

## Sermon followed by Service

February 12, 2023

1 Kings 11

Hard to imagine, isn't it? 700 wives and 300 concubines. And what do we try to imagine? How - how does that work? That's not the important question, is it? The important question is "How, how could he think it ok?"

Did you catch the warning signs? Back when Solomon first became king, we read a clue: "**Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter.**" God had commanded his people not to marry foreigners; he knows how easy it is for love and sex to distract us from God. He knows how easy it is for the world to distract us. So God told his people: "Don't go there." But Solomon didn't listen. Did he not know? Did he not care? Did he think he was somehow exempt? "I'm King, and all the other kings do it, so why not me? But she's the one, so it should be ok, just this one time. I can handle it; I know what I'm doing; I'll be careful." "Everybody else does it; why not me? Just this one time. I can handle it." Sound familiar?

Then another clue. Solomon spent 7 years building the temple, a house for the LORD; how long did he spend building his own house? 13 years. Oh, we can think of good, practical reasons why Solomon's palace needed to be bigger than God's palace, right? Solomon had a business to run out of his home; Solomon needed a place to work; Solomon needed a place to entertain; Solomon needed a place to get away. Oh, and God

gave him the means, so why not? It's easy to find reasons to pamper ourselves more than we worship God. It's easy to spend more on our own comfort and fun and leisure life than we put in the offering plate. It's easy to get focused more on building a life for self than building a life for God. And it's so easy to excuse ourselves, isn't it? "All the other kings .... Everybody else. I need it." Sound familiar?

Then another clue. **"Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem."** Sounds reasonable, doesn't it? It only makes sense. A rich kingdom needs to be a powerful kingdom. A rich and powerful kingdom needs to have forts and fortifications, the best weapons and weapon systems. Except God had told his people and his kings not to gather horses and chariots; they were the power of the ungodly; they were the trust, the safety and security, of the ungodly. But - "Everybody else is doing it. It only makes sense." Sound familiar?

So when we get to chapter 11, and we read 700 wives and 300 concubines, and that Solomon worshiped their gods, we really aren't that much surprised. Oh, we're disappointed. And the numbers might shock us. But that Solomon lost his direction really isn't that much of a surprise, is it? For years, Solomon had been living a double life. For years, Solomon had been choosing to live a double-life - choosing to live the life of the world at the same time God was calling him to live a God-lived Life. For years, Solomon thought it ok to live like the rest of the world. For years, Solomon thought he knew better than God. For years,

Solomon had been turning his ears, his heart, his mind off to what God had said. For years, Solomon had been living a double life, choosing to live a double-life - while God was calling him and blessing him to live the God-Lived Life, he was living the life of the world. Sound familiar?

Finally, the LORD had enough. **“The LORD became angry with Solomon.”** I don’t like to hear that, do you? When I’m choosing to sin, I’d much rather imagine God forgiving me than imagine the reality of God’s judgment. I don’t get to do that; we don’t get to do that. When we choose to sin, when we choose to continue to sin we put ourselves in jeopardy of judgment. I need to hear that: **“The LORD became angry with Solomon.”** So the LORD said to Solomon, **“Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates [Jeroboam].”**

We wish we could hear Solomon echo his dad, David: **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”** We wish we could hear him echo his father, David: **“Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me.”** But that’s not what we hear. Instead of Solomon repenting, instead of Solomon getting rid of his sin and his offense before God, Solomon tries to get rid of Jeroboam. Just as Solomon thought he was smarter than God, Solomon thought he could out-smart God.

Solomon thought that he could live a double life; Solomon thought he could live the life of the world and it wouldn't cost him. He was wrong. It wasn't long after he died that the northern 10 tribes were torn off from his kingdom with Jeroboam as their king. And it wasn't long after that that the king of Egypt came and ransacked Jerusalem. Solomon had shamed the glory of God, and now God shamed the glory of Solomon.

