Today's scripture reading is a little more gruesome than we normally have. We don't like to talk about negative things like that. And as we read it, it gives us a very strong and solid image, right? I mean, we know that these two women are not good people. We know that Solomon is just kind of wishy washy on this one. Let them decide, right? How could somebody be so callous in this? And just be, like, okay, we're talking about the life of a baby. If we cut it in two, they'll figure it out themselves. We know that's not really how it is. We understand Solomon knows that one of them will not sacrifice the child, and he's counting on that. He's counting on that because God has given him wisdom to count on it. But for a brief moment, I want to talk about the two women. I want to talk about them for a second. Let's think about them.

When you first hear that they're both prostitutes, what is your first thought? You think a little less of them, right? You know, they don't have a real, a real blue-collar job, or anything like that. They're just out being what they are. And we think less of the second one because she killed her baby. She stole a baby. She lied about stealing the baby, and then she's ready to kill the second baby. These aren't attributes we would normally think of positively, and I'm not saying we should. But what I'm talking about is, let's think about these two women: Who they might be.

Remember during this time, if a young woman marries and becomes a widow and she doesn't have a son or her husband doesn't have a brother, she gets nothing. She gets absolutely nothing. She has to go out and fend for herself. But she's a woman, so she can't get a job. She can't work somewhere. She doesn't have an option other than being a prostitute. It's our only chance of survival during that time. So, that's one point.

Let's think about the second woman for a minute. Let's say she's one of those women. She's an old woman. She's 19. She's been married. They can't conceive. Her husband has no other family.They finally get pregnant, and he dies. So, now she has no house. She has no way to support herself, so she becomes a prostitute, knowing that she's pregnant. Now, she has this baby, and it's the only thing left from her husband that she has as he rolls over and kills it in the middle of the night. So, she's not just grieving the loss of that baby, she's grieving the loss of her husband, as that is the only thing she has left that was positive in her life before that.

Now, she's before Solomon, and he tells them to kill the baby. So she's lost her husband twice, and now she's losing her kid twice. There's nothing left for her, so of course she's going to snap like that. Changes the story a little bit. Changes our perception of these two women a little bit. But it didn't change Solomon's perception. He knew. and remember, at this time, he's a kid. This is when he first became king. He's got to live in David's shadow, and he's hoping he's making the right choices. He's hoping he's making the right decisions and the first thing he has to do as a king is decide on what to do with this baby and these two people. But he's done one thing, right? He's done one thing right before that day. He prayed. He prayed to God, knowing his limitations, knowing what he was going to be facing. And he didn't ask for help. He didn't ask for power. He asked for wisdom to be a good leader, to be a good person and to be faithful to God. And God came to him in a dream and said, here you go. These things are already within you, but I'm going to help you. He woke him up. He woke up the gifts that were already inside of Solomon, and he gave him wisdom. And with that came compassion, came love.

Now, God didn't just give that wisdom to Solomon. They gave it to all of us. We have all of those gifts inside of us as well.We don't have to go as extreme as what the story says. Think about little things that happen in your life on a daily basis. Think about the people you just go up

and say hi to. You don't know why. You don't know what it does, but there's something inside of you that says this person needs to smile today. This person needs a hello. That wisdom comes out of our hearts. The wisdom to be better people each and every day. That's what today is about, remembering all of those before us, who have shared God's wisdom and God's love in ways that touched all of our hearts.The people that didn't necessarily know they're there,, calling us out of the blue one day completely changed our day. The people that don't know that simple, hello, can change the world. We celebrate the people today that we've lost over the past year, especially because we know how much we are all missing them. We know how there's a void that they aren't filling right now, but we also know that they still bring us joy. We still have those memories of the gifts that they shared with us of the love that they had for us. And just because they aren't here physically with us does not mean that they aren't still here. They aren't still in our hearts. They aren't still making a change in our lives each and every day because they are. And they do because God gave them those gifts to be a part of our lives forever, not just here on Earth, but throughout time, because we know for time does not matter to them as much as it does to us. But we do know that one day we will have unlimited time with them again. So as we pray today, I'm going to lift the names of the people that we've lost over the past year. But I also want you to think and hold in your hearts to people that I'm not saying, the people that aren't here, that we've lost even longer than that because they are with them, and they're still with us in our hearts.

Let us pray.

Oh God, Heavenly Father. We thank you today for calling us your saints in spite of our unholy lives. You look at us and see Jesus's perfect life and death covering ours. Thank you for this grace. The grace we received when we were baptized. Thank you for every Christian who has helped us on our journey and encouraged us to keep believing when we felt like giving up. Thank you for all those who taught us the faith. Thank you for those who made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to ensure others could hear of your love in Christ. We remember the saints in heaven. Thank you for releasing them from the burden of sin and death in this life and for keeping your promise to them. We especially remember those from our community who have passed away in the past year. For Shirley, Tammy, Larry, and Ann. Give comfort to all those who grieve over loved ones, no longer with us on Earth. Give them the hope only your word can offer. We pray for your church on Earth that it may remain faithful to the apostles teaching, and that it will strive for unity. We pray for all Christians, especially those under persecution that they may imitate the martyrs and bold and witness to the gospel. We pray for those who are not yet part of the church, and for those who have left it, asking your spirit to convince them of your love for them in Jesus. And we pray for the enemies of the church and those who curse your saints. Bring peace to those nations and conflict, and where there is political instability. Protect those who are poor and hungry and give them hope. Move those with plenty to share with those who have little. Help all people to love their neighbor as themselves. God of life, we give thanks for the love you have shown to the world through all your saints, and we celebrate our continuing communion with them. Wherever we worship, we look forward to being a part of the crowd around your throne in heaven on the last day. In the meantime, keep us looking to Jesus and help us to keep giving a clear witness to him, living the holy lives you have called us to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' holy name, we pray. Amen.