12th Sunday after Pentecost

**“King Solomon’ Dream”**

1 Kings 3:3-14 / August 15, 2021

**About Dreams**

What are dreams? Did you have a dream last night? What kind of dream did you have? We often think about this after we dream, ‘Why did I dream about this? What does this dream mean?’ In the dictionary, dream have three meanings. First, it is a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep. Second, it is the hope to realize our ideals. Third, it is a vain expectation or idea that is very unlikely to be realized.

Sigmund Freud was the first scholar to scientifically study dreams. He discovered that humans have a dimension of unconsciousness below the dimension of consciousness. The result of his study was tremendous news. Since the Industrial Revolution, scientific research on the visible outside world has developed brilliantly, but the invisible inner world of human beings was not developed at all. Freud was the person to open the inner world. He argued that human’s repressed consciousness accumulated in unconsciousness, and that unconscious desire appeared in the form of dreams.

His student, Carl Jung, agreed with Freud's theory on a larger scale, but opposed the teacher's argument that all dreams stem from sexual oppression, and especially his mechanical and schematic interpretation of dream. Instead, Jung argued that we could find a hidden motivation in the dream to determine our consciousness and behavior, and that there was some clue to figuring out our hidden intense desire. Freud’s contribution to understanding the human inner world was great, but Jung’s ideas allowed a deeper understanding of it.

Meanwhile, in the ancient world, dreams used to be accepted as divine revelations or messages. The stories about dreams in the Bible almost all fall in this category. Accepting a dream as a revelation of God could be considered unscientific at first glance. But think about it! If the real desire in us, which we are not aware of, appears through dreams, wouldn’t it be God's revelation? I believe that God speaks to us through dreams, and that we can realize our deeper desires through our dreams.

Today’s text tells the story of Solomon’s dream. Whether it’s an in-depth psychological approach or an ancient worldview, what's clear was that Solomon's dream was a story that showed what he really desired. The Bible also tells us Solomon's dream needs to be our dream, and that we should think about what we really desire. Let's take a look at Today’s story together.

**Solomon’s Dream**

Solomon succeeded his father David as a king. King David expanded Israel's territory to create a huge Kingdom, but the bureaucracy and governing foundation were still in its early stages, and international relations became more unstable because of the expanded territory. Furthermore, Solomon was exposed to dangerous power struggles because he was one of the many princes and the son of a concubine. 1 Kings chapter 1 & 2 introduced the story of Solomon overcoming such various chaos and dangers in the early days of his monarchy.

Today’s text introduces what happened next. Solomon had a dream one night. God asked Solomon in the dream. **“Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”** This question was not just plainly asking what he needed, but what Solomon really desired. God wanted Solomon to realize what unconscious desire was hiding deep inside him.

When asked by God what he wanted, Solomon answered, **“Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.”** This was a dream situation. Solomon may not have thought of this consciously when he was awake. The deep longing hidden in his unconsciousness would have been revealed in his dream, and when he awoke from his dream, Solomon would have realized that there was such longing in him.

I’d like to suggest you put down your view of Solomon as a hero to focus on today's message. I hope you don't think Solomon gave such a great answer because he was special and a heroic man of faith. If that's the case, then we will come to regard it as a story of a hero in a cartoon or a movie, and we will miss the Bible's intended message for us. What on earth is the Bible trying to tell us through Solomon's dream story?

Let's think about it. Solomon had just been crowned. At that time most people thought Adonijah, David’s other son, would be king, but unexpectedly Solomon became king. Adonijah already had great power, and many people followed him. What did Solomon wish for in the midst of this complicated power struggle? If God asked what he wanted when he was awake, and not through a dream, he probably would have answered to get rid of his political opponents.

Let's think about it again. His father David had greatly expanded Israel's territory, more countries had protested and were threatened with war with neighboring countries. If God had asked what he wanted when he was awake, and not through a dream, Solomon would have answered to protect him from threats from neighboring countries. But Solomon did not answer like that in his dreams. Instead, he asked for ‘a discerning heart that can distinguish between right and wrong.’

Solomon did not ask to solve the problems that he was facing right there, but to give him the ability to solve them as justly as he can no matter what happens. He asked for wisdom to discern what is right and wrong, not just to make the problem disappear whenever it happens through life. Solomon must have woken up and been astonished to realize the deep desire that was lurking in him. ‘Oh, I had this longing in me! God made me realize this!’

**Our Dream**

Solomon’s dream story throws us a very important message. The things we desperately want in reality may not be what we really want. God has planted ‘the ultimate desire’ in the center of our existence. It is deeply located, so we are often not aware of it, but that is our real desire. The ultimate desire is to live properly, to distinguish between right and wrong, and to live genuinely as God has created us. There’s the ultimate desire in us.

Maybe we want to succeed. Maybe we want to make more money. Maybe we want to be praised, acknowledged and respected by people. Maybe we want to get rid of the people who are bothering us, and we want to be safe from the threats around us like Solomon. But today's story teaches us that they are not what we really want, and that there is a deeper and more ultimate desire within us.

From the Bible’s point of view, wisdom means having God's eyes, and looking at things from God's eye level. It means that Solomon wanted to be able to see through God's eyes, not his own. He asked God to give him a discerning heart. He did not want Israel's complicated problems to be solved as he wanted, but rather wanted God to be able to discern the right from the wrong. We need this today.

Life is not a matter of what we own, but of what we are become. Life doesn't depend on changing the environment of our lives, it depends on changing ourselves. To do so, we must realize the ultimate desire deep in our existence, not our external desire, and have a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong within God's eyes, not with our own eyes. May God come to us tonight and dream of the dream Solomon had. When God asks, ‘What do you want?’ in your dream, I hope you can answer, ‘O Lord, give your servant a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong.’ Amen!