What an awful way to end a series on the life of Solomon. What's the point? It's not just "700 wives and 300 concubines are a few too many." It's the danger of distraction, the danger of thinking we can live a double life - thinking we can mix the God-Lived Life and the life of the world, thinking we can balance the God-Lived Life and the life of the world. Jesus said you can't do both. You either end up living and dying the life of the world, or you repent and set your heart to live the God-Lived life with God.

Thankfully, that's not the last we hear of Solomon. In Ecclesiastes, we hear Solomon talk about his distracted days. He doesn't make excuses; he lays out the ugly and empty truth: **"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."** Solomon chased and chased and chased to fill himself up on the life of the world, and it got him nothing.

That's still an awful way to end a series on Solomon, isn't it? Listen to how Solomon ends Ecclesiastes with a nod to the God-Lived Life: **“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”** I don't know about you, that gives me some hope for Solomon, but it doesn't give me a lot of hope for me.

I know were we can find some hope. Follow me back to 1 Kings. The Lord announces his judgment to Solomon, then he hedges: **“Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime ... for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.”** When the LORD makes a promise, he works to keep his promise. The LORD had promised David a forever King who would make life right for his people, and in spite of Solomon, the LORD was going to keep his promise. You know David's forever King as Jesus. Somehow and sometime, we don't know how or when, God brought Solomon back from his distractions. Somehow and sometime, God brought Solomon back to the God-Lived Life where God's Forever King rules. I wish God told us more about how and when he brought Solomon back, but he hasn't.

Instead, he points us to Jesus. When we get distracted, he points us to Jesus. When we're foolish enough to try to live a double life, mixing the God-Lived Life with the life of the world, he calls us back to Jesus. When chasing the life of the world has you worn out, before living a double-life has you splitting from God, listen to Jesus' invitation: **“Come to me all you who are**

**weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** The good life, life made right isn't found out there; the good life is found in Jesus. When God calls you out, don't settle for “Oops, I couldn't help it” or “Everybody else is doing it” or any other excuse. Echo David: **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”** Echo David and hear your forever King answer: “With the cross, I've taken your sin; with the cross, I've erased your guilt.” With Jesus, you are forgiven to live a life better than the life of the world, with Jesus you are forgiven to live the God-Lived life with God. And when you need, when you want a new start in the God-Lived Life, don't think it's too late. Join David: **“Create in my a clean heart, O God”**; go to the Word and Sacraments where the Spirit of God does God's heart work and gives God's new life. And what will you find? When God makes a promise; he works to keep his promise - for you with Jesus. Amen.

February 11 & 12, 2023

## SERVICE OF THE WORD

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** people lose focus and we hear: “Oops. I didn’t know. It got away from me. It just happened. I couldn’t help it.” Do we ever hear ourselves say the same kind of thing?

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we see wise King Solomon lose focus, and we see what it cost him. We also see that God did not lose focus on his promise, and he found a way to keep his promise for you and for me! (For more from Solomon, read Ecclesiastes.)

### OPENING HYMN

*“Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray”*

**Hymn 873**

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; from your sleep awaken!  
Be not by the evil day unawares o’ertaken;  
for the foe, well we know, is a harvest reaping while the saints are sleeping.

Watch against the devil’s snares lest asleep he find you;  
for indeed no pains he spares to deceive and blind you.  
Satan’s prey oft are they who secure are sleeping and no watch are keeping.

Watch! Let not the wicked world with its lies defeat you  
lest with bold deceptions hurled it betray and cheat you.  
Watch and see lest there be  
faithless friends to charm you who but seek to harm you.

Watch against yourself, my soul, lest with grace you trifle;  
let not self your thoughts control nor God’s mercy stifle.  
Pride and sin lurk within,  
all your hopes to shatter heed not when they flatter.

But while watching also pray to the Lord unceasing.  
God protects you day by day, strength and faith increasing,  
so that still mind and will shall unite to serve him and forever love him.

## INVOCATION

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

## + CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

## + PRAYER AND PRAISE +

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

## HYMN

### *"O Taste and See"*

Hymn 965



O taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless-ed are they who take  
ref - uge in him. Your Word, O Lord, is e - ter - nal; it



stands firm in the heav - ens. Your faith - ful - ness con -  
 tin - ues for - ev - er. O taste and see that the  
 Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Lord God, in mercy receive the prayers of your people. Grant them the wisdom to know the things that please you and the grace and power always to accomplish them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

*1 Kings 10:23–25; 11:1–13*

King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.” Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites.

