

07-01-18 – The Widow and the Judge – Luke 18_1-8

As we continue with our series in the Parables of Jesus, I want to start by reading a paragraph in the booklet we have been using for this purpose.

“Today many people are suffering from a disease known as ‘lottery fever,’ the gambling craze sparked by million-dollar lotteries. A person’s chances of winning are very small, so small that you would think people would soon get discouraged. Yet millions go on playing the lotteries unsuccessfully all their lives. They never lose hope.” (Parables – The Greatest Stories Ever Told – John White – p. 22)

Think back over your years. What schemes and plans have you put your hope in? How did that pan out? Did you get discouraged and lose hope in that? What makes people diligent to stick to a dream or a request without losing hope in the process of disappointment? Hopefully, we will see the answer to this question today.

Let look at this parable of Jesus see what He is saying to them and to us today...

Luke 18:1-8 - The Parable of the Persistent Widow - (ESV)

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.
² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.
³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man,⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’”⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says.⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

As was mentioned in previous weeks, we don’t have to find some hidden meaning or reason for the parable. In this parable we are told plainly that this story was so that people are always to pray and not lose heart. Sounds pretty straight forward – No? So, why the story? If we know that we are to pray and not give up or lose heart/hope, why the need for a parable to teach it? Because historically, we are not too bright. God has to tell us over and over again the same thing and we still don’t really get it. Keep this in mind as you read through the Bible.

Think of a time or a need that you were praying about and needed for God to intercede. If you didn’t get the answer you wanted, did you get discouraged? Did you lose hope in the process? It’s not so easy to be diligent in prayer without wavering. If we tend to pray for things we need or others need for a while and then fall away because the prayer doesn’t seem to be getting answered, this parable is for you and me.

Oscar Wilde writes: *While I was on vacation I finished a book called Adrift. It's the story of a man who built a vessel that was to sail him through the whole Atlantic, sort of a large loop. He hit bad weather and his vessel went down. He existed on a raft for almost eighty days. The thing that kept the man alive was hope. His lowest days were the days when he could see no hope and he could not see the possibility of being rescued or making it to the islands or coming into the shipping lanes and being found by one of those vast vessels on its way on the trade routes. His hope kept him alive.*

Someone has said, "We can live forty days without food, eight days without water, four minutes without air, but only a few seconds without hope."

Hope is something we need in order to survive. It is developed in our lives in many ways, but the primary way is through prayer. When we pray we make a two-way connection to God. We can communicate with Him and He can communicate back to us. This kind of prayer builds hope. We can be assured that God hears us and that makes all the difference. Many times we pray in our own strength and according to our own will, but true prayer acknowledges God's will in our lives and circumstances. When we resolve to His will, we have hope.

[James 4:6](#)

But he **gives** more **grace**. Therefore it says, "God opposes **the** proud but **gives grace to the humble**."

[1 Peter 5:5](#)

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject **to the** elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility **toward** one another, for "God opposes **the** proud but **gives grace to the humble**."

God said it twice - - He opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This happens through prayer. As we humble ourselves in prayer with the Father, He meets our innermost needs – our true desires that align with His will, and we have answers and direction that we need.

Hang on to hope in prayer and it will never disappoint us.

Romans 5:3-5 - Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

So, let's look to our text – v. 1 – **He told them this parable so that they would always pray and not lose heart.**

WHY? - because many of us and them back then – would pray, but then lose heart and lose their hope when they didn't receive immediate answers. Can you relate?

So, He backed up this theory with a practical story they could relate to. This would draw them into the parable and then hit them with the lesson plan for their lives and ours.

v.2 - ***He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.***

We have our first character of our story – a judge! What do you think of when you hear he is a judge? What would you expect from a judge in any generation? Wouldn't his job be to hear cases and meet out justice impartially? That's what we would think – right? Does it phase you that he was an unbeliever? Should that matter? Isn't this kind of like the environment we find ourselves in occasionally? We may have to go to court for something. We pray for the right outcome and then find the judge to be a careless and maybe cruel judge who doesn't want to hear what we have to say – really. What do we do then? Do we take our lumps and lose hope?

v. 3 - ***And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'***

Here is our second character of the story – a widow – innocent and asking the judge for justice to be served on her behalf. This should be a no-brainer, don't you think? She's not asking for a favor or for anything illegal. She is just asking for justice in her case. She must feel very innocent in her situation, yet her adversary seems to have the upper hand, so she is pleading only for justice. The key here is that she did just ask the judge for justice, she kept asking, kept hounding him, kept nagging him, kept at it.

