**They were happy
1 Kings 4:1-34
Key verse 4:20
“The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.”**

About 15 years ago one servant of God asked me during a staff conference. Are you happy? I wondered why he suddenly asked me about happiness instead of being faithful to God or “life of mission”. But I reasoned that he asked the question to me because we should be happy in the course of serving the Lord. I don’t remember my answer. But I am sure my answer was not “Yes, I am so happy.”

In today’s passage, if we asked the people of Judah and Israel at the time of Solomon, “Are you happy?” Their answer will be, “Definitely, Absolutely. I am so happy.” We all want to be happy. So today we want to find out how we can be happy.

My message has three parts. **Part I. Solomon ruled over all Israel (v.1-20) Part II. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms (v.21-28) Part III. God gave Solomon wisdom (v.29-34)**

**Part I. King Solomon ruled over all Israel (v.1-20)**

**Verses 1-6
“So King Solomon ruled over all Israel. 2And these were his chief officials:
Azariah son of Zadok—the priest;
3Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha—secretaries;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud—recorder;
4Benaiah son of Jehoiada—commander in chief;
Zadok and Abiathar—priests;
5Azariah son of Nathan—in charge of the district governors;
Zabud son of Nathan—a priest and adviser to the king;
6Ahishar—palace administrator;
Adoniram son of Abda—in charge of forced labor.**

The first verse, verse 1, is like a proclamation. “So King Solomon ruled over all Israel.” Here “all Israel'' is significant. Even at the time of his father, the great king David, to rule over all Israel was not easy. But now King Solomon truly ruled over all Israel.

These verses show how the central government officials were organized during the time of King Solomon. It is like our federal government system. The first chief official mentioned is **Azariah son of Zadok—the priest;**It seems like Zadok the priest became old, and his son inherited his father’s position and was in the high priest. When we see Azariah, the priest, comes at the first of all Solomon’s chief officials, we can see how much Solomon’s kingdom valued the role of the high priest.

Two sons of Nathan took important positions. I believe king Solomon honored prophet Nathan in this way because he did a critical role for his enthronement.

Here the wisdom of Solomon was displayed because king Solomon organized his government so effectively and productively. We can say it because people under his rule were so happy. They could see the effectiveness of King Solomon’s chief officials and their work.

**Verses 7-19
“7Solomon had twelve district governors over all Israel, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year. 8These are their names:
Ben-Hur—in the hill country of Ephraim;
9Ben-Deker—in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh and Elon Bethhanan;
10Ben-Hesed—in Arubboth (Sokoh and all the land of Hepher were his);
11Ben-Abinadab—in Naphoth Dor (he was married to Taphath daughter of Solomon);
12Baana son of Ahilud—in Taanach and Megiddo, and in all of Beth Shan next to Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth Shan to Abel Meholah across to Jokmeam;**

**13 Ben-Geber—in Ramoth Gilead (the settlements of
Jair son of Manasseh in Gilead were his, as well as the region of Argob in Bashan and its sixty large walled cities with bronze gate bars);
14 Ahinadab son of Iddo—in Mahanaim;
15 Ahimaaz—in Naphtali (he had married Basemath daughter of Solomon);
16 Baana son of Hushai—in Asher and in Aloth;
17 Jehoshaphat son of Paruah—in Issachar;
18 Shimei son of Ela—in Benjamin;
19 Geber son of Uri—in Gilead (the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and the country of Og king of Bashan). He was the only governor over the district**

Twelve district governors are like governors of states in America. They are head of twelve districts all over Israel. Their districts are different from the original divisions of the land according to the twelve tribes. Solomon’s division of the twelve districts instead of tribal divisions of the land shows his nation became a truly a kingdom from a weakly formed federation of twelve tribes.

These twelve district governors took care of the provision of the king and the royal household, each for one month in the year. The king and the royal household probably are like our federal government.

When we see that there was no grumbling among the twelve district governors, we can see the justice and fairness must have been displayed in division of the twelve districts. For example, if the divisions were not right, some governors would complain “It is not fair. My district is so small and we do not have any businesses. We cannot provide one month of the year. Look at the other districts. They have plenty of farmers and industries. But we don’t”.

But the divisions of the twelve districts were done so well , the twelve governors were all satisfied and happy.

**Verse 20
“The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.”**

When King Solomon ruled all of Israel, the people under him were happy. First of all, they were very numerous. God’s promise to Abraham has been fulfilled in today’s passage about 1000 years later.

**Gen 22:17a**

**“I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.”**

The people of Judah and Israel ate, they drank and they were happy. They had enough food to eat and drink and they did not have worries. So they were happy.

