

Devotion, Week of July 26, 2026

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Sunday I talked about Solomon's wisdom. When he first became king, in his early twenties, he asked God for a listening heart rather than riches or power, and God was so impressed that he gave him wisdom – and God said it was going to be more than anyone before or after him. We know that Solomon had issues later in his realm – with enemies and power struggles within the kingdom, and even women. He also used conscribed labor to build the temple – he forced his people to work with no wages – and taxed the people heavily to pay for it. That caused a great deal of resentment.

Now the temple was a marvelous thing – today it would be a World Heritage Site of beauty. Not only was it massive, it was painted inside with all kinds of flowers and animals to mimic the garden of Eden. Solomon intended for it to remind the people of that perfect place that God had created, as well as to appreciate God's creation. But he didn't build it with a generous heart toward his people.

Solomon was known for being a wise judge – we remember the story of the two women who claimed the same baby, and how he resolved that issue. But in the end, his power and lust caught up with him. And the kingdom of Israel was never the same again – it became weaker with his descendants until it finally split into two. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom about 100 years later, and then the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom about 250 years after that. Solomon's wisdom was short lived, although we have psalms and writings attributed to him and that golden era of writing and thought.

There's a lesson here for all of us – we have to be careful when we think we are wise – it may be our self-centeredness rather than a gift from God that makes us think we know all. It's easy to get too proud of our accomplishments and forget that God had a hand in them. We have to listen for God to speak to our hearts.

Jeanne