

King Solomon & the Queen of Sheba Instruct Us
Sermon on 1 Kings 10: 1-10, 13
Weekend of September 18, 2005
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
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Introduction: Some People Use Their Influence to Share Christ With Others

The Bible says: *You have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* Amen.

Dear fellow Christians—and some of you are also fellow Packers fans:

Later on this afternoon, a hundred miles north of here in Green Bay, the Packers are going to retire Reggie White's number. No one will ever wear number ninety-two for the Packers again.

Reggie White was, of course, a remarkable football player. Six foot five, three hundred pounds, he had the size and the speed to rack up a hundred ninety-seven sacks in his NFL career. Packer fans remember him for his speed rush to the right, his club move to the left, and his bull rush up the middle—and maybe especially for dropping Drew Bledsoe three times in Super Bowl Thirty-One.

Now, I'm not going to talk about the Packers any more in this sermon. Sermons are meant to focus on Jesus Christ, not Reggie White. Besides, some of you couldn't care less about football, and I'll admit: you're probably better off for it. But here's the reason I brought up Reggie White. Besides being a remarkable football player, number ninety-two was a person who always seemed to try to use his fame and influence to promote Jesus. He's an example of what God's Word to us this week teaches us to do.

Theme: King Solomon & the Queen of Sheba Instruct Us

See, in the section of Scripture we're going to consider today—a third section of Scripture, this September, from the life of King Solomon: KING SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA INSTRUCT US. Their story reminds us: (1) THE LORD HAS ANSWERED THE HARD QUESTIONS IN OUR LIVES..., which means: (2) WE USE OUR LIVES TO ANSWER THE HARD QUESTIONS FOR OTHERS.

Part One: The Lord Has Answered the Hard Questions in Our Lives

It was just about nine hundred fifty years before the birth of our Savior—and almost three thousand years ago now. The setting, of course, is on the other side of the world—in the land of God's Old Testament people Israel. And it's about midway through the forty year reign of Israel's third king, King Solomon. By this time, King Solomon has become famous for his wealth and wisdom; he has built God's temple and his own royal palace.

And that's where we pick up God's Word to us today—First Kings, chapter ten, beginning at the first verse: *Now, the Queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon. The Queen of Sheba—who was she? Well, Sheba was what is now Yemen—at the southwest edge of Saudi Arabia. This was one thousand three hundred desert miles south-southeast of Jerusalem. And the queen's trip alone, both ways, took her probably an entire four months of the year—a substantial investment of her time.*

So: *When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.* See, it wasn't just Solomon's fame that attracted her, it's that his famous name also kept getting

linked with the name of his God. And the Queen of Sheba, no dummy herself, just had to meet this man, put his wisdom to the test, and – if he was genuinely wise – she just had to share that wisdom.

Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan-- with camels carrying aromatic spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones, the things for which the land of Sheba was well known -- she came to Solomon. And the Queen of Sheba talked with Solomon about all that she had on her mind—better translated: *all that she had on her heart.* So you see, the hard questions the Queen of Sheba posed King Solomon were not, “Hey, big fella, how come smoke goes up, but apples fall down?” No! Hers were heart-questions, the really tough questions. But we read: Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her—or better: *Nothing was hidden from the king to explain to her.* In other words: God revealed everything to him.

Well, that’s a good place for us to stop and to ask: “What are our hard questions?” and: “Is there anyone who answers them for us?”

“What are our hard questions?” ...Well, let me suggest to you some—and I’m sure you can add others. “Why did that hurricane hit—and half a million people got flooded out of their homes and displaced in New Orleans?” “Why do so many people suffer so much—and maybe even die young?” “Why am I so often so hurt, so lonely, so sad, sometimes so bad?” And maybe even most significantly, questions like these: “Why is it that there is so much evil in the world?” And: “Why is it that I’m going to die?”

Those are some good questions, aren’t they? Now, how about that second question? “Is there anyone who answers them for us?” Well, the answer is “yes”! In fact, there’s somebody that not only answers these questions, he resolves them! And that somebody is our Lord, who speaks to us in his Word.

...“Why is there so much evil in the world?” Jesus answers in the Scriptures, “It’s because the first people fell into sin. And they passed on that sin to all their offspring. And that’s why you’re sinful, too. But fear not! God laid your sin – all sin! – on my shoulders, and I died for you to erase your sin!”

...“Why is it that I am going to die?” Well, Jesus answers that question in the Scriptures, “The wages of sin is death. But fear not! Since I laid your sins to rest, I rose from the dead, never to die again. And I hold you in my powerful arms. You’ll rise from the dead, never to die again. And you’ll live with me forever.”

...And now, those other hard questions: “Why the hurricane? Why the flooding? Why the pain? Why the suffering?” Jesus answers in the Scriptures, “Some of these things are not for you to know. But I will tell you this. They’re in my hands. And I love you.” No doubt, the hurricane took home to heaven some of those who were trusting Christ. No doubt, the flooding gives us opportunity to pray, and help, and care, and hope. No doubt, our own pain and suffering are ways by which Christ draws us close to him—and ways in which others get to know Jesus, as they observe his work for us.

You see, it’s true: The Lord has answered the hard questions in our lives.

