

[SLIDE 1: Give Us an Understanding Heart]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We've just heard names. The bell sounded. And together we answered, "Here with us." Some of those names bring a face immediately to mind. Perhaps you can still hear a laugh, picture a place at the dinner table, or remember a voice that knew just what to say when you needed help. Before she passed, my sister Jr recorded a short message to each of her family members. I wish I had something like that from my mom, dad, and other sisters who have also passed. We miss those voices. Sometimes we especially miss being able to ask, "What do you think I should do?"



[SLIDE 2: Lord, I Need Understanding]

Solomon stands at a moment when it must have felt like the weight of the world was on his shoulders. His father David is gone and now he's the king.

When God invites him to ask for a gift, Solomon admits something we might not expect a king to say. "I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in." Whatever his age, Solomon knows how small he feels beside the work before him. These are God's people. Their lives matter. How will he care for them?

Then the story brings that responsibility right up in his face. Two women stand before him. One child has died. Another child is alive. Both women claim the living child. There is grief in that room. There is accusation. A child's life hangs in the balance. A crown isn't going to tell Solomon what to do.



[SLIDE 3: Give Us Hearts That Listen]

We know something about having responsibility without having all the answers. Someone we depended on dies, and suddenly there are decisions we used to make together. The house gets quiet. We reach for the telephone before remembering the person we want to call cannot answer. Other times, the uncertainty comes while life is still moving right along. Someone needs our help, and we can't figure out what the best course of action might be. We love our children and grandchildren, but we cannot live their lives for them. We want to do right by the people we love. Sometimes we get it wrong. And sometimes our

difficulty goes deeper than uncertainty. We can become so certain of our own solution we stop trying to hear other options. We stop listening because we think we already know the right and only answer. We can do that at home or in church and even with God. We bring our plans and expect God to approve them. Making room for an answer we did not expect is hard.

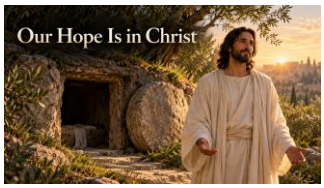
All Saints Sunday can stir that up, too. We remember people whose judgment we trusted, and we wonder whether we can carry what they carried. Solomon gives us words for that moment. Lord, I do not know how to do this. Give your servant understanding. Give us an understanding heart.



[SLIDE 4: God Gives Wisdom]

Notice what God does with Solomon's admission. God welcomes his prayer. Solomon doesn't have to pretend he's ready. He doesn't have to prove he can manage everything himself. He can bring his need directly to God. In response to Solomon's prayer God gives him wisdom. Before Solomon settles the dispute, before he has demonstrated his ability, God promises him a wise and discerning mind. His work begins with God's gift already received. Then those two women come before him, and the wisdom God has given is already being tested as the life

of a living, breathing child hangs in the balance. The command to bring a sword is frightening. We should feel the horror of it. Then the mother speaks. Her compassion breaks through the argument as she cries out, “Give the child to the other woman; let him live.” Solomon hears her and acts. The child is spared and returned to the rightful mother. The people recognize God’s wisdom at work in justice. God’s gift reaches beyond Solomon. It reaches a mother and her child. That is good news for people who feel unequal to their responsibilities. God hears the prayer for understanding. God gives gifts through which neighbors receive care.



[SLIDE 5: Our Hope Is in Christ]

When we look to Jesus, we see how deeply God has entered our need. Jesus comes among people carrying grief and confusion. He hears their cries. He receives those whom others would turn away. At the cross, he bears our sin and enters death itself. In his resurrection, he opens a future death cannot close. Our hope rests in this living Lord.

That is why we could speak those names this morning with both sorrow and hope. We miss these people. Their absence is real. Faith gives us room to grieve.

Faith also gives us a promise greater than our grief. All who belong to Jesus remain his forever. Death cannot undo his love or cancel his claim upon those who Jesus loves. When we answered, "Here with us," we confessed the communion we share in Christ. We belong to one Lord, whose risen life holds his people together, even through death itself.



[SLIDE 6: Given for You]

In a few minutes as we come to his table, we will bring our grief, our unanswered questions, and whatever responsibilities are waiting for us. Jesus will meet us with a gift. "My body, given for you." "My blood, shed for you." There is forgiveness here for the times we refused to listen. There is strength for the work we cannot carry alone. There is Wisdom for those times when we just don't know what to do. There is a place for us in the company of God's beloved people.



[SLIDE 7: Lead Us in Your Wisdom]

The same Lord who sustained the saints before us will sustain us now. After worship, we'll gather for our annual congregational meeting. Solomon's prayer can be our Annual Meeting prayer too. "Give us understanding minds as we listen to one another and consider the people our decisions will affect. Grant us a share of your Holy Wisdom to discern how to best care for the neighbor whose need we have not yet noticed." Whatever business comes before us, we remain people gathered and loved by Christ.

Solomon's prayer can go home with us, too. Before the difficult conversation... When someone needs our patience... When we miss the voice we once depended on... When the next faithful step is hard to see… We can pray, "Lord, give me an understanding heart." We can ask because God has already turned toward us in love. Christ has claimed us, and he will not abandon us. The future is in God's hands. So are the saints we remember. So are we.

May God give us Holy Wisdom to see the world through the eyes of Christ's love. Amen.