



Worship at Home—Sunday 15 August 2021

Call to Worship

As we gather to worship this morning
Let us delight in the works of the Lord
And sing and shout our praises for all the things God has done for us.
Because God is gracious and merciful
And keeps His promises for ever and ever.
Bread of life for the world
Grow Your kingdom within us.

Amen

Opening Prayer

Lord God to you belongs all power that lasts and does not fade
To you belongs all love and manner of love

By your love and power, you have called us into being and we are called to do Christ's
ministry amidst your people and to share his love in all circumstances.

Out of your powerful and faithful Word, Lord God, inspire us by the power of your Holy
Spirit we pray.

Give us energy and wisdom and the words we need to make a difference in the lives of
others.

As your church, give us vision to see what we can do in Christ's strength to alleviate problems nearby as well as in the world

Lead us and guide us in these times as we reopen after Covid, as we look to find solutions to Climate warming.

And speak to our hearts as we worship you now. Break through our defences and barriers. Waken us from slumber and sleep and teach us about ourselves.

Enable us to bring before you all our weaknesses and stubborn prejudices, our neglect of caring, all our insecurities, anxieties, burdens and cares.

Here in this hour, restore our minds and hearts. Cleanse us from sinful thoughts and forgive us from wrongdoing. Energise us and empower us to see and know your real and lasting presence in our lives, in this community of Currie and in our vast world of need.

As we focus our eyes and open our hearts to your heavenly love, a love greater than we can fathom or understand, hear us as we come to say afresh the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ.

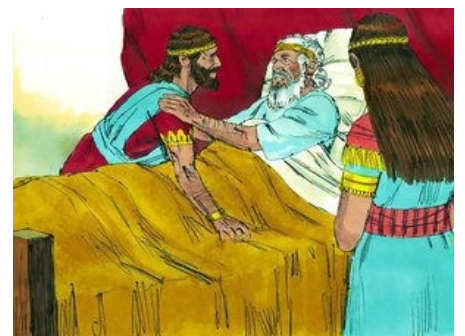
Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

The Scriptures

1 Kings 2:10-12

Death of David

Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned for seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.



1 Kings 3: 3-14

Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places.

The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt-offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' And Solomon said, 'You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today.

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?'

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.'

Sermon on the Gift of Wisdom

1st Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

As our schools go back in Scotland this week let's be mindful of all those who have worked in government, in the councils, in the schools themselves preparing to reopen after this drastic crisis. Let's pray for the pupils too who have lost a lot of learning, and other developments and who may well be very anxious at the thought of resuming a new academic year. This crisis took a toll on daily life, in many ways beyond the disease itself. The Head Teacher of Currie High School, Jennie Smith, only just got the post before Covid. I am sure she is hoping for a less stressful year ahead.

I have always noted and been amazed how in every organisation, the character, and values of the person in charge at the top filters down, influencing the whole atmosphere of the place and its people. This can apply to a national leader like the prime minister, a president, dictator, or monarch. It can apply to the CEO of a company or any person leading any organisation. A school principal shapes the ethos of the whole place and influences the spirit and energy of the pupils. The difference between a good head teacher and a bad one can change the whole student experience. Good leadership is so important.

In our bible passage, King David (who, despite his personal indiscretions was hailed as a great leader of Israel for forty years) is dying. And as is often the case in that moment when the King dies, a successor must be appointed immediately. The crowd's familiar chant, "The King is dead, Long live the King!" gives people the assurance that the throne will never be empty and the nation will never be without a monarch.

At the Point of King David's death he had a few children. One Son Adonijah, the eldest wanted the throne and the power that came with it. So he started a rabble and went about proclaiming himself as the heir to the throne and getting crowds riled up to support him. However, King David had selected his son Solomon to lead.

Reading the first few chapters of 1st Kings reminded me of the Lion King, if you have seen the film or show, when the lion cub Simba is born, he is held up above the African plains and proclaimed heir to his father Mufasa, the great Lion King. However, Simba's lion uncle Scar is a calculating, conniving, cruel Lion who wants the power himself, so when Mufasa is killed in a stampede, Scar, who is a nasty Scar takes the Lion's throne. Under Scar, the land is ravaged by hyenas and drought. Finally, Simba grows up and returns to fight Scar and restore the land to wellbeing. It is a lovely children's story illustrating the importance of wise leadership.

Maybe it is a stretch, in 1st Kings, Adonijah wanted the throne of Israel for himself, not for the sake of the people. Thanks to the Prophet Nathan and Zadock the Priest, Solomon is rightly appointed as the new king and heir to his Father David. He is still young as he assumes this responsibility. Taking over his father's role was an enormous duty.

Therefore, as you heard in the scripture, Solomon comes before God with great humility, offering his time, attention and sacrifices of devotion. He makes it clear that he has chosen to follow God first rather than pursue earthly glory for himself. He yearns for God's blessing and help. And God comes to him in a dream and speaks to him, "Ask what I should give you". What a great opportunity from God at the start of this huge moment of leadership. Solomon who was still so young, could have asked for riches, power,

victories over his enemies, strength for his armies but he chooses instead to ask God for an understanding mind so as to be able to govern and guide God's people who are now entrusted to him. Solomon does the mature thing. Solomon asks for "an understanding mind . . . able to discern between right and wrong, for who by himself is able to govern." He asks God for WISDOM !

