

“The Persistent Widow”

Habakkuk 1: 1 – 11 & 2:1 – 4; 1st Thessalonians 5: 12 -22; 2nd Timothy 3:14- 4:5;
Luke 18: 1 – 8

As you know a parable is an earthly short story used to illustrate a spiritual truth by means of comparison **OR** by contrast.

In our case today this is both a parable of contrast and a parable of comparison!

God is contrasted and compared with the judge and we are told to emulate the widow’s actions.

I want to begin with a little background on the role of judges in the Bible and the plight of widows in Bible times.

In 2nd Chronicles we see that a judge was supposed to be like God in his judging; just, impartial, above reproach. (2nd Chronicles 19:4-7, 9)

The judge was required to administer justice in accordance with the righteousness of God.

Judges in Jesus’ day and today have extraordinary power. However, in that day in Israel the judge was the final authority.

There was no jury and no Court of Appeals.

Also In Isaiah 1:17 we see that the only cases that were to take precedence over a widow’s case was an orphan’s case.

Widows in that day were vulnerable victims.

They were a symbol of helplessness.

A widow could not inherit her husband’s estate.

The estate went to the deceased’s sons or brothers so disputes involving widows were common (Psalm 82:3-4 and Jeremiah 5:28-29).

Widows were dependent upon the compassion of the community. Remember Ruth and Naomi.

Widows who felt wronged by a judge often pleaded for God to intervene and vindicate them (Psalm 6:6-10 and 82:8).

Several places in scripture tell us that God will vindicate the widows (Numbers 22:22-24, Psalm 68:5).

Widows also had a special place in the early church (James 1:27) and in 1st Timothy (5:5) , Paul states, ***“The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.***

In verse 1 of our lesson from Luke Jesus told us that He had two purposes in telling this parable.

First to always pray and secondly we are not to give up.

And Jesus told us the type of hope we are to exhibit.

Then Jesus went on to explain the kind of praying.

The widow in this parable had been wronged so she did exactly what she was supposed to do.

She took her case to the judge.

The problem was that the judge in this parable was exactly the opposite of what a judge in Israel was supposed to be. ...

In verse 2 we read that this judge did not fear God nor did he care what other people thought about him.

In other words this judge did not believe he was accountable to anyone else.

Not only was the judge heartless and unjust the judge in this parable shirked his duty by not hearing the widow's case.

While the judge did not fear God **or** care what people thought about him, this judge did care about himself.

Look at verse 5. ***"I will see that she gets justice so that she will not wear me out."***

In verse 3 we see that the widow's only request was only for justice.

The judge finally did the right thing but the judge did it for the wrong reason.

The judge finally relented by hearing the widow's case, ruled, and granted the widow justice because the widow was so persistent.

One might quickly conclude that the lesson of this parable is "nagging pays off".

However, a closer study does not support this.

The lesson is not about nagging but rather it is about the power of persistence prayer and faith in order for a change to take place or an injustice to be righted.

What is to be emulated is not the nagging but rather the passion and the desire for something to happen.

Justice is needed. The point of the parable is that we pray to a just and loving God and we should never give up.

If an unjust judge can be persuaded by persistence how much more will a loving just God do for us?

If the unrighteous judge grants justice, how much more will a loving, caring God do for His people when we are passionate and persistent in our prayers for justice and mercy?

We must never lose sight of the fact that our God knows and our God is affected by what is going on in our lives.

We need to exercise our faith that God is totally in charge of every situation and that our God will bring peace, relief and / or justice.

In verse 7 Jesus asks a rhetorical question. *“And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you He will see that they get justice and quickly.”*

It is comforting to know that we know that we do not have to nag God to get His attention.

Our God is more willing to hear, to help, to protect, and to provide for us than we are to ask for His help.

We can depend on our God.

So the question is can God depend upon us to be passionate and persistent in our prayers for peace in Cameroon and an end to violence in Baltimore City?

A second lesson for us is to never give up praying for the cause of justice, no matter who has the power.

In this parable Jesus shares the sense that injustice permeates the world we live in.

We are not where we should be as a culture.

As a people therefore, we need to be persistent and persistent in praying for justice, peace, and for God’s kingdom to come.

We need to be expectant people.

One of the greatest dangers we face is to lose hope.