So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."The

Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



1 In hope - less - ness and near de - spair, I  
 2 I see my heart's con - di - tion now, My  
 3 I trem - ble as I feel your hand, Ex -  
 4 For - giv - en, free of guilt and shame, Grant



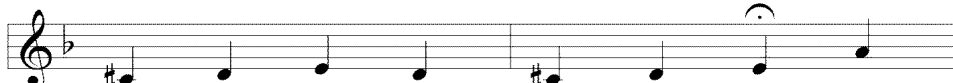
cry to you, my Sav - ior! My guilt is more than  
 heart's di - verse af - fec - tions. Why do I love the  
 pec - ting re - tri - bu - tion, Yet hear no curse or  
 me some time to ren - der A gift to glo - ri -



I can bear. I have not earned your fav - or. You  
 things you loathe; I'm torn in two di - rec - tions: Now  
 re - pri - mand, But grace and ab - so - lu - tion: With  
 fy your name, Love to re - flect your splen - dor: This



know me as I real - ly am: How  
 prod - i - gal, now Phar - i - see. O  
 you there is for - give - ness, Lord, You  
 world must know what I have learned, That



much is truth, how much is sham; Why  
 God, be mer - ci - ful to me; Who  
 speak the sweet, con - sol - ing Word, And  
 you be - stow what none has earned: The



should you heed my plead - ing?  
 else but you can help me?  
 I am sure you love me!  
 joy of full for - give - ness!

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

♪ **Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**  
**These words are written that we may believe**  
**that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**  
**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

## GOSPEL

*Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23*

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*"All Depends on Our Possessing"*

**Hymn 807**

All depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing,  
though all earthly wealth depart. They who trust with faith unshaken  
in their God are not forsaken and will keep a dauntless heart.

He who to this day has fed me and to many joys has led me  
is and ever shall be mine. He who ever gently schools me,  
he who daily guides and rules me, will remain my help divine.

Many spend their lives in fretting over trifles and in getting  
things that have no solid ground. I shall strive to win a treasure  
that will bring me lasting pleasure and that now is seldom found.

When with sorrow I am stricken, hope anew my heart will quicken;  
all my longing shall be stilled. To his lovingkindness tender  
soul and body I surrender, for on God alone I build.

Well he knows what best to grant me; all the longing hopes that haunt me,  
joy and sorrow, have their day. I shall doubt his wisdom never;  
as God wills, so be it ever; I commit to him my way.

If my days on earth he lengthen, he my weary soul will strengthen;  
all my trust in him I place. Earthly wealth is not abiding,  
like a stream away is gliding; safe I anchor in his grace.

**SERMON**

**HYMN**

*"What Is the World to Me"*

**Hymn 717**

What is the world to me with all its vaunted pleasure  
when you and you alone, Lord Jesus, are my treasure!  
You only, dearest Lord, my soul's delight shall be;  
you are my peace, my rest. What is the world to me!

The world seeks after wealth and all that money offers,  
yet never is content though gold should fill its coffers.  
I have a higher good, content with it I'll be;  
my Jesus is my wealth. What is the world to me!

The world is like a cloud and like a vapor fleeting,  
a shadow that declines, swift to its end retreating.  
My Jesus shall remain, though all things fade and flee,  
my everlasting rock. What is the world to me!

What is the world to me! My Jesus is my treasure,  
my life, my health, my wealth, my friend, my love, my pleasure,  
my joy, my crown, my all, my bliss eternally.  
Once more then I declare: What is the world to me!

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Lord God, our maker and preserver, we praise and thank you for all that you give us day after day.

C: **We are not worthy of all the mercies you show us.**

M: You have given us your precious Word to nourish our souls and to protect us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

C: **We thank you for those who teach and preach your saving truth at this place and everywhere. Grant them a rich measure of patience, wisdom, and love.**

M: Heavenly Father, we pray that you shield us from every kind of danger: sudden catastrophe, terrors of crime, and the pain of disease. Watch over those who travel by land, sea, and air. Keep our loved ones from whatever perils may threaten them.