And so God imparts the gift of wisdom to Solomon. There are great stories in the bible which highlight the wisdom of Solomon and he became renowned as a wise king because he was a man of God. The Book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon—it is full of wise maxims for every-day life.

We may well wonder what is wisdom exactly? What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? With information technology, the internet, Google and all the advancements of weaponry, space travel, computing, navigation . . . we have no shortages of information at our disposal, even at our fingertips. Yet all this knowledge does not guarantee wisdom. In fact I know many teachers who complain that our current school system sees education mainly in terms of a dissemination of knowledge, the passing of exams, getting the grades—but these things in and of themselves do not bring maturity and personal growth.

Wisdom is clearly not the same as knowledge—wisdom is the ability to discern what to do with your knowledge. I once heard the difference is this: If knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in your fruit salad!

When we look across the world, how many conflicts and tensions could be avoided or eased if people in power took King Solomon's approach to leadership. How badly our world needs wise leaders who discern right and wrong—who use the knowledge to serve, not just to gain power or wealth or to threaten or go to war. Global warming is causing a crisis in terms of deadly storms and raging forest fires. We need scientific solutions but we also need wise global leadership so that nations can work together, cooperating well instead of hoping for world domination. This is where wisdom is important. Wisdom brings peace and harmony between people and groups.

Wisdom is more than knowledge because it is a spiritual gift. One practical way to gain wisdom is to steep ourselves in the scriptures. In ancient times, the books of Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Job came to be known as the Wisdom Literature. People believed these ancient books can bring us closer the Mind of God. Surely this is always true of the study of scripture. We think of Psalm 27: "*Wait for the Lord, be of good courage and he will strengthen your heart.*" (Psalm 27:14), and "*The Lord is my light and salvation, of whom shall I be afraid.*" (Psalm 27:1) Or in Proverbs chapter 3 "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.*" Proverbs 3.

Several psalms contain the line, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The word fear is often translated to mean reverence. These words mean a lot to me as the Latin Motto for the University of Aberdeen is *Initium Sapientiae Timor Domini*, which means, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord. What a great motto!

Wisdom is not simply a principle to live by. It is a power. A power which Jesus personified. We remember throughout the Gospels that people were astonished by Jesus' ability to open the scriptures to their hearts.

In Mark 6 it says, *"And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom given to him?'"* In first Corinthians, Saint Paul wrote, *"Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."* (1 Cor 1:24)

The books of first and second Kings are a really great read. Perhaps King Solomon's wisest course of action was also quite simple. He recognised that if he wanted to fulfil his sense of destiny and purpose, he needed the help, support and partnership of God. He needed God's grace and he needed to seek to be faithful. Solomon was thought to be a better ruler than even his father David. Much blood was shed when David was the king of Israel, but under Solomon there was peace and Solomon sought to rebuild the temple at the heart of the city so that all people could know that God was at the heart of his reign.

What a wonderful reminder for all of us as we begin the challenge of a new school year or just the challenge of finding our feet, reopening our church after this experience of Covid. We know life will not be exactly the same as it was. But if, like Solomon, we put God at the heart of our personal life, our family life, our spiritual life, even our community life, then good things can come. Jesus assures us that the door is always open to God's Spirit when we knock. The grace of God, the wisdom of God is freely given when we try to pray, asking God for help, knowing that the beginning of wisdom is reverence for God. Solomon wrote these timeless words in Proverbs:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths."

Pastoral Prayer

Father God, with thankful hearts we rejoice in your goodness towards us, grateful for the blessings we receive each day.

We thank you for the physical gifts that sustain us and the added gifts of love and insight that make our life meaningful and full.

Help us to be generous with others in love and grace as you are generous with us

God of wisdom, guide our paths

Father God,

be with our children and young people as they start and return to school.

Help them to learn and grow and flourish.

We pray for the children and families who are feeling anxious about the new term, knowing that school isn't always an easy place to be.

We pray for the pupils and teachers at [your local schools].

God of wisdom, guide our paths

Be with the people getting ready for the COP26 Climate conference in just a few months' time.

As reports are prepared and arrangements made,

give us bold ambition to make the changes we know are necessary to protect the world You have created.

Let us not lose sight of the need for justice and accountability

God of wisdom, guide our paths

Be with those who lack basic things that we can take for granted

be with those struggling to survive or thrive after disaster or war

Be with people of power and influence

locally and internationally whose decisions affect the lives of others

God of wisdom, guide our paths

Be in and with our Kirk,

Help us to pray for one another and to care for those troubled by circumstances or burdened by grief.

Bless our church

as we grapple with the need for change

and the reality of a future that is going to be very different from our past.

Help us to recognise You at work already in our community

and to be listening for Your whispers of new possibilities

and ways of living out our faith.

God of wisdom, guide our paths.

Amen

The Blessing

As we go out into the week ahead,
May God give us wisdom to know what is good
And let us see God's kingdom all around us
Amen



Kirk Contacts

Minister: Rev Dr Easter Smart—Tel: 449 4719 email: esmart@churchofscotland.org.uk
Family worker: Heather Merriman email: Familyworker_JVP@outlook.com
Pastoral Coordinator: Gordon Clephane—449 2313
Nina at the Kirk Office—451 5141
email currie_kirk@btconnect.com if you need anything.
Website: [//www.curriekirk.org/](http://www.curriekirk.org/) or [//www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/](http://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/)

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