

Trinity, Waukesha, WI ~ Pastor Jay Zahn ~ 1 Kings 3:5-12 ~ July 25-26, 2026

Series: What Makes Christians Different? Christians seek spiritual wealth.

Theme: Seek the Treasure That Lasts

If God came to you today and said exactly what he said to Solomon, "***Ask for whatever you want me to give you***," what would you ask for?

God doesn't ask that question to learn what you want. He asks it to bring to your attention what your heart most dearly desires, most deeply treasures.

Better health, maybe. Financial security. A restored relationship. A deeper one. Relief from anxiety. Or maybe just enough time to catch your breath.

None of those are bad requests. Scripture invites us to bring every concern to our Father.

But imagine your Heavenly Father promised to grant only one. What would you choose? What would your choice reveal about your heart?

Throughout this sermon series we've been asking: What Makes Christians Different? Today's focus, today's answer: Christians seek spiritual wealth.

What does that mean? It doesn't mean we ignore this life. We work. We provide. We save. We enjoy God's physical blessings with real thanksgiving. But Christians seek something the world doesn't want to acknowledge: the greatest treasure isn't something you can put in a bank account. It's what God gives through Christ.

As we think about that, I want you to hold on to the word: treasure. I want you to hold onto it because it holds insight into your heart and your life. You see, one of the deep truths of life is this: whatever we treasure will shape how we live.

Now think about young King Solomon. He is standing at the beginning of an overwhelming responsibility. His father, King David is gone. The kingdom is his. He's young, he knows his limits, and he knows these aren't really his people. They belong to the Lord.

Then the Lord appears to him in a dream: "***Ask for whatever you want me to give you.***"

Before we dig into that invitation, notice who moves first. God approaches. God invites. God offers before Solomon asks for anything. Even this dream is a gift Solomon didn't earn. What an amazing example of grace. God offers before the request is ever spoken. Keep that in mind; it matters.

In the ancient world, a king given this kind of blank check would have asked for the obvious things: victory over his enemies, a long and glorious reign, treasure for his palace. That's what kings prayed for. So when Solomon answers in a decidedly different way, we should sit up and take notice. Notice, Solomon doesn't ask to be made greater. He begins by confessing his smallness: "***I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.***" He's not an infant. He's inexperienced. It's not every day you hear a king admitting he's in over his head. Then he asks, "***Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people, to distinguish between right and wrong.***"

That last phrase is significant. Solomon isn't asking for raw intelligence. He's asking for wisdom to serve, to govern God's covenant people justly, not to rule them for his own gain. Biblical wisdom has never been a matter of IQ. It's the capacity to live by God's Word in faith, and to let that Word shape how you treat the people in front of you.

The Hebrew behind "***discerning heart***" (*lev shomea*), literally means a "*listening heart.*" The Hebrew word for listening, *shama*, is the same word Moses used in Deuteronomy 6: "***Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one.***" Hearing doesn't just mean catching a sound. It means paying attention, believing, and obeying. Solomon is asking God for something even greater than a sharp mind. He's asking God to give him a heart that trusts and obeys what God says. Ultimately, that means he's asking God to keep speaking to him. The listening heart Solomon seeks is a heart God creates by his Word, not one we manufacture by trying harder.

That request pleased the Lord, because Solomon sought God's priorities ahead of his own. Jesus would later teach exactly that: "***Seek first [God's] his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***" Money can buy a lot. It cannot buy forgiveness. It cannot buy peace with God. It cannot buy eternal life. God's greatest gifts are always his spiritual gifts, the ones that teach us to know him, trust him, and serve one another in God's love.

These gifts also address our deepest needs and greatest struggles. Though we frequently make the struggle more difficult because our hearts naturally treasure other things.

For some of us it's money and retirement accounts. For others it's approval, needing people to think highly of us. For others it's control, or certainty about the future, or a family that looks like it's succeeding, or simply comfort: a day with no friction in it. Different treasures, same root. A root our culture plants with the question: "How much are you worth?" That question focuses us on earthly things, reshaping what our hearts treasure, often in subtle even imperceptible ways. One way it shows out is our prayers, when they

start sounding like shopping lists: Lord, give me security. Lord, fix my problem. Lord, make this easier.

None of those prayers are sinful on their own. Jesus tells us to pray for daily bread. But what happens when daily bread, or approval, or control, becomes life's greatest treasure? Something deeper has shifted. We are tempted to believe: if I just had enough, enough money, enough certainty, enough control, then I'd have peace.

