

# Prawn2King. Check!

## 1 Kings 3:16-28

Reformation Sunday. And, as you know, the great symbol of the Reformation is . . . the prawn.

Well, not really. But I have been learning about prawns this week. Like astronauts, prawns live in a virtually weightless environment. But *unlike* astronauts, prawns usually only feed at night . . . which makes things even more difficult for them . . . I imagine it's pretty dark at the bottom of the ocean at night . . . like, pitch black! So, how do they tell which way is up and, more importantly, which way is down, since the food is at the bottom . . . on the ocean floor?!

Well, here's the thing . . . prawns have this amazing navigation system in their heads. Part of it is something called a statolith. Apparently when little prawns are developing, and each time they shed their exoskeleton, they take on a tiny grain of sand which gets wrapped in fine sensory hairs in the prawn's head. Then as gravity pulls down on the sand those sensory hairs detect more pressure in one spot and so they can tell which way is down . . . they can tell where the food is!

One day, way back in the 1890s, in the time when scientists could do this sort of thing, a scientist by the name of Alois Kreidl put some little baby prawns in a tank . . . but, instead of having sand in the tank he put iron filings. That meant instead of a grain of sand being embedded, it was the filings that lodged in the prawns' heads and become their statoliths - their navigation system.

The scientist found that when he put a powerful magnet at the top of the tank those little prawns flipped over and started swimming on their backs. And, when it came to feeding, the prawns swam to the top of the tank instead of to the bottom! Other prawns with their normal statolith were put into the tank and they, of course, swam to the bottom where the food was; but the iron-willed prawns didn't follow their example . . . they refused to believe that their guidance system was faulty, and so they swam around at the top of the tank in vain looking for food. Left like that they would have starved to death. Their guidance system led them astray.

There are many people in our city . . . in our country . . . in our world . . . who are swimming the wrong way up . . . whose values have been turned upside down . . . whose navigation system has gone completely haywire . . . causing them to look for sustenance where there is no sustenance. In fact, this is so widespread that Christians are now regarded as odd . . . as though they were the weird ones! As if we have flipped. As if we have rocks in our heads!

So, you have to be careful about what you put in your head, or rather, what gets put into your head. The wrong sort of input can lead to a totally false orientation . . . a totally false sense of direction . . . one which leads, eventually, only to death.

So, you have to be careful about what gets put in your head. King Solomon knew he had to be careful about what went into his head . . . so, he prayed to God and he asked. Not for wealth . . . not for power . . . not for adulation . . . he asks for wisdom . . . for a discerning mind . . . that he might know what is right . . . the right way . . . the right direction . . . the right practice. In other words, Solomon asks God for a statolith . . . a statolith that orientates him to God's will . . . to God's mind . . . to God's word.

You have to be careful what gets put in your head. Because it's not always straight forward knowing right from wrong . . . knowing good from evil. What looks attractive and desirable may not always be the best option. Just because everyone is doing it may not mean it is right. But, it's hard to swim the right way up when everyone else is swimming upside down. Which is why we need a sure and certain statolith . . . one we can trust . . . an internal guidance system orientated towards what is good and pleasing to God. This world is a complex place!

As Solomon soon discovers . . . if he didn't already know it! He's asked to judge in a case of these two women . . . two mothers . . . who both have newborn babies . . . and one of the mothers accidentally smothers her baby, but then swaps her dead baby for the other one and claims the live baby as her own. There are no other witnesses . . . these women have already been pushed to the margins . . . they are alone . . . it's the word of one against the word of the other. No DNA testing back then! As the two women squabble Solomon comes up with a surprising judgment . . . an unorthodox solution . . . "Bring a sword . . . cut the child in two . . . if they can't agree, let them both have half each"!

An ingenious solution! But, if you think that's a reasonable solution you're obviously not a parent!

And that's how the imposter is revealed . . . the child is returned to its rightful mother . . . and Solomon is praised and lauded for his great wisdom . . . the wisdom of God. He got what he prayed for . . . a statolith . . . the wisdom of God that brings justice.

From there the legend of Solomon's wisdom just grows . . . and rightly so. Solomon was a wise man.

But, that's not all there is to this story. Because buried in this story, unheralded . . . almost unnoticed . . . is another who is wise . . . perhaps even more wise . . . more profoundly wise . . . more heart-breakingly wise. One whose wisdom points even beyond the wisdom of the great King Solomon. One whose wisdom points not just to the mind of God, but to the heart of God.

That one is the unnamed real mother of the child. A prostitute. A marginalized woman. A nobody. Alone. All she had was her son. Everything she had was her son. And compassion for her child burned in her heart. Compassion. Love. So much love that she was willing to give up her everything. So much love that she was willing to suffer injustice . . . so that the judgment would not end in death.

So often these Old Testament stories point us beyond themselves to an even greater wisdom . . . to the heart of God. To the heart of God who entered into this complex world in the person of Jesus. Jesus whose compassion burned within him for those facing the judgment of death. Jesus whose love was so great he was willing to suffer injustice. Whose love was so great that he was willing to give up everything so that death wouldn't be the last word for God's children. Jesus who was the very heart of God . . . Jesus who displayed the wisdom of God, hanging on the cross. To everyone else it looks all upside down. It looks like Jesus was swimming the wrong way. But, there . . . on that cross . . . is the love of God . . . the compassion of God . . . the grace of God . . . the wisdom of God . . . freely given . . . freely shared . . . because it is God's will . . . God's mind, that every single person is accepted. It is God's will that every single person is loved. It is God's will that every single person is given life.

This connects nicely to today's celebration of Reformation. It was that wisdom that Martin Luther lifted up before the church, and before the world, again . . . this was what the Reformation was about:

our statolith is Christ . . . Christ who is the love of God . . . the mercy of God . . . the grace of God . . . given freely . . . by grace, through faith, so that we might have life and have it to the full. This is the wisdom of God.

So, may that be the statolith that controls our every heartbeat . . . our every thought . . . our every action . . . that we might serve our neighbour with compassion and love.

It may look to the rest of the world like we are swimming upside down. A crucified God might look like foolishness, but we can trust our statolith to guide us . . . to sustain us . . . and finally to welcome us with outstretched arms and say: "Well done good and faithful prawns . . . well done."

Amen.

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