



In his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost shares a dilemma he faced while standing at a fork in the road. As he lays out a beautiful scene that many would enjoy to witness, he writes:

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I marked the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Life provides every one of us choices at every bend and our response to every choice shapes us into the people we find here today. Have you ever made a really bad decision and the results of that decision devastated you? On the flip side can you think about a wise decision you made that worked out wonderfully for you? What is it in life about the decisions we make and the impact they have on us?

Open your Bibles to 1 Kings 9. For the last eight weeks we have taken an in-depth look into the life of King Solomon through our sermon series "The Wisest Fool." Throughout our study there have been some mile-markers we have passed in this series to get where we land today. The way that Solomon handled his older brother trying to usurp the throne from his father David taught him to trust in the Lord. When God established his leadership over Israel it proved to Solomon that God was trustworthy and honored his word. The time God appeared to him in a dream allowing him to ask for anything he desired revealed to us what was in the heart of the young king. Solomon's use of his newfound wisdom saved the life of a young child caught in an unlikely predicament.

Now that Solomon has completed the Temple of the Lord and his own personal palace, God appears to Solomon once again but the purpose of this visit is for a different reason.

**When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do, the Lord appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. The Lord said to him: "I have heard the**

**prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there (verses 1–3).**

Last week we studied Solomon and his attitude of public worship at the dedication of the Temple. We looked at the sacrifices that Solomon made as the nation of Israel moved the ark of the Lord to the temple. After the ark is placed the glory of God appears in the Temple and the Nation of Israel is in awe of the presence of God. After this phenomenal day is completed Scripture tells us that Solomon has completed everything that he had in his heart to accomplish.

Scripture tells us that Solomon is about 40 years old, has just celebrated a monumental day in the history of Israel and that everything he desired has already been accomplished. Could you imagine being 40 years old and already having accomplished everything that your heart desired? Imagine what Solomon must have been thinking and the feeling that he experienced. Has the lure of money, sex and power taken its toll on the king? Can redemption come to the king or will his life spiral out of control and further from the hand of the Lord?

Verse two gives us a glimpse into what this visit from God may have looked like and it probably was in another dream; just like the first visit from God at Gibeon. Unlike the visit at Gibeon we don't see Solomon respond to God. Instead he likely just listens to the choices God presents.

**"As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel'" (verses 4–5).**

Up to now we have seen evidence of a divided heart in the life of Solomon. His foreign wives have slowly pulled the heart of the king away from his dedication to the Lord. God appears this time not to grant a request from the king but to encourage the king to make the right choice; to stop following after personal gain and to re-up his commitment to God.

God's hand has always been watching over Solomon through his endeavors in life. Your endeavors in life provide a window into your heart; therefore, **regularly evaluate the condition of your heart.**

In this appearance God presents Solomon with an “if-then” decision. If Solomon will walk faithfully before the Lord, as his father David had, then God will establish his throne over Israel forever. I find it interesting how God makes the correlation between integrity of heart and King David; would Solomon have felt belittled by being compared to his father or would this make the choice that God presents him that much easier to choose?

Many of us are familiar with King David but just in case you are not let me share quickly about the heart of the previous king. One day the God spoke to the prophet Samuel and told him to fill his horn with oil and travel to meet a man named Jesse who lived in the small town of Bethlehem. Once Samuel arrived in Bethlehem he consecrated a man named Jesse and asked to see his sons. Immediately Samuel saw the oldest son and thought for sure this is the man God has chosen to lead Israel. ***“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’”*** (1 Samuel 16:7).

Jesse had seven of his sons appear before Samuel but God was not calling any of them to lead Israel. Finally Jesse brings in the youngest, a little shepherd boy named David, and God exclaims: “This is the one! Anoint Him!” We think that God chose David because of his heart but the Psalms are filled with accounts of how David’s heart remained dedicated to God throughout his life.

Are there things in your heart this morning that are hindering you from following the path that God desires to lead you down? There are Christian practices that you can do to regularly evaluate the condition of your heart. This may look like regular accountability with someone you trust. Spending some time each morning, or evening, reading Scripture and applying that to your life. It may look like times of solitude sitting before God asking him to speak truth to you. Obedience to God is not an easy path to follow but there is a reward for our obedience to God.

**“But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’ People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them’”** (verses 6–9).

God continues his conversation with Solomon giving clarity about the choices that await the king. Once again we see an “if-then” clause given to Solomon. This second choice God presents to Solomon is a tough one to read. If Solomon fails to heed the correction from God the results of sin will be clearly revealed to the surrounding nations. God will devastate the Temple that the people of Israel have tirelessly worked to complete and Solomon has just dedicated and it will be clear that the reason the Temple has been flattened is a direct result of disobedience.

Knowing that my endeavors provide a window into my heart we need to **clearly heed the instruction of the Lord.**

The same choice God gives to king Solomon is a choice each one of us face. Maybe you can think about a friend that has left the church. I bet you can recall about the time they started slowly walking away from God. For most people this isn’t a choice that happens overnight but is a gradual process. It’s one of those choices that happens when bitterness is allowed to sneak into our lives. It’s one of those choices that happens when we decide to take our focus off God for a period of time to accomplish a project at work or to get into the new house or to focus on final exams or to make sure all the wedding preparations are complete. It’s one of those things that happens when we fail to have right relationships with those in our community and instead of talking through our issues we back away to avoid contact with that person.

The road to deception begins with one little lie. The road to bankruptcy begins with an unwise financial decision. The road to adultery begins with an extended look. The road to addiction begins with one too many drinks or just “one try.” If you don’t believe me just turn on the news and listen to the Petraeus affair.

God presents this choice to Solomon and since we are studying his life we know how the story turns out. Solomon continues walking in the same path he has been taking and 2 Kings 25:8–11 reveals to us how that decision played out.

