

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.  
Amen.

You may be seated. We have an interesting lesson today. We are still in the Christmas season celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord, the Son of David. But in this lesson in the Old Testament, when we read about a different son of David, Solomon. Now, it's an interesting choice, Solomon. Solomon was king after David, which makes sense. Solomon is in the line of the Messiah, and yet this son of David, the son of Solomon, he have questions about where he ended up and how he... With all of the gifts and all the blessings that he received from God, he ended up turning from the Lord later on in his life. And it's interesting. He inherits the throne from his father, David. And God asks him, "What do you want? What can I give you?" And he asked for wisdom to rule the people because his father David had ruled and his father David was upright and righteous and holy before God.

And I'm thinking, wow, that's an interesting choice to think about David, isn't it? Especially considering who Solomon's mother is. Solomon's mother is Bathsheba. Bathsheba is the woman that David saw bathing on her rooftop and he lusted after her and brought her into his household and got her pregnant. The first child that he had with her died, and yet God still graced Bathsheba with another child who would indeed become king.

This whole story is all about God being gracious when He ought not to be and calling David upright and holy. What in the world are we talking about? He committed adultery. He committed murder. He was not exactly, as far as we are concerned when we look at his actual activities, he wasn't exactly the most righteous and upright man, and yet God says that David is a man after God's own heart. What is that all about?

And Solomon who asked for wisdom from God and received it as well as great wealth and long life, or at least he was supposed to, that's how it was supposed to work out, he, with all of his wisdom and all of his wealth, turned from God. He started worshiping the gods of his wives of foreign lands and turned away from God. David, we know, as a man after God's own heart, we know he is with God. Solomon; not so sure. Solomon turned from the Lord. What are we talking? How is David righteous and Solomon not? Solomon has wisdom given to him by God; David had some questionable activities going on in his life. What is this all about? See, the story of God and the story of Christmas. The story of the scriptures is all about God being gracious to people who do not deserve it. And David understood this. David understood that he did not deserve the grace of God. He understood that he had sinned against God. When confronted with his sin, he flat out said, "I've sinned against God and against man." Didn't deny it, didn't make excuses for it,

didn't try and explain it away, he just admitted his sin. That is what made him righteous, to recognize that he was a sinner before God. And his only hope, the only hope that David had was to throw himself upon the mercy of God because God's word had said, "I will be merciful," because God's word tells us that He is gracious and loving towards us. And David believed those words. And so David is considered righteous and holy, not because of what he did, but because of whom he believed in.

Solomon, on the other hand, had all the wisdom given to him. And he used that for the purpose of guiding the kingdom for many years. But he started to rely upon his own wisdom and forgot where that wisdom came from. He started to look to himself and to brag about himself so much that he bragged about his own riches and his own wisdom to the queen of Sheba. Brought her in and showed her his whole treasury... Basically inviting her to come and ransack him later on. But he was so enamored with himself and with what he had, he began to forget who had given it to him. And that was his downfall. He failed to recognize that he was but a humble servant of God. Given gifts, yes, but they were gifts from God. And he needed to trust in the word of God and he failed to do that. That is the difference between these two kings. The son of David that we first hear about, Solomon, failed in his office, hence the reason and part of the reason why the second Son, the true Son of David needed to come, because even Solomon in all his wisdom could not maintain his righteousness by his own efforts. He still fell short because of his own sin.

While Solomon seemed to fail to recognize that it was the grace of God that gave him these things, we must not. We must understand that everything is a gift. That is what the Ephesians passage is talking about, that we are a given adoption, that God has adopted us. He has called us by name. He knows us. He has written our name in the Book of Life.

And this is not for us to try and figure out, well, how do we know? How does God know we're saved or not saved? And how does he pick and choose? That's not the point. The whole point of this being predestined and being adopted is to know this: Whenever you look to your own behavior and you recognize, "I've fallen short," where do you go for hope? Where do you go for reassurance? Try harder? Do better? No, that doesn't work. You'll never try hard enough and you'll never be good enough; not in your own effort, not in your own strength.

Where do we turn? We turn to our adoption. We turn to the assurance that we are children of God, and by His grace we have been saved and forgiven of all of our sins. We turn to the baptismal font where we have been buried with Christ and raised to new life, where we have the confidence and the assurance that when we face the judgment seat of God, it will not be a seat of wrath but a seat of mercy, a

seed of grace and forgiveness because we are His children, because He adopted us, because He made us His children and He forgave us our sins by His own will and His own desire, not by our own effort and our own worthiness.

John the Baptist was out preaching a message of repentance to prepare them, not that they would repent and therefore be justified before God, but that they would repent and be ready to receive and hear the message of grace that was coming, the message of forgiveness that is found in Christ, the Son of David, who got it right, the Son of David who understands our temptations as He was tempted in every way like us and yet resisted and did not fall into sin, the Son of David who had the wisdom to trust only in the word of God who only spoke what His father willed Him to speak, who only did what His father desired Him to do. And we receive that benefit in our baptisms. We receive His work, His justification as if it were our own.

We began this Advent season by talking about John, pointing to the coming of Christ. And we end our Christmas season with John again pointing to Christ because it's not about us and it's not about our work, it's about Christ. He has come. Not just born into manger, but He has come to us in our baptisms and He has made us children with Him. And He will come again.

And so in the meantime, what are we called to do to be satisfied with our lives that God has given to us? To trust that He is working even in the difficult situations, even in the challenges and the frustrations and the illnesses and the sicknesses and the tumult and whatever else we might be facing in this world.

Is His word still sufficient for us? Is His promise still true? Does He guarantee that we will be with Him, that our sins are forgiven? Yes, He does. That is the true wisdom that we have received from God. Just as Solomon did, we have also received. But let us not turn from it, rather dwell in the word. Inwardly digest his word. Focus upon what God has given to us.

Luther, in his definition of the third commandment, "Onto the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." What does this mean? We should not despise preaching or His word, but gladly hear and learn it. The word of God is what sustains us. The word of God is what gives us hope. The promises that we find there are what enable us to stand firm, what enable us to be confident. That in spite of the sin that we know we've done, in the eyes of God we are righteous, we are holy, we are perfect because we have been robed in the blood of Christ in His righteousness. His righteousness is ours, therefore we can stand firm; confident as David was confident that God loves us and that He will bring us to be with Him in everlasting righteousness and blessedness. May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.