayer

- † Gracious offer (v.5)
- † Humble petition (vv.6-9)
- † Generous gifts (vv.10-12)

In the name of “*Christ Jesus, who became for us the wisdom from God,*”¹ dearly redeemed believers:

With so many virtual, but real graduations this spring, I’m praying for more Christian young people to become servant leaders in medicine, engineering, education, production, politics, preaching and teaching. God is giving you what non-believers can’t imagine: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” (Proverbs 9:10) Why are we surprised at officials in government and medicine, the ones who don’t even claim to worship God? Without the fear of the LORD they fail to rule wisely for the good of others. Why are we surprised when we Christians stray from the fear of the LORD? We too act foolishly and do great damage to friendships and family.

Yet God does not forsake His children! He kindly keeps sending His love in Word and sacrament, drawing us back, closer to His loving heart. In all struggles you come close to God when you listen intently to His Word. You become a blessing to others as you **Treasure Loving Kindness in Prayer**.

† Gracious offer (v.5)

Remember the stories of Aladdin’s Lamp? How he could rub that magical lamp and the genie would appear to grant three wishes? Seems those stories always go sideways, don’t they? He asks the wrong things. Or the genie turns out to be an ogre. So they say, *Don’t let the genie out of the bottle!*

Sometimes we treat God that way in prayer. Are you ever afraid to ask for something because you fear God might be too busy? Or He might be angry with you and give you something you don’t like? You just keep trying harder and harder, wishing for a miracle, but not realizing what a **Gracious offer** God is giving us **in Prayer**. Jesus promised His disciples: “*I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son....You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*” (John 14:13; 15:16) Jesus’ promise was not the first time God made such a **Gracious offer**.

Imagine you’re Solomon who just ascended the throne of your father King David. You haven’t built the temple yet, so you go to the most important high place to worship. *The LORD appeared to Solomon in Gibeon in a dream at night. God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”* See the first point of this sermon? The **Gracious offer** of the LORD God to Solomon, He makes to you through Jesus Christ! If your father trained you in God’s Word, you too will answer like Solomon in...

† Humble petition (vv.6-9)

Solomon said, “You have shown great mercy and faithfulness to your servant, my father David, just as he walked before you in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart toward you. You have shown this great mercy and faithfulness to him and have given him a son who is seated on his throne to this very day. O LORD my God, now you have made your servant king in the place of my father David, but I am a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And I, your servant, am among

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30 – *Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV)* © 2019 NPH (800-662-6022). www.wartburgproject.com

your people whom you have chosen, a great people, who cannot be counted or numbered because they are so many. Now give to your servant a perceptive heart to judge your people, to distinguish between good and evil, for who is able to judge this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:6–9)

We see Solomon humble because he had already demonstrated so much wisdom. He survived an older brother's coup attempt. He fulfilled the wishes of his dying father to deal with murderous officials from King David's administration. Solomon stepped up in ways that would make his father proud.

But severe challenges and responsibilities have a way of making us feel vulnerable. Every year graduates of our Seminary feel like that. After twelve years of training you're called to your first parish or classroom. And suddenly you realize, "I have so much to learn!" That's how Solomon felt.

Solomon acknowledges God's "**great mercy and faithfulness**," one word in the Hebrew original. *Chesed* usually translates as *loving kindness* or *unfailing love*. It's the way God promises awesome help no one would think of...then keeps reminding His people of His promise...then delivers on that promise even at the cost of His own shed blood and laid down innocent life. In His body Jesus guarantees God's *Chesed*. "**He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32 *TPA*) So Solomon asked for "**a heart that hears**," or we might say, "**a heart with ears**." I'd love to see the children draw that for us – **Humble petition** for...

† **Generous gifts** (vv.10-12)

In the eyes of the LORD, Solomon's request was good. So God said to him, "Because you have asked for this, and you have not asked for a long life, nor have you asked for riches, nor have you asked for the lives of your enemies, but you have asked for discernment to reach just verdicts, therefore I will act according to your words. Yes, I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you before you, nor will anyone like you rise up after you."

Generous gifts - wisdom and discernment! Solomon demonstrated both when two prostitutes claimed one live baby and blamed the other for the dead one. Everyone in court must have gasped when the young King Solomon called for a soldier to bring a sword and cut the live baby in half. "Give half to each one." But when one mother cried for the baby to live and the other demanded his death, Solomon said, "**Give the living child to the first woman, and do not kill him. She is his mother.**" (1 Kings 3:27)

Without the fear of the LORD officials forget they have only one more breath and heartbeat if God gives it to them. In "merry old England" when Catholics ruled, protestants burned. Protestants took over and burned Catholics at the stake. Caught between were Separatists. One overexcited official condemned a "heretic" to burn the next day. That night he partied with friends too late...blistering cold. Never got home. Next day found his body frozen in a creek past his waste. God froze the ruler; freed the prisoner.

You need God's **Generous gifts** if your fear the Lord among politicians who don't. Or medical experts who just want more money while you are caring for the sick. Or you're on the facility staff or serving as an Ombudsman, a go-between government and residents, but you have no power to help them. **Treasure Loving Kindness in Prayer for Generous gifts** to do what you can with what God gives.

God gave Solomon "**riches and honor**" sought after by rulers wanting to learn like the Queen of Sheba. As the greatest university professor of all time, Solomon had the most than wisdom and knowledge – vast data plus the sense to put it all together for practical application in real life. But eventually Solomon proved that prayer is not a means of grace. Middle aged Solomon was talking more than listening to God's Word. Solomon fell into many gross sins. Wealth and power are *meaningless*. (Ecclesiastes) But God's *Chesed* always welcomes back sinners to **Treasure Loving Kindness in Prayer**.

Pray for more servant leaders from God's youth today. Pray for a humble heart to keep listening intently to God's Word. Pray to seek Him earnestly for wisdom and knowledge. God bless us one and all that "**they will still produce fruit in old age. They will stay fresh and green.**" (Psalm 92:14) Amen.