

Luke 18: 1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

He said, ‘In a certain city there was judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.”

For a while he refused;

but later he said to himself:

“Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me,

I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming”

And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says.

And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?

Will he delay long in helping them?

I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

and yet, when the Son of Man comes,

will he find faith on earth?’

Meditation

**My Grandmother and my mother-in-law were died in the wool Cubs fans.
Both have passed into their heavenly homes now,
but I have to wonder if they, and other life long Cubs fans,
didn't have something to do with the top of the ninth inning last Tuesday night
And last night's bottom of the 8th???**
**I don't know folks....we might actually be cautiously looking towards the
_____shhh....I don't want to say it yet!**

**But I think Cubs fans everywhere, believers or not,
are praying for the curse to be broken....but ahh....we shall see, we shall see....**

So...is that it?

Is the meaning of today's Gospel shown in the prayerful stance of Cubs fans???

Remember the first verse of our reading today?

"Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart."

Is the meaning of todays scripture reading really that obvious?

nah..

According to Scripture scholar Barbara Reid, the first verse that I just read

And the closing verses that bookend the parable are, in fact,

Luke's interpretation of the parable.

Please listen again to the parable itself...

'In a certain city there was judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying,

"Grant me justice against my opponent."

For awhile he refused;

but later he said to himself:

"Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,

yet because this widow keeps bothering me,

I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.”

**So here we have this judge who is getting tired of this nagging widow...
she just won't quit.**

**Now...in the translation that I used, it sounds like the judge is worried that her persistent,
nagging efforts are going to try his patience.**

In fact, a better translation would be that he's afraid she will tarnish his reputation,

**You see, in Ancient Israel Jewish judges were expected to render verdicts that
were in accordance with God's law, God's will.**

**The ancient Jews understood God to be a God of justice deeply concerned with widows and
orphans and the refugee.**

But this judge obviously isn't worried about the widow..

he admits he is not afraid of God

and he doesn't really respect other people...

so what is he worried about?

Well...he's concerned about his reputation and his job.

If he does not rule in her favor,

which God fearing Jewish judges would do

because that is what God would want..

and he would be removed from his position:

and loose all of his power and prestige...

So, what is Jesus trying to say?

**Prof. Reid suggests that because this woman is relentless in seeking
and obtaining justice, SHE reveals the way of God...**

that God is relentless in seeking justice....and God will not be denied.

Remember: widows were powerless in his society.

**There was no way that she could have physically forced
the judge to render a verdict in her favor.**

**Yet she came day after day to present her case,
refusing to be intimidated by the unjust judge and his power over her.
And, in Jesus' parable, she eventually succeeded in receiving what she demanded**

**For Jesus to use a woman, a widow none the less, to show the ways of God is startling.
Jesus uses the widow to show how his Abba God would act in the world ...
He uses her to show that his God never forces anyone to behave justly...
He uses her to show that his God does not use violence in the service of justice....**

**And he uses her to show that his God never relents in seeking justice...
and the God of Jesus of Nazareth always succeeds....**

**That was pretty radical in his day...that a woman could be the image of God...
no wonder Luke had such trouble trying to figure it out...
heck, it is radical now in many circles...**

**But it is just not the fact that the woman offer an image of God that is so remarkable but
the parable also emphasizes the power of continually naming and confronting injustice
without resorting to violence.**

**The parable assures those without power that Justice will be served
even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.**

**The parable assures the powerless that those who hold power in this world
and who use that power unjustly will not have the final word ...
the Reign of God will not be denied...
the vision of God will not obstructed...**

What was true back then is still true today....

All across our nation we have thousands of people naming the prejudice and injustice that is still exists in our country along the lines of race and gender.

If we were to use this parable for our current social issues we would recognize the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: He knew the power and the wisdom of naming the injustice and opposing the injustice with love and non violence.

In Dr. King's "I have a dream speech" delivered in Washington D.C. on August 28, 1963 he said:

"Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all God's children.

"No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

He continues:

"We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of mending physical force with soul force."

Dr. King understood the parable of the persistent widow and the unjust judge.

But there is one more important detail to notice: the judge was still in power.

Unjust social systems are not quickly changed.

Violent upheavals often simply replace one unjust system with another.

Often times the oppressed simply reverse the tables and become the oppressors...

But like water that wears down the rock...

**consistently naming the injustice...
and consistently work for Justice
standing tall and coming from a place of personal integrity
and allowing the grace of God to be the ground from which you draw your strength...
will be a force than no earthly power can resist...**

**Yes...we are called to put forth persistent effort in the work for justice
for all people in all our many shades and colors....**

**Working for a just society is the work of our day and time...and we do not do it in vain..
Persistence in prayer is essential in this work because it roots us in the life giving grace,
wisdom, courage and power of God...which no earthly power can stop.
no matter what any bully might say....**

**Yes, persistence is important but it is not persistence in badgering God to give us what we
want...even a world series championship seems to be a just request...**

**Persistence in the work for justice for ALL of creation makes known the Reign of Heaven
on Earth... and for that we must say 'thank you'. Amen**