Matt. 7:7-8 (ESV) - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

We heard this explained numerous times, but here again in the context of our parable. The Greek tense is present – Keep Asking – Keep Seeking – Keep Knocking. This is exactly what the widow was doing. She wasn't a nag or out of line with God's will. In fact, she is used as an example of praying tenaciously. Don't give up, don't take no answer as a NO from God. Sometimes He just wants to test us to see if our integrity is intact. So don't lose heart in your prayers for you or for others. Keep praying regardless of getting an answer. God has His own timing and is never sleeping on the job. He is aware of your circumstances and wants to bring you the perfect answer at the perfect time. And He will.

v. 4-5 - ***For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'***

This little frail widow, submissive to the law of the land, comes again and again to the judge. The judge is a man of authority, and the widow is a type of commoner who needs justice. Did you ever have circumstances turn you over to the bad side? You are right and just, but the system has turned the tables on you, and you are now on the other side, trying to justify your situation.

Why is she so persistent in her request to the judge? Do you sense some urgency in her life or request?

Some people are just persistent in their requests, while others are more laid-back and submissive. In this case the widow was persistent and God uses this as a lesson for us all. When it comes to prayer, we need to be persistent. We are being instructed to be persistent in prayer before God. While God is our judge, He is not an unjust judge.

So, when you pray about things, don't give up right away. You may need to weigh the request against the will of God found in the Word of God. Sometimes our prayer requests drop off the list because they just weren't aligned with God's will, sometimes it's because we realize this isn't really what we want, and sometimes the requests are really important. In those cases, keep on praying and don't give up. This is the point of the entire parable. Pray and don't give up. Don't lose heart. Don't lose HOPE.

v. 6-8 - *And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

Listen to what Jesus is telling you and me... If this unrighteous judge – someone who doesn't know God or care at all about God – will give this woman justice that she asked for, how much more will your Father in Heaven give you what you need when you persistently pray for it? He loves you; the unjust judge couldn't care less about you. God's principles work in the unbelieving world just as much as they work for believers. Don't be deceived, pray and pray and pray some more. God is listening. You may not understand why your answer is delayed or changed, but that's God's business. Trust Him and keep on praying. He will make known to you the answer or the reason for no answer at the time. If an unjust judge can yield to the will of God, how much more will God Himself answer your prayers?

The parable doesn't just say He will answer, but He will give justice quickly to those who are praying diligently.

Now we come to the hard part of the lesson.

Vs. 8b - *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

What do we do with this verse? Like it or not – ready or not – Jesus is coming back to this earth. As we read our New Testament – Community Bible Experience – together we are winding down and getting to Revelation. Jesus is coming back for those who are truly His own. Jesus is using this parable to warn us of His judgment that is to come. Are you diligent in your prayer life? Are you consistently in His word? Where do you stand with the Master? He will not pull any punches at that time. Our job is to stay vigilant and diligent in our prayer life. This is a demonstration of our faith in Him. If we have true faith, it will be manifest by our prayer life and our devotional life. These things don't save us, but they do speak of our faith in Christ.

When Jesus returns, will He find faith on the Earth? Will He find faith in you? You can step up and make a difference for yourself today. That's why we're here. We gather to encourage each other to faith and good works. So make a new commitment today to serve Jesus by praying through all requests and don't give up – ever. He wants to see you diligent in prayer and then He will answer in kind.

Prayer is Surrender – Surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boat anchor from a boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.

(E. Stanley Jones – A Song of Ascents)

Eugene Peterson – Comments on this Parable - (The Message – Study Bible – p. 1619-1620)

The widow at prayer puts the weakest and least influential people on equal footing with the recognized power figures in society. Widows in the social structure in which Jesus lived were at the absolute bottom of authority and influence. They weren't used to being listened to by anyone of rank. After a lifetime of being ignored, it's hard to "pray consistently and never quit" (v. 1).

Prayer, which is simply a conversation with God, isn't conversation regulated by social or class distinctions. Rather, it's a conversation in which all men, women, and children, widows and judges, kings and beggars, the literate and the illiterate, poor and rich, the wise and fool, saints and sinners are equals. They are all peers with equal access to God.

Then Jesus steps out of the story and asks us a question, especially those of us who have gotten so used to not being listened to by anyone of importance that we've quit asking God for want we need. What Jesus asks is this: "how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?" (v. 8).

Will you and I finally give up and quit praying because the deaf ear of the world has so flattened our expectations of being heard by God? Or will we have the kind of persistent faith the widow had?