

Luke 18:1-8 “The Parable of the Persistent Widow”

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ 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?⁸ I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Introduction

The parable of the persistent widow is a parable about prayer. In verse 1, Luke writes, “Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” Parables are not true stories about historical events. Instead, parables illustrate theological truths. They are depictions of stories told by Jesus to impart a truth that he was wanting to teach to help His disciples understand a spiritual principle. In the parable of the Persistent widow, the widow may represent those who are in an extremely vulnerable position and are seeking justice for something that’s being done against them. The widow may also represent a disciple who is facing persecution.

Context

In the previous chapter, Luke 17:20-25, Jesus was preparing His disciples for how to endure prayerfully in the coming age. He is reminding His chosen that He is not slow in fulfilling His promises even if he seems to be delayed. God is patient and His desire is for many to come to repentance in the current age. Jesus is preparing His disciples to live faithfully, prayerfully and watchfully until His return to earth.

The Characters: The Widow and the Unjust Judge

v. 18:2 Jesus words: “In a city there was a certain judge who neither feared God nor respected man”

v. 18:3 There was a widow in that city who kept coming to the unrighteous judge,

The Widow

1. The widow had a real need. Someone was treating her unfairly & coming against her (an adversary.) A widow represents someone who is in a most vulnerable state. She is not able to look after her own needs. She desperately needs intervention.
2. Jesus was pointing out the woman's persistence Her actions of going back again and again showed her conviction that she would receive justice. Her actions reveal that she did not give up.
3. In the story, the widow could represent someone who is powerless. She could represent the elect of God. Jesus refers to his elect in Luke 18:7. The elect are those who have chosen to follow Jesus.

The Unjust Judge

- Someone who is in a position of authority
- Not interested in helping her (most likely looking for a bribe.)
- Unrighteous
- Not God-fearing
- Did not respect others; reluctant
- A judge is someone who is meant to uphold the law but didn't.

v. 18:3-4 But in verses 3-4 Jesus said :The widow kept coming to the judge with her plea. And “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think

v. 18:5 Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me.

Structure (Contrast)

In parables of this type (single direct parable) Jesus often placed two characters side by side to show contrast. In the story, the unjust judge, (who had no regard or respect for people,) is being contrasted against the pure intentions of an infinitely righteous God. The story highlights the extreme goodness of God against an extreme opposite ungodly judge. (Craig Blomberg)

Luke 11:13 “if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask”

God vs. The Unrighteous Judge

v. 18:6 *And the Lord said: "Hear what the unjust judge says."*

- In this story, Jesus is saying that the judge will do justice for the widow despite his lacking both the fear of God and human sympathy
- By choosing such an unjust judge in the story, Jesus is saying that even an unjust judge can give justice to the widow. God will do the same for his elect not because of anything they have done but because they're the ones God "selected" for salvation. (Robert Gundry)

v. 18:6-8: *And the Lord [Jesus] said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge is saying. 7 And won't God by all means do justice for his elected ones, who cry out to him day and night, and be indulgent toward them as they cry out day and night for justice? 8. I tell you that he'll do justice for them speedily.*

God will vindicate His chosen ones because of His character, not because of anything they have done. He is a God who gives justice. This should motivate Jesus' disciples to pray.

Point 1: Sometimes we feel like a Helpless Widow But Don't Give Up

1. We may feel like: "I will not get justice in my situation!, I will not be heard."
2. If I put aside time and invest in reading the word of God? Could it make a difference in my life?
3. We are to pray earnestly for the vindication of our testimony in the world. Rather than quit, praying is the correct response to a righteous God. The widow kept going back because she knew who she was praying to.
4. Though we may not see instant results, we are to continue to pray and not give up.
5. The word faith in Luke's gospel suggests a reliance on another to provide something that one cannot provide for himself." The widow could not make anything happen for herself.

Point 2: Prayer (is a correct) Response to God's Character

God (is totally opposite of the judge in the story)

- He is an Infinitely righteous judge
- Hears the cries of His own
- Cared deeply for widows and vulnerable
- Throughout the Bible He is Moved to action to help the broken
- Encouraged His elect to pray for justice for the vulnerable

Jesus tells this parable to highlight the fact that if a judge who has no regard for people or his position as a judge can give justice, how much more will God, who is fair and just avenge His people?

- To emphasize His readiness to give justice, Jesus asks two rhetorical questions.

v. 18:7a. *“And will not God give justice {and be indulgent towards} “his elect?”*

v. 18:7b. *“Will he delay long over them?”*

God is ready and waiting to give justice. God is far readier to rid his own of oppression (give justice) than this judge is willing to do for the widow. He wants to give justice to his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night.

v. 18:8a *“I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.”*

When Jesus says “I tell you” he is putting great emphasis on what is said next: God's readiness to give justice. He cares for us. When we faithfully pray, we are showing that we trust in the character of a just God who desires to give us vindication. God is good. When we pray, it is an expression of faith. It is a response to His goodness. He has never failed. He has answered our prayers in the past and He will again.