**On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon.**

The nation of Israel eventually is defeated; the temple is demolished and the people taken into captivity. After the fall of Israel you have to imagine mothers threatening their children, “if you don’t watch out you’ll end up like the Israelites.” The sad thing is

king Solomon only has himself to blame for the destruction. God came to warn him in this second visit but once again Solomon chose money, sex and power over a humble heart that is dedicated to God.

This morning we have a unique opportunity to see what Solomon wasn't able to see. We can see how this choice played out for him. The tough thing is that we can't see how our choices are going to play out for us. We can plan and execute as much as we want but in the end there comes a time that we just have to make a decision and hopefully that decision will involve choosing God. Hopefully it is determined by Scripture and filled with prayer as you heed the instruction of God.

We don't have time this morning to go through every verse in the rest of the chapter but I do want to take a few minutes to summarize them. 1 Kings 9:10–28 talks about Solomon's endeavors and gives us a window into his heart. Here is where we find out that Solomon has been leading Israel for 20 years and we find out what he has accomplished in those 20 years. He had an international business relationship with Hiram where he dabbled in the import/export business. Solomon was involved in a beautification process where he rebuilt cities, barns and other buildings as he desired. He had massive amounts of slave labor at his disposal to help with these projects. He built an amazing house for his foreign wives and appears to have done much better at finding gold than those guys on the Discovery Channel. I actually like math and figured the value of the gold Solomon acquired in verse 28 would have been somewhere in the neighborhood of \$850 million dollars. Now if someone gave CPC that kind of money we could accomplish half of our Vision 2020 by finding permanent locations for all our campuses!

**Three times a year Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar he had built for the Lord, burning incense before the Lord along with them, and so fulfilled the temple obligations (1 Kings 9:25).**

This is one verse that I want to pay special attention to. In the 28 verses in this chapter we do see that Solomon always made a choice to worship God. Thinking about our endeavors in life and how they provide a window into our heart will you choose to **constantly worship God?**

It's difficult for us to know exactly what the writer is trying to tell us about Solomon's heart in this passage. Some would say that these verses show Solomon's continued commitment to God and God's blessing on him. Others would say that this is an indictment of Solomon, showing that his heart was pursuing the wrong things and not keeping God alone as the One he worshipped. Either way, we do know here that God desires for us to choose to worship him in all that we do; even when times are difficult and we may not feel like it.

Just over three years ago started what would become the toughest run of ministry that I have ever faced. The founding lead pastor of the church where I was in Las Vegas walked into our leadership meeting and confessed that he had committed a moral failure and needed to resign his leadership over the church. Needless to say I was in shock and for the next year I was on a team of four men that helped to lead our church through the absence of a lead pastor. After a year of helping to lead our elders called a new lead pastor to come out to Vegas.

To be completely honest with you that time without a lead pastor wore on my heart and I started to see my relationship with God slipping. I was leading a growing high school ministry, helping give leadership to missions at our church, attending seminary, and Charity and I had Sophie at the time and then she got pregnant. About a year ago I hit this wall and I wasn't sure I wanted to be in pastoral leadership anymore; I had even considered taking a break from church. My heart was feeling lonely, hurt and ugly. One day, while I was praying, I really felt God speaking to me and encouraging me to press on; that this was all a part of what he was teaching me. Through that dark time I stayed committed to God by constantly worshipping him and not letting myself leave his side.

This morning if you are having a difficult time worshipping God through the difficult times of life I want to encourage you to do something very simple yet very bold. You may be struggling in your job; you may be over your head financially; you may be having problems with your marriage; this morning will you **choose to follow God?**

When we look at all of chapter nine we see no response on the behalf of Solomon. We are not certain how Solomon responds to this God in this appearance. We don't know if Solomon made a choice to follow God that day. Now when I talk about choosing to follow God today I am not referring to salvation in Jesus Christ. I am referring to the little decisions that we make every day that either draw us closer to God or pull our hearts away from God.

In his book on the life of King Solomon Phillip Ryken says: "Some Christians seem to think that this is a choice we make only once in life, when we first decide to follow Christ. But in fact we face this choice every day at every moment."

When the Israelites asked Samuel to give them a king they were looking for a military leader that would be a conquering king. Over 900 years after the death of Solomon the true leader of the Israelites came to earth in the form of a man. Jesus didn't come as a conquering king but as a suffering servant. He came gentle and speaking truth. He healed the sick and touched the lepers. he raised men from the dead and walked on water. He forgave prostitutes and drove out demons. One day he was speaking on a mountainside and gave what would become the most famous sermon ever preached: The Sermon on the Mount. In that

message he said: ***“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”*** (Matthew 7:13–14). That day Jesus presented a visual image that leaves us with a choice today. There is a broad road that leads to destruction and a narrow road that leads to life.

All throughout history people have been making choices that would direct their future. In 1999 the choice was solidified in the minds of hundreds of thousands who watched a cutting edge movie called *The Matrix*. I haven't been able to completely figure out what the Matrix is but I do know that Neo was given a choice. That choice is the same choice that was presented to Solomon almost 3,000 years ago to choose God. Two thousand years ago Jesus presented that choice to those who sat and listened to the

Sermon on the Mount. This is the choice that we have to make today to follow God.

No matter what life stage you find yourself at this morning no one is exempt from the choice. You may be a student working your way through college, a single adult trying to find time to connect with God, a young parent who feels that your prayer life revolves around your children sleeping through the night, a business professional doing your best to make choices that honor God, an empty-nester who is serving in your free time, or a prime-timer loving what God is doing in your life. Please let this morning's message serve as a reminder of our need to daily choose to follow God in all we do.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

© 2012 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA  
Catalog No. 1379–8FC