We need to have passion for peace, for equality, and for justice.

If we quit wanting things to change we will become overcome with apathy; which means no passion.

The widow was persistent and she had a passion about her request and this is what is commended.

This parable is particularly appropriate at this time since there is violence and injustice all over the world.

Prayer is the only effective method for dealing with it.

That is why we had a special prayer service to pray for peace in Cameroon.

There are four (4) principles about praying that are reinforced in this parable:

We need to persistent in our prayers –

Several scripture tells us we are told to pray about everything and to pray with out ceasing.

Verse 1 of our focal scripture says; *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”*

Philippians 4:6 says: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God “*

1st Thessalonians 5:17 -18 says; *“Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”*

Again we need to be careful not to jump to the conclusion that we should nag God until He gives in to our request.

That is not what Jesus was teaching.

God knows our needs before we ask, like a wise father, God responds to our needs out of **God’s wisdom** and **not** our wisdom.

We are confident that God hears our prayers and God always does what is best for us.

Sometimes the answer is **“yes”**, sometimes it is **“no”**, and sometimes the answer is **“not at this time”**.

God answers our prayers, but His answer is always in accordance with His divine will and eternal plan.

We need to remember Jesus’ prayer.

“Not my will, but Thine be done.” (Matthew 26:39)

We need to remember God’s timing is not our timing.

God is not a genie in a bottle at our beacons call.

God is not our celestial bellhop.

We are God’s servants.

We should always pray that God’s will be done because our God knows what is in our best interest.

Secondly we are to pray with confidence.

If our request is in accordance with God’s character and in accordance with God’s will then we will be earnestly praying for God to be glorified in answering our prayers.

When our prayer is in accordance with God’s will we are assured of God answering our prayer.

Thirdly we need to passionate in our prayers –

Do we really believe in the cause we are praying for?

Do we feel the pain we are other people are experiencing.

Are we really expecting God to intervene in our daily activities?

And fourthly we need to pray in faith –

Faith is believing that God will do what God said He will do.

Faith is acting on God's promises!

Faith is an action word.

Hebrews 11:1 states; ***“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”***

You see praying without faith is nothing more than wishful thinking.

And praying without faith is no more effective than talking to a brick wall!

Faith in Jesus is the unshakable confidence in the certainty of Jesus' Second Coming to establish His kingdom on earth and that we will live and reign with Jesus throughout eternity!

Jesus is saying that it may seem like a long time before He comes again but do not become weary, do not become discouraged, do not become complacent, and do not give up.

Jesus' second coming and Christ's reign throughout eternity is certain!

There is a close connection between this parable and Jesus' discourse on His return to establish His eternal kingdom in Luke 17:20 – 37.

There Jesus stresses the need to pray for the coming of His kingdom on earth.

That is why in the 8th verse of our lesson Jesus asks, ***“When the Son of Man comes, will He find such faith when He comes again?”***

Jesus also taught all of His disciples to pray, ***“Thy kingdom come.”***

We need to look beyond our present circumstances and we need to pray for things that will last throughout eternity.

After all we are only here on earth a very short time, maybe 100 years at best, and that is nothing compared to eternity.

God encourages us to never lose faith even in times of an apparent abandonment by God!

We are to pray persistently, we are to pray passionately, we are to pray with confidence, and we are to pray in faith knowing that God loves us, provides for us, and protects us,

God will right the wrongs in our lives!

Prayer is intended to be a time to enjoy being in the presence of God. Prayer makes our journey here in this hostile environment much more enjoyable.

Prayer gives us the assurance that we are not walking through this life alone.

When Lady and I began dating I was not old enough to drive a car, so most of time we were riding with parents.

So you know that we were either going to church or coming from church.

But because it gave us time to be together, Lady and I enjoyed the journey.

The same is true with our prayer life. For Christians we are on a journey that takes us to heaven.

Heaven is going to be a wonderful place but our time spent with The Lord in prayer makes the journey so much more enjoyable.

Prayer allows us to enjoy The Lord's presence here and now.

Proverbs 18:24 assures us that ***"We have a Friend who sticks closer than a brother!"***

Jesus is saying that it may seem like a long time before He comes again but do not become weary, do not become discouraged, and enjoy the journey to your heavenly home.

AMEN