The original language of “happy” has the meaning of “rejoicing.” The people of Judah and Israel under King Solomon’s rule were rejoicing. Rejoicing means to be extremely joyful.

**Part II. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms (v.21-28)**

**21And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life.**

Solomon’s ruling over all the kingdoms fromthe Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt was the fulfillment of God’s promise given to Abraham, too.

**Genesis 15:18-20**

**“18On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— 19the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 20Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”**

Here if you look at the map of Solomon’s kingdom, these countries includes all the countries of Amalekites, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Arameans and more.

These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life. Do you know what is “tribute”? It is some kind of payment for the protection of a powerful nation. So king Solomon protected these countries from the invasion of other countries and they paid tribute, and they were Solomon’s subjects all his life. No country grumbled their quotas of tribute was harsh compared to the other surrounding kingdoms.

When we think about bringing tribute to other country and becoming their subject would be a humiliating thing. But all the kingdoms under Solomon’s rule did happily because they could enjoy such peace, safety and prosperity. They were willing to bring tribute and they were happily Solomon’s subjects.

To become subjects of someone may be offensive in our culture. But spiritually speaking this makes perfect sense. When we accept Jesus as our king, we don’t mind to bring out tribute which is broken and contrite hearts, and we would be willing to become his subject.

Even in our practical life of faith, we can be willing to listen to the advice of our spiritual seniors or bible teachers sent by God. And this is the way of happiness.

One day I said to one person. “See. When you lived according to your own judgment, you became a homeless and you went through such hard life including rapes. But when you listened to God through your bible teacher and her advice, your life only became better. You became a full time staff for our ministry, and our ministry even bought a car for you and paid monthly payment. Can you see the difference between living according to your own judgment and living according to the advice of God through your bible teacher? Why don’t you choose the life of listening to God through your bible teacher? What do you lose?”

What do we lose when we bring our tribute to Jesus and become his subjects? We do not lose anything. Our lives will become only better day by day. But if we still want to live according to our own judgment we will be in trouble. Sooner or later, we will not be happy.

**22Solomon’s daily provisions were thirty cors of the finest flour and sixty cors of meal, 23ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks and choice fowl. 24For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphsah to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. 25During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.”**

Thirty cors of the finest flower is about 5 tons of flour. Sixty cors of meal means like about 10 tons of meal. They enjoyed various kinds of meat, stake, organic stake, sheep, goals, deer, gazelles, roebuks and choice fowl like chicken.

Solomon ruled all the kingdoms **west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphsah to Gaza.** If you look at the map, Tipshah is on the north right at the Euphrates River, and Gaza is far down south.

Solomon had peace on all sides among all the kingdoms west of Euphrates River. It means all of their conflicting interests were adjusted properly by Solomon and they did not have any conflicts among them.

And that peace also came as the fulfillment of his promise given to David.

**1 Chronicles 22:7-9**

**“7David said to Solomon: “My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. 8But this word of the Lord came to me: ‘You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. 9But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign.”**

We know how hard it is to satisfy every kingdom’s interests and have peace.

“Peace” is so important for the happiness of people. But when we look at our world they are full of conflicts and wars and violence. There are ongoing civil wars in Africa, and terrorists attack, so many war refugees form middle east, and there are so much discriminations and violence because religion, race, gender, politics etc. Our world is far from peace.

But when Solomon ruled all the kingdoms there was peace. He had peace on all sides. It means they had peace among them too.

True peace comes from forgiveness and healing. These kingdoms had long history of wars among them. During the time of king David, there were so many wars between the Philistines and the Israelites, for example. But now they had peace among them when Solomon ruled. It means God did a miraculous work of forgiveness and healing among them all.

Jesus said in **John 14:27** **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”**

Jesus brought true peace among people through his forgiveness and healing.

**1 Peter 2:24**

**“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”**

By bearing our sins in his body on the cross Jesus bought us life for righteousness and true healing of our wounds and scars.

In verse 25, we can see another reasons why reason why people of Judah and Israel were happy. **25During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.”**

There was safety and economic prosperity.

“Dan to Beersheba” is a typical expression of referring to all Israel. Dan was in the end of the northern part, and Beersheba was in the end of Southern part.

They were happy because of safety. They lived in safety. They did not need to worry about terrorists attack or bombing or gun violence. In addition, everyone enjoyed economic prosperity and independence. Living under one’s own vine and fig tree is the express in the bible for people’s prosperity. It is like to say “everyone is home owner fully paid and has car fully paid.”

