

**Objective:**

- To explore the drama of the start of Solomon's reign as King and invite the St Catherine's community to think about our responses to crisis or drama;
- To consider everyday dramas as God-events in our lives; and
- To invite the St Catherine's community to consider other ways of responding:
  - o To pause, reflect and ask: who are we being called to in this situation?
  - o To consider what the Spirit of God might be inviting us into.

**Introduction:**

Drama.

I love watching movies that present a good drama.

One that invites me into the turmoil, the sadness, the chaos.

One where I can watch the characters in flux, not knowing which way to turn.

Maybe have a good cry because I so identify with him or her.

It's not just the movies that invite me into drama. It is life. All of life.

And especially life in community.

Oh! how we love drama.

The interesting part of a drama for me, is how it pulls out the most instinctive, primitive ways of reacting. The reptilian brain's responses – fight or flight.

And those responses formed by our deep needs from our broken past – needs of survival, security, affection, esteem, power and control.

And we may find ourselves avoiding the drama (maybe by running toward someone or something else), or getting overinvolved and trying to fix it or control it.

*(from Invitation to Love by Thomas Keating)*

Take the simple drama of a leaky roof. We haven't had that here have we? No!

- You have those of us who avoid it. We might stick a bucket under it, close the door, play loud music so we don't hear it drip.
- Some may even climb in their car to go shopping or go to buy some ice-cream.
- And then there will be those who just need a hug, because that's what we do when it feels like everything is falling apart.
- And then some of us will proceed straight to call plumbers, roofers and get quotes.
- And still some of us will order everyone around, so that we feel we are in control in the chaos.

We all can identify with at least one of these. Maybe even two or three!

Ice-cream first then boss everyone around!

Rev. Sharon Smith  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
1 Kings chapter 2 & 3

Every drama, pulls at our instinctive patterns of reacting.  
Yet if we stop, pause and reflect...

**Every drama also invites us to deeper questions.**

- Who do I choose to be in this situation?
- What is God inviting me to do?

**Every drama has the potential of being a God-event in our lives, that leads us to wisdom.**

---

Solomon – David and Bathsheba’s son. Is taking his place on the throne of his father and establishes his Kingdom, in the wake of his father King David’s death.

David’s final words recorded in 1 Kings 2: 2

“I am about to go the way of all the earth. So be strong, act like a man and observe what the Lord your God requires...”

And then David instructs Solomon how to deal with individuals who have been a threat to his Kingdom and those who had stood by him.

And David says that he is to deal with them according to his wisdom.

And this is where we pick up the story.

David dies and Solomon we are told firmly establishes his rule.

The chapter that our reading conveniently skips over (perhaps because it is PG 13 or R rated), - it describes the ruthless way that Solomon establishes his power/reign. He kills 4 men. Some would say this was justified to protect his throne, but justified or not the Narrator of the story subtly calls into question Solomon’s character.

Is he a King who will respond to drama by rushing in and fixing things through violence (as his father had done)?

Remember the violence of King David had disqualified him from building the Temple.

Something the prophet Samuel had said would be carried out by his son.

Would Solomon prove to be a person who would find favour in the eyes of the Lord?

Solomon begins his Kingship by destroying any who may pose a threat to his Kingdom.

And for that the writer of the story critiques him.

Now the critique in the story is subtle. It was dangerous to speak badly about the King.

So the writer writes:

“Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David”

Rev. Sharon Smith  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
1 Kings chapter 2 & 3

A compliment or a criticism?

What an interesting sentence. The writers of the Old Testament indicate one who is upright by saying that they walk in the statutes of God.

Something is not quite right.

Solomon seems to be lost. He is responding to the drama around him in a knee jerk way. Imitating the worst of his father.

And then the dream.

Walter Brueggemann writes:

“It is important to recognise that in that ancient world, dreams are not to be understood in terms of psychological unrest, as they are in our post-Freudian world. Well before the emergence of such psychological categories of interpretation, dreams are understood as messages from the gods that are given in sleep, when conventional human controls are at rest and the hovering and haunting of God has a chance.”

**The dream is an interruption. The dream is Solomon’s pause.**

**To reflect on who is. And what God is inviting him to do.**

I love the way God shows up in this dream.

This mysterious and generous God says: “ask of me whatever you need?”

I really struggle to name my needs to prayer.

Especially the things I so deeply desire.

The invitation here is to trust and to be authentic, honest, to speak our hearts.

The mystery of God invites us to be just where we are before the presence of the mystery.

Solomon’s response is a confession - It is that he is “a child”.

Seemingly overwhelmed by the immensity of the size of the nation that is now under his rule.

An honest statement of his fear and his sense of being out of control.

Perhaps the instinct of violence is a reaction of this deep sense of inadequacy?

He communicates to God the mismatch between the work of King and the resources of this King. And in this moment, this moment of vulnerability of being faced with more that he can handle. It is his turning point.

He asks for what he really needs...

Solomon’s request is for an ‘understanding mind’ – also translated ‘a listening heart’.

To be attuned (heart, mind, soul) to God’s guidance for the purpose of justice.

Rev. Sharon Smith  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
1 Kings chapter 2 & 3

**Every drama has the potential of being a God-event in our lives, leading us to wisdom.**

When we unconsciously respond to drama over and over again.

It leads us away from what really matters.

- It can lead us away from facing a decision and into personal addictive behaviour.
- It can lead a community to focus on survival and not on thriving.
- It can lead a church to focus solely on finances and not on God's deep calling.

The invitation before us, individually and as a community, is to stay awake in every moment of our lives. And as each drama unfolds to pause and pray.

The Jesuits call this 'contemplation in action'.

The Buddhists call it 'mindfulness'.

And we can cultivate it through spiritual practices of silence, prayer and meditation.

So that when we are in the middle of a drama we are less likely to react and more likely to pause.

Perhaps we could visualize it like being in the middle of a dance. And we sense an inner nudge. A whisper. An idea. A dream.

And we take the time to get off the dance floor and we walk up onto the balcony.

And from this vantage point we look down.

We see where we were once spinning around.

And how we were affecting those around us and how they were affecting us.

*(from Leadership on the Line by Ronald Heifetz & Marty Linsky)*

And we ask ourselves: What is really going on here?

- Who do I choose to be in this moment?
- What might God be inviting me to pray or do?

**May every drama be for us a God-event that leads to wisdom.**

And even when we might react out of our brokenness.

May that be an invitation to pay attention the next time.

**So that over our moments and days - We find the path to wisdom - to a listening heart that seeks kindness, love, justice and humility.**

Amen.