I've been nursing some significant back pain recently, the kind that makes getting up from a chair hard and walking uncomfortable. In the midst of this pain, God has helped me see just how closely I have tied my own security to my ability to keep producing. Beneath my concern about unfinished work was a deeper fear: *If I can't keep carrying all my responsibilities, will I still be okay?*

Martin Luther diagnosis this worry plainly: our god is whatever we fear, love, and trust above everything else. He says it even more sharply in the Large Catechism: "*Whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, that is properly your god.*" That's uncomfortable, because who we name as our God may not always be what we're functionally trusting in. That is often revealed by what keeps us up at night, what we can't imagine living without.

Instead of listening hearts, we often have distracted ones. Instead of asking for wisdom, we assume we already know best. Instead of seeking God's kingdom first, we ask him to help us build ours. God's Word exposes what we struggle to admit: we've often loved God's gifts more than we've loved God himself. No amount of earthly wealth, or approval, or control, fixes that.

Solomon was wise, but even Solomon stumbled. Later in life his heart wandered after other loves. His wisdom was remarkable. But it was still far from perfect. Solomon still needed a Savior.

Jesus is the greater Solomon. Jesus is greater in every direction that Solomon points. Solomon asked for wisdom; Christ *is* divine Wisdom, in the flesh. Solomon judged Israel with a listening heart; Christ judges the nations with perfect justice. Solomon built a temple that would one day fall; Christ builds a Church that death itself cannot tear down. Solomon's kingdom eventually split and faded; Christ's kingdom cannot be shaken.

Even greater, Jesus did something Solomon never could: he traded places with us. He took our wandering hearts, our misplaced treasures, our greed, our need for control, and carried all of it to the cross. In exchange he gives us his perfect righteousness before God,

his unfailing wisdom, his spotless obedience, washing from our sins, a right relationship with God, unconditional love, a home in his Kingdom.

The greatest treasure God ever gave wasn't wisdom by itself. It is the wisdom of knowing, trusting, and following his own Son.

In Christ, you already possess riches no market can erase: forgiveness, peace with God, adoption into his family, eternal life, the Holy Spirit himself. However secure or shaky your accounts, your health, or your reputation feel right now, there is one gift the worst day of your life cannot touch: what Christ has already given you. That's not wishful thinking. That's what "imperishable" means.

Jesus not only forgives us, he also changes what we treasure. Not because we decide to try harder, but because his Spirit keeps strengthening a listening heart in us through the very Word we're hearing right now. This is why we keep returning to Scripture, worship, and the Sacrament: it's not a duty tacked onto faith, it's where God gives his greatest gifts, real spiritual wealth.

As he does, we start asking different questions. Not "how do I get ahead," but "Lord, in your wisdom what would you have me do?" Not "what will make me comfortable," but "what would glorify Christ." We stop measuring our worth by possessions, or approval, or control and start measuring it by faithfulness, not ours to God, but God's to us.

What does that mean for us as Trinity? It means wanting to be known not for how much we have but for the One whom we treasure, where the best conversations at our tables are about Christ, where our kids grow up believing Jesus really is worth more than anything else, where our neighbors notice a peace in us that doesn't disappear when the economy falters, because our treasure was never there to begin with. That's not a boast about who we already are. It's a prayer for what the Spirit keeps doing among us.

That's the kind of people God calls us to be. Our mission objectives of Believe, Belong, Blossom, Build aren't only about sharing this spiritual wealth with others, but also continually growing in these treasures ourselves. Believe, to continue growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, our greatest treasure. Belong, deepening our connection with one another as family, gathered together as brothers and sisters in our Heavenly Father's family. We Blossom as the Spirit grows listening hearts in us through God's Word and Sacraments. And we Build because God doesn't enrich us just so we can admire his gifts. He enriches us so we become generous, faithful builders of his kingdom.

That's happening daily, in ways you may not always realize. Your family, coworkers, neighbors, teammates, they see and notice it, though. Your priorities preach even before you say a single word.

That brings us back to the opening question. If God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" what would you ask?

Solomon sets a compelling example. Before you ask God for security, or comfort, or control, ask him for a listening heart. That gift is how you hold the treasure that lasts forever. Everything else is temporary. Christ is eternal.

The world will keep chasing bigger barns, bigger accounts, bigger reputations. Christians are different. We ask for a listening heart because we seek real spiritual wealth, the greatest treasure we could ever have.

His name is Jesus.

May his Spirit keep shaping our hearts so that, above every treasure that fades, we joyfully treasure Christ, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.