

Make A Wish

1 Kings 3: 3-15a John 6: 51-58

When my children were young I believe we owned the entire Walt Disney DVD collection. And whether we are children of 3, or 103, I believe we all love these classic stories of magic and fantasy. One of Disney's all-time greats is Pinocchio. From this movie we all know the song of Jimmine Cricket, "When you wish upon a Star." According to the song, "when you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires can come to you; if your heart is in your dream, no request is too extreme, when you wish upon a star your dreams come true." While we as adults know that this is not how the world really works, it is at least a source of hope to many young minds that have many wonderful dreams. Our wishes and desires take on a more pragmatic look in the later movies like Aladdin. The Genie tells Aladdin from the outset that he has 3 wishes. But he cannot wish for someone else to die, someone to love him, or - getting around the thinking of every child presented with such an opportunity - wish for more wishes. In The Little Mermaid Ariel wishes to become a human. In The Hunchback of Notre Dame Quasimodo only wants Esmeralda to love him. In a more sinister way, Cruella DeVil wishes to make a beautiful coat out of 101 Dalmatians.

But maybe you aren't into all the Disney movies. So let's look at something you may be more familiar with – the great musical Fiddler On The Roof. While a story about turn of the century Russians, it is a story that closely reflects the toil, pain, joys, and life of most families, including our own. Tevye is the lead role; and in the show Tevye has wishes, too. And as a devout Jew, he makes his wishes and prayers known to God. “If I were a rich man,” sings Tevye. “Lord who make the Lion and the Lamb, would it spoil some vast eternal plan, if I were a wealthy man?” “O God, all I ask is that you provide good husbands for my lovely daughters.” Yes, Tevye has wishes, too; but this different. Tevye isn't fantasizing like a Disney movie; his requests are serious and real – much like the requests we find ourselves sometimes making of God. O God, help me with this problem. O God, help my troubled child. O Lord, I desperately need a better job. O God, our marriage is falling apart, what can I do? Lord, help me; the doctor says I have cancer. O God, I am helpless to handle this addiction, please save me.

King David has died, and all of a sudden Solomon is now King. Solomon is still a very young man. Solomon is thankful to God for God's blessing upon his father. But he is also honest with God – “I don't know what I am doing!” Solomon found himself thrust into the position of leading a whole nation. So, in a dream, Solomon made a wish to God too. It was a very urgent request – “*Give your servant*

therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil.” Solomon made one of the most profound and honest wishes ever raised to God. Solomon desired wisdom. Solomon wanted to know good from evil so that he could honestly and rightly govern the people of God. Notice where the focus of Solomon’s wish is centered. The wish for wisdom focuses on the needs and welfare of the nation, of other people, not himself. Solomon’s wish was very pleasing to God, for he did not ask for long life, riches, or the life of his enemies. Solomon did not ask to win the lottery, or any of the things people often wish for today. Solomon was able to acknowledge his own lack of insight and to ask for holy wisdom.

Today, as a member of St John’s Lutheran Church, if you were given the same chance as Solomon, to make one request, one wish, to lift one prayer to God, what would it be? (Pause) Right now, I suspect many of us would wish for the selection of a great new Lead Pastor. Pastor Nate is now retired. We loved him, and we will miss him. We may wish he didn’t retire. But we all know that, whoever is called as our new Pastor, she or he will be different than Pastor Nate. That could cause some to resist the message and work of our new Pastor – because they may speak and preach differently than Pastor Nate did, or they may handle things differently than Pastor Nate did, or....or....or. I hope our wish will be, like that of Solomon,

that we would be open to God's leading of a new pastor into our midst, and that we would all be open and supportive of them as they seek to help us live as a river of compassion flowing into our community. We need the gift of wisdom so that we, like Solomon, might meet the needs of the people in our community.

What do you think Jesus' wish was? More specifically, what do you think Jesus' wish was for his disciples? For we who seek to follow him today? Today's gospel lesson is the conclusion of an entire chapter, which has been shared in recent weeks, where Jesus speaks to us of being the Bread of Life who has come down from heaven to give life to the world. Jesus has told us that if we eat of his body and drink of his blood that we will find real and true life. Of course, Jesus isn't speaking literally here. But when we gather each week at our Lord's Table, and we kneel at the Altar, we share in the partaking of body and blood, bread and wine. We ingest Jesus. We feed upon Jesus' gospel. We take in all that he taught, and all that he did. We take him into our very selves and are nourished in body and soul. When we partake of Holy Communion we are declaring that we want to manifest in each of our lives the life, message and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So, what was Jesus' wish? What do we claim for our lives as those who partake of Christ? I believe the gospels make very clear that Jesus wish is that we manifest

God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven; indeed, we pray for this every week.

Jesus' wish is that we would be a people of grace and restoration in a world where more and more our culture is ready to condemn and isolate. Jesus wishes that we would welcome the children – yes, those in our own community, but also those at our borders and those fleeing from their own. Jesus wishes that we would welcome and love all people, regardless of skin color, economic status, criminal record, or sexual orientation, just as God's people have always been called to welcome the orphan, alien and stranger into our midst. Jesus wishes for his Church to be a place of healing – not just our members who are facing surgery or battling illness, but also to pray and work for those in our community who battle addiction, whose marriages have crumbled, and whose families have been torn. What is Jesus' wish? That those who partake of his body and blood would be unceasing in making sure that none of God's people go to bed hungry or homeless. Indeed, whether you read Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, I think Jesus' wish is pretty clear: that we would be a fountain of life for all who gather here, which then overflows into a river of compassion for the world.

The task may seem daunting. How do we welcome all, feed all, clothe all, and bring healing to all? Lord knows we have tried. Yet the needs just seem to continue, and it can feel hopeless. We may think we are failures. Yet consider this

image. Think of a small child who is just learning to walk. She stumbles and falls. She gets up and tries again – and falls again. She may even break into laughter about the challenge. But, eventually, she walks. We, too, our God’s children trying to master a new skill. The failures of the past are unimportant. We are here, now, and given the opportunity to practice Christ’s Kingdom-building skills. We may fail to fully love, but we get up and try it again. We may fall in our efforts to heal, to comfort, and to welcome. But we can get right back up and keep trying. I truly believe this is Christ’s wish for us: Walk boldly, children of God!

Much like Dorothy waking up in her bedroom after all her adventures in the Land of Oz, today’s story also ends with Solomon waking from his dream. And we have to ask ourselves, was this dream real? Was Solomon’s request for wisdom possible? Could a man pressured by the realities of politics, business, outside influences and governing a people, be open to the guidance and wisdom of God? Only time would tell – and you’ll have to read the rest of Kings to find out. And what about us? As Kingdom people – as body and blood people – what is our wish? If you were like Pinocchio or Tevye or Solomon, if you could make one wish of God, what would it be? May we, as the members of St. John’s Lutheran Church, make Christ’s wish for us come true. Amen.

Rev. Eric G Nielsen – St John’s Lutheran Church, Eau Claire WI – Aug 19, 2018