Point 3: What is Persistence in Prayer?

In Luke 18:7 Jesus said, “and will not God bring justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night?”

The widow persistently prayed while waiting for what seemed like a delay without seeing any hope of an answer.

In Matthew 7:7, Jesus said, “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.

- Knocking is an intentional action. It is not passive. It suggests participation and perseverance and it requires a posture of humility rather than giving up when we don't see the results
- When we pray, we are not only asking for our prayer to be answered but we are taking responsible steps to pursue the will of God.
- Prayer has a role in creating in ourselves a right attitude with respect to God's will (Christian Theology, Millard J. Erickson).
- In the story, the widow's faith is related to a specific context of God's will: Christ's second coming to the earth.

Luke 17:22-25

Jesus tells His disciples that He will depart from the earth but after a period of days he will return. He tells them that first He must suffer severely and be rejected by this generation. He says they will long for the day when he reveals Himself to the whole world. Now He is telling them to endure in prayer during this period and not to lose heart while they wait.

Luke 17:24 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

- But there will be an absence.
- It is necessary that he must suffer first. He must be rejected first. Jesus suffering is part of God's plan.

Why did Jesus speak of losing heart?

In Luke 18:2 The unjust judge represents injustice of persecution on the earth prior to Jesus second coming that disciples will have to endure. The unjust judge, as Jesus called him, admitted that he didn't fear God and didn't have consideration for human beings. He didn't even have compassion for a defenceless widow who obviously had no other means to help herself.

- Luke emphasized that between the first and second comings of Jesus, the world will be filled with indifference, injustice, and misuse and abuse of power (Luke 17:26–30).
- Jesus was saying it is necessary to pray because of the injustice of persecution disciples of Christ will face.
- One Bible scholar pointed out that the tense Jesus uses for need for prayer (dei'n) means: "ought, it is necessary." In an age of injustice it will be necessary for disciples to pray.

Matthew 24:12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. 13. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

John 15:20 If they persecute me they will persecute you.

- Jesus was telling the disciples of the need for prayer so they would not become discouraged in the face of trials and suffering and so they would not walk away from God.

John 15:24 If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet have hated both me and my father.

John 16:1,3 All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. 3. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

Point 4: Christ Will Come "Will He Find Faith?"

Luke 18:8 I tell you, he will see that He will see that His disciples get justice and quickly but asks the question, "will he find the faith on earth?"

Delay:

While the widow was repeatedly waiting to receive justice from the judge, it seemed that there was a delay. Luke 17:20-24 & Luke 18:1-4 speaks of the season when Jesus may be delayed in returning for His second coming.

He is patient in his desire that all may have an opportunity to turn to Him.

The Widow's Character:

The parable of the persistent widow portrays good character as someone who does not give up in the face of delay or wrong doing. In light of unjust treatment (17:22–37), “the certainty that there would vindication helped her to keep praying.” Her faith was evidenced by her prayer. Luke 18:8 asks “Will He find faith on the earth,” Jesus is asking: “Will he find her kind of faith?” Her faith is the kind of faith that keeps on praying and doesn't give up because she is going through a difficult time or doesn't get an answer. She believed in God's goodness and vindication. (David Mappes)

Evidence of Faith

Jesus is saying that there is certainty of vindication. Though we may not see justice happening on the earth now, we are to live with the knowledge and assurance that there will be justice executed when the Son of Man Returns. Though many do not believe in Jesus, they will. Not believing in Jesus is sin. Vindication means being shown as right. Jesus is in the right and the world is in the wrong. This certainty of believing these truths will be evidenced by our faithfulness to pray.

- Our prayer shows our certainty
- The question should not be when will Jesus return? But, based on God's character and His promise for vindication, how will we respond as we wait?

Prayer

I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8

Church

- We would be drawn into a deeper place of trusting in God's goodness.
- We would be moved by the conviction that God has called each one of us to a place of prayer and Bible reading.
- We would see ourselves used as an instrument to see others receive justice.
- We would be committed to endure, to lay down our convenience to be prepared for God's will for the church.
- We would abide in Christ. He would abide in us.
- Ministries
 - Worship team. Thank you for sustaining the worship ministry throughout the Pandemic. Pray that God would continue to shape their hearts to lead the church in deeper worship.
 - Sunday School: pray for each child and teacher to have an encounter with God's word.
 - Lifeline, Redeeming Roses, Life Explorers: (learning and preparation)
 - Preaching and application of God's word
 - Pastor Adam, Jacqueline and leaders: vision and development
 - Reopening of church

Malaysia

- We would be convinced that racial reconciliation is God's will for Malaysia. We would be faithful and not give up praying.
- We would be committed to pray for justice and good leadership in Malaysia.

Covid-19

- Economy (people's livelihood)
- Pray for all the children who are receiving vaccines in the coming weeks and months and reopening schools.
- Healing and comfort for those who are sick and have lost lives.

Thanksgiving

- God sustained Carrie's parents and other church members through sickness with Covid.