Part Two: We Use Our Lives to Answer the Hard Questions for Others

No wonder we want to use our lives to answer the hard questions for others! And that’s exactly what King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba have taught us to do. We go on to read: When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed. Literally, it says here: *It took her breath away!*

And no wonder! *The palace Solomon built?* It took him thirteen years! It was a hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high—all cedar, and

with a great big porch out front. Inside was his throne room, and further back were his living quarters. *The food on Solomon's table?* The Bible tells us this was five hundred sixty bushels of grain, thirty head of cattle, a hundred head of sheep and goats, plus assorted choice meats – get this – ...every day! ...every twenty-four hours! And *the burnt offerings?* Well, at the dedication of the temple alone: at least twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred twenty thousand sheep and goats!

So, that's why: **The Queen of Sheba said to King Solomon, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth – no, no, the Hebrew there says: in wisdom and goodness – in wisdom and goodness you have far exceeded the report I heard.** See, it wasn't as much Solomon's fabulous wealth and splendor, it was instead his wisdom and goodness that impressed the Queen of Sheba most.

And there's a lesson there for us.... Solomon's wisdom and goodness impressed the Queen of Sheba. Solomon knew he got his wisdom and goodness from his wise and good Lord. So, he used his wisdom and goodness to connect the Queen of Sheba with the same wise and good God from whom he had received his gifts.

Now, every one of you is also an impressive soul. Maybe you're wise like Solomon. Maybe not. Maybe, instead, you are just very kind to others. Or maybe you are a very faithful worker. Or maybe you are a very dedicated and loving family member. Or maybe you have special talent in some skill or some sport or on some instrument. ...Whatever it is that's impressive about you, it came from God! Use it! Use it to influence others toward him who gave you your gifts!

So, Solomon used his wisdom to influence others toward the Lord. The Queen of Sheba used her testimony. Listen in to the next verses. She says to Solomon: **How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.** So, the queen acknowledges the Lord as God. The queen acknowledges the Lord's eternal love for Israel. And Jesus' words in today's Gospel Reading help suggest that the Queen of Sheba had taken this Lord to be her own God.

Again, there's a lesson here for us.... The Queen of Sheba met the only true Lord by way of Solomon. And the Queen of Sheba subsequently gave personal testimony in regard to the Lord.

Every one of us can do the same. Every one of us has somebody whom we can comfort – or confront! – with the Lord. Is it that aging, ailing family member, who needs to know that her sins are gone through Christ? Is it that coworker or fellow student whose life's a mess, finally, because he doesn't know Jesus? Is it that friend or neighbor who never goes to church, and doesn't have a clue why Jesus is so important to you? ...Whoever it is: Tell them! Tell them Christ died for the sin of their soul! Tell them Jesus promises the resurrection of their body! Tell them there's nothing they're facing that they and Christ cannot manage together! Speak up for the sake of your Savior!

So, the Queen of Sheba used her testimony to influence others toward the Lord; in fact, she have spoken even to us today. Now, she'll use her wealth in the same endeavor. Listen in, to conclude our text. **And the Queen of Sheba gave King Solomon 120 talents of gold**—ah, that's nine thousand pounds of gold; it would be worth approximately fifty-seven billion dollars, give or take a billion or two (!), on the open market today.

She gave him large quantities of aromatic spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many aromatic spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. And why, do you suppose, did she give all this to the king? He himself didn't need it at all. The verse after our text says that Solomon was doing all right on his own. He was pulling in about fifty thousand pounds in gold every year. That would be worth about three hundred twenty billion dollars these days. And you know, a guy can usually manage to make ends meet, after a few good years like that. But I'm sure the Queen of Sheba gave her wealth to King Solomon not for the sake of King Solomon, but rather in order to serve the Lord.

Meantime: *King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.*

And again, there's a lesson there for us.... The Queen of Sheba had met not only King Solomon, but also through him the King of kings and the Lord of lords. She was grateful. And she happily shared her wealth with him.

And every one of us can do the same. Of course, we might want to say, "Well, if I had the Queen of Sheba's wealth, or if I had Solomon's wealth, I could spare more for the Lord, as well." But my friend, you and I have more. The Queen of Sheba did not have – Solomon in all his splendor did not have! – a fridge loaded with food, a microwave, an air conditioning unit, a TV with a hundred channels, a stereo playing his favorite songs, a computer with or without internet access, an automobile – let alone two or three – Solomon didn't even have efficient indoor plumbing!

...So, use that wealth of yours to serve your Savior—and to influence others toward him! Go ahead and eat out, if that serves your Savior, but give at least that much this week at church. Go ahead and take that vacation across the country or across the world, if it serves your Savior, but give at least that much in the next several months at church. Go ahead and build on or buy a new house, if that serves your Savior, but give at least that much in the next year or two to church— ...because you know the wealth you give away is going to go to announce the good news of Jesus the Savior to others: so that they will banquet with you and vacation with you and dwell with you in glory.

Conclusion: We Should Use Our Influence to Share Christ with Others

You see, you don't have to be a six foot five, three hundred pound, defensive end to use your influence to share Christ with others. You just need to be a Christian. And that's what you are. This is what Christ bought and paid for you for: to serve him here, temporarily, and to enjoy his presence there, eternally. Amen.

The Bible says: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that a godly person may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* Amen.