

Kings 10: 1 – 7 Wednesday 11th February 2026 Revd Linda E Hunter

I wonder whether you recognised this piece of music. It is *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*. It tries to capture something of the sense of anticipation in our first reading: a great journey, a long approach, and a visitor who does not yet know what she will find when she arrives.

In this music there is movement, expectancy, a sense that something important is about to happen. And that is exactly the mood of the biblical story. The Queen of Sheba is not a casual tourist. She comes, because she has heard reports about Solomon, reports of his wisdom, his prosperity, and the blessing of God upon him. News has travelled far beyond Israel's borders. But she does not simply accept what she has heard. She does not come for spectacle or ceremony, or to admire from a distance. She comes to test what she has been told. The text is very precise. It says she brings "*hard questions*" questions that probe, that press, that do not have easy or convenient answers. That in itself is worth noticing. These are not idle questions. They are the questions of someone who has thought deeply about life, about power, about what makes a society flourish. They are the questions of someone who knows that appearances can be misleading, and that truth must be tested.

Faith, in this story, does not begin with certainty. It begins with curiosity. With questioning. Even with a measure of scepticism. The Queen brings "*all that was on her mind.*" Nothing is held back or edited or softened. And

Solomon does not rebuke her for that. He does not tell her she should already believe. Nor does he suggest that questioning is a failure of faith. Instead, he listens. And he responds. The text says, *“There was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her.”* There is something deeply reassuring here. God is not threatened by honest questions. Wisdom is not afraid of scrutiny.

Long journeys of faith often begin with people who are brave enough to ask what they really want to know. Faith is rarely simple, this is a quietly comforting truth. What is interesting, though, is what finally convinces the Queen. It is not only Solomon’s clever answers. It is the whole pattern of life she sees around him. She notices: the house he has built, the food on his table, the way his officials are seated, the clothing of the servants, the rhythm of worship. In other words, she sees wisdom *lived out*. She sees that wisdom has consequence, that it affects daily life, shapes relationships, and creates an environment where people are not crushed or overlooked, but cared for and given dignity.

This is a very biblical understanding of wisdom. Wisdom is not simply intelligence, knowledge or what someone says. It is the way a life is ordered. Wisdom becomes visible in relationships, in justice, in generosity, in hospitality, and in worship. It shapes a community so that people can live within it, depend upon it, and flourish because of it.

And the effect on the Queen is overwhelming. We are told, *“there was no more spirit in her.”* She is quite literally left breathless. Then comes her

confession: *"The report was true... but I did not believe it until I came and saw with my own eyes. Not even half had been told me."* How many people of faith could say something similar? We hear reports, inherit stories and are told what God is like. But often it is only over time, sometimes much later, that we begin to see how deeply God has been at work. Looking back, we realise that what we understood at the time was only partial. Now we can say, *the half was not told me*. What is most striking of all is where the Queen's praise is directed. She does not end by congratulating Solomon, or flatter his achievements or dwell on his success. She blesses the Lord.

"Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you... because the Lord loved Israel for ever." She recognises that wisdom, justice, and good leadership are not ends in themselves. They are signs, signposts, of God's enduring love. In doing so, she reminds us that the truest sign of wisdom is gratitude and praise. Today, we may not come with camels and gold. We may not come with the sense that something dramatic lies ahead. We come quietly, with lives already shaped by joy and loss, certainty and doubt, prayers answered and prayers that still linger unanswered. But we still come. We come with questions, with attentiveness, with hearts that can still recognise wisdom and goodness when we see it. And perhaps this story reassures us that faith is not about having everything neatly resolved. It is about remaining open, open to learning, to seeing God's goodness lived out in ordinary, faithful ways. And like the Queen of Sheba, we may find ourselves saying: *"The half was not told me."*