So the people of Judah and Israel were happy because of peace, safety, and economic prosperity.

**Verses 26-28
“26Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses.
27The district governors, each in his month, supplied provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king’s table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking. 28They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses.**

The many chariot horses reveals the ignorance of Solomon about God’s commands given to kings of Israel.

**Deuteronomy 17:16-17**

**16The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” 17He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.**

God commanded that Israel kings should not have many horses or wives and much gold and silver. But Solomon did not obey the Lord’s command. Solomon did not need to keep such many chariot horses and other 12,000 extra houses. If we count two hours per stall, Solomon had 8,000 chariot horses. Chariot horses are like our version of A bombs or ballistic missiles.

God asked kings not to have many horses because he wanted kings to depend on the Lord for their national security rather than their military power.

The district governors made sure of the supply of the provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king’s table. They also provided their quotas of barely and straw for the chariot horses and other horses.

**Part III. God gave Solomon wisdom (v.29-34)**

**Verses 29-34
“29God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. 30Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. 31He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations.**

God promised Solomon that he would give him wisdom in Solomon’s dream in chapter 3. Although there was a token expression of his wisdom shown in the judgment between two prostitutes, God fulfilled his promise to Solomon fully here. God is faithful to keep his promises.

In fulfilling his promises, the Lord revealed another character of himself. That is his generosity in giving.

When Solomon asked the discerning heart, the Lord gave him the wisdom and also wealth and honor for free. Now in giving wisdom the Lord did not give just wisdom alone. He gave Solomon the wisdom, and very great insight and a breath of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore, but the breath of understanding given to Solomon was also as measureless as the sand on the seashore! It is like almost one to one match.

Solomon’s wisdom was so great that it was greater than the combined wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the combined wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone in the world including **Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol.**

 Wow! How can this be possible? It is possible only when we see Solomon’s wisdom is human wisdom. It was the wisdom of God. Indeed “God gave Solomon wisdom” by fulfilling his promise to Solomon.

**32He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. 34From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.”**

These are specific application of Solomon’s wisdom. His wisdom includes plant life from the **from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls.** How broad his wisdom was! **He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.**It sounds like there is nothing that he does not know.

So all the kings of the world sent their people to learn Solomon’s wisdom.

For wisdom, **James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”** God is the generous giver!

We need God’s wisdom because we face new challenges as we live on. Solomon did not have such great wisdom when he was born. He was like us. But he asked, and God gave Solomon wisdom so generously.

We want God’s wisdom in order to serve our children and our bible students and our church.

Last night I was so moved by God who gives generously. God is giver! And furthermore he is the most generous giver. Moved by his generous giving, the Lord reminded me of one verse. It is **Luke 11:11-13.**

**11“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”**

As based on his promise I asked the Lord the Holy Spirit before going to bed.

I also wanted to know if there is any command of God that I do not keep like Solomon. Solomon did not keep the commands of God directly given to kings of Israel. So I wanted to know if there are such commands. Then I was reminded of one verse from **2 Timothy 2:24a, “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome”**

Timothy is known as the book for pastors. So I tried to think about any commands I do not keep. There are so many great commands like preach the word, or endure hardship like a good solider of Jesus Christ. But the Lord kept reminding me “The Lord’s servant must not quarrel.” And I did not know the reason.

Only after I woke up this morning I realized why the Lord gave me the verse. It was because I am quarrelsome. I don’t quarrel with you. But I have one person with whom I quarrel. Who is that person? Yes, my wife.

A few days ago, Maria told me, “Terry’s house got all vaccine shots.” So I thought, “Wow! Terry must have done a great job because he was able to have all shots for his entire family members although his sons are young and do not have access in priority. So I kept asking, “Including all sons?” But as I kept talking to her I became a little irritated because she did not answer what I was asking. So I became a little quarrelsome.

Later we found out that I was thinking about Terry Lopez and my wife was talking about Mary Kwon’s mother in law. Her name was Terry too.

So it is clear that the Lord wants me not to quarrel with my wife anymore. I accepted it as the command from God. In the future my plan is just drop the matter if I cannot understand what she says.

In conclusion, we learned that Solomon ruled over all Israel and over all the kingdoms East of the Euphrates River. People under him was numerous, happy, and lived in safety and prosperity. But ultimately the happiness of people came from God who fulfilled his promise given to Abraham and David and Solomon.

How can we be happy? Offer our lives as Christ’s subject and bring our tribute because Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promise, and Christ is the most powerful demonstration of God’s giving.

**One word: They were happy.**