C: **Heal those who are sick, cheer those who are sad, calm those who are distressed, and comfort all who are old and infirm.**

M: Bless our land, our people, and those who hold offices of high trust. Keep our government and schools upright and strong for the advancement of good citizenship and useful vocations, that we may enjoy your gifts of peace, security, and well-being.

C: **Grant your blessing to every nation on earth. Where there are wars, may there be peace. Where there is hatred, let it be healed. Where there is poverty, danger, or disaster, come with your almighty power to help and restore.**

*Special prayers and intercessions may follow.*

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring to you our private petitions.

*Silent prayer.*

M: We bring these requests before you in the name of Jesus our Lord, and ask you to hear us. Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, our ministries and offerings, and use them to your glory.

C: **We give ourselves to you that we may serve you in whatever way is pleasing in your sight. Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

#### CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.  
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

## CHOIR

*“His Mercy Is More”*

Hymn 579

*What love could remember no wrongs we have done?  
Omniscient, all-knowing, he counts not their sum;  
thrown into a sea without bottom or shore,  
our sins they are many, his mercy is more.*

### **Refrain**

*Praise the Lord! His mercy is more!  
Stronger than darkness, new ev’ry morn;  
our sins they are many, his mercy is more!*

*What patience would wait as we constantly roam,  
what Father so tender is calling us home!  
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor;  
our sins they are many, his mercy is more. **Refrain***

*What riches of kindness he lavished on us;  
his blood was the payment, his life was the cost.  
We stood ‘neath a debt we could never afford;  
our sins they are many, his mercy is more. **Refrain***

## OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code  
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(continued from page 12)

Because of your generous gifts, WELS continues to provide financial support to the ULC. The pastors and people are using those funds carefully and wisely, providing food, clothing, medicine, and transportation to those who need it. Thank you for your generous gifts!

Please continue to keep our brothers and sisters in your prayers. Thank God that they continue to worship and hear his Word. Thank God that he has kept them safe. Pray that God would continue to bless them with his loving protection and that peace will soon be restored throughout Ukraine.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder

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## **St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**

*A Family Connecting in Christ*

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## **Update on the Ukrainian Lutheran Church**

The situation in Ukraine remains very challenging and difficult for our brothers and sisters of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC). Rev. Roger Neumann serves as the WELS liaison to the ULC and is in almost daily contact with Bishop Vyacheslav Horpynchuk, the head of the ULC. Neumann provides regular updates with information provided by Horpynchuk.

Horpynchuk often reports of the situation on the ground in Ukraine. Heavy shelling of populated areas continues. Even though there are widespread power outages and a lack of heat and sometimes even water, the congregations of the ULC continue to meet for worship (dressed in winter clothing) whenever possible. Pastors continue to be faithful to their callings by preaching, teaching, calling on members, and distributing food and medicine to their members, refugees, and communities. Many members have had to flee from their hometowns, but those people are often served by pastors in congregations where the danger is less intense.

Even when it seems safe, often it is not. Last Sunday one worship service was interrupted by a shell that fell 800 meters from the church, shaking the building and breaking some windows. Members in Kiev try to go about their normal life, using public transportation to travel. But when an air raid siren sounds, all public transportation stops. Subways can be stopped for two or more hours. Sometimes people need to remain in bomb shelters for up to seven hours. At night, when missile strikes shake their apartments, they wake up in fear and anxiety, wondering when the next missile will hit. Whenever families are separated by work, school, or buying groceries, they are in constant fear for one another's safety. Yet they are quick to confess that they believe that the Lord will watch over them and that they await an enduring kingdom that is secured by our Lord Jesus, a kingdom where they will be safe eternally.

Plans for new church buildings have been put on hold, but there is every intention to continue those projects when the war is over. In the meantime, even small temporary places of worship become places of refuge and comfort as God's Word is preached and his promises proclaimed.

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