



Intro: Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem and larger crowds are growing. He uses the time to challenge the disciples and to answer the Pharisees. In response to the question about when and how he will return, Jesus tells this parable.

In other words, in light of 17:22 - *"The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it,"* how should we live?

To answer that question, Jesus offers two parables:

- 1 – The unjust judge and the widow. 1-8
- 2 – The Pharisee and the tax collector. 9-14

First: The Cause. 1

- a) In light of 17:22 - *"The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it,"* how should we live?
- b) Jesus encourages the disciples to demonstrate their faith by persistent prayer, even when they do not see life as it was or will be, in the *"days of the Son of Man."*

Peter asks the same question -

2 Peter 3:11 - *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*

Note: Eschatology is ethical. The coming of Jesus should motivate us to live holy, godly lives – not arguing amongst ourselves about the specifics of Jesus' return.

Persistent = persistently, not continuous

Why? Prayer is beset with opposition and discouragement –

- Answers are delayed. "For a while he refused". 4 & 7
- So, people should cry out day and night. 7

Bottom Line: Persistent prayer is a mark of faith in God, not circumstances.

Second: The Characters. 2-3

a) The unjust judge. 2

1. He did not fear God.

Fear = phobeo = Homer = to put to flight, to flee; NT = to be afraid

Luke 8:50 - "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

But this judge does not fear God. He acts solely in self-interest.

Instead of loving God and loving his neighbor, this judge loves only himself.

2. He did not respect people.

V 2 Respect = entrepo = to shame

1 Corinthians 4:14 - I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

V 4 "for a time he refused..." = ethelen = to have no interest or intention of doing anything

Bottom Line: This judge is the opposite of God; cold, reluctant and indifferent.

b) The persistent widow. 3

In Jesus' day, widows were entirely dependent on the kindness of others, in social services. With no husband, she is particularly vulnerable and defenseless.

This widow is like the person who roused his neighbor in 11:5-13. Both parables underscore the virtues of persistence.

V 3 – "kept coming" = ercheto = imperfect (repeated attempts)

Her persistence has the same effect Delilah's pleas had on Samson (Judg 6:15-16), or

David in the Psalms –

Psalm 55:16-17 - But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.

The theme of vindication occurs 4 times in this passage: 3, 5, 7, 8. We don't know who the "adversary" is in this parable. Nor do we know why she wants "justice." But she evidently is not pestering the judge because of a misdemeanor. Yet, justice is not the point of the parable. Faith and prayer – faith that prays – is the point of this parable.

V 1 – And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to lose heart

V 8 – Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

Widows possessed no power, no influence. But she was...

1. Persistent

Bottom Line: We have no power, influence, are vulnerable and helpless.

Third: The Consistence. 4-5

- a) The Judge's reluctance. 4a
- b) The judge's acknowledgement. 4b
- c) The judge's rationale. 5

"...this widow keeps bothering me..."

"...so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming"

The judge is motivated solely by self-interest and practicality. The widow's incessant pleas interrupt his life and exhaust him, tax his patience and bruise his reputation.

V 5 = *"keeps bothering me"* = *hypopiazein* = boxing metaphor depicting a swollen face
- *beating me black and blue*

1 Corinthians 9:27 - *But I discipline my body and keep it under control*

Bottom Line: God is not like the unjust judge

Four: The Contrast. 6-8a

Jesus ends the parable saying, *"...Hear what the unrighteous judge says... v 7 – And will not God give justice to his elect..."*

...God is cast in negative stereotypes...as a reluctant and corrupt judge...

- James R. Edwards

No. This is not a story of comparisons, the unjust judge and God. The hinge of this story is the contrast between the unjust judge and God.

- *"Do you hear what the unrighteous judge says?"*
- *"Will not God bring about justice..."*

a) God is unlike the unjust judge. 7a – He *"will not"* and *"Will he delay long..."*

God is the counterbalance to this unjust judge. He says that God not only hears our prayers but that God does respond swiftly in his timing.

ILL – A woman continually begged Philip of Macedon for justice. He replied, "I have no time for you." The woman responded, "Then give up being king."

Jesus is not like the unjust judge –

Hebrews 7:25 - *...he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

We don't know what we will receive from people. We can know what we will receive from God.

V 7 – “*And will not...bring about*” = *ou me poise* = *Ou me* = strongest imperative in Greek.

V 8 – “*I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.*”

Unlike the unjust judge, prayer grants us God's

- ear
- heart
- hands

The real question is,

b) Are we like the persistent widow. 7b - “*who cry to him day and night*”

Bottom Line: Because God loves us and will answer us, we should pray

Five: The Challenge. 8b

Prayer is a mysterious thing.... Pagan prayer, on the other hand makes perfect sense....[it is] part of a transaction...in which petitioners attempt to bend the will of the deity to give them what they want....bargaining, bribing, begging.... Prayer before God, however, is exactly the opposite.... Prayer is not an exercise in manipulation but a necessary part of a relationship.
- Chuck Swindoll

The question is, Do we have faith in God?

And the problem is the word, “*speedily*,” = *en tachei* = 20x in Greek Bible –

- Soon in six instances
- Surely in six instances
- Immediately in four instances
- Suddenly in three instances

God will answer. It is in his character to do so. He is not indifferent to injustice or to the cries of his people. God is in solidarity with the oppressed. He is longsuffering with sinners.

What set up this parable? Jesus' discussion about his 2nd coming in 17:20-37.

Bottom Line: We pray because we believe everything Jesus says (in spite of circumstances)

Five: The Consideration (Application)

- a) Persistent prayer is not about persuading a reluctant God to answer us.
- b) Persistent prayer is about unwavering trust in a good, loving God.

In the end, (v 8), the emphasis is not with God but with us.

- Will we have faith?
- Will we faithfully pray??

Bottom Line: Jesus' words in 17:20-37 challenged the disciples to have faith, unlike the people who died in Noah's flood or Lot's wife. This parable is a continuation of that theme. This parable may be more about faith more than prayer.

At the end of the parable, Jesus doesn't say, *"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find prayer on earth?"*

He says, *"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

Prayer is simply the demonstration of faith.

If someone was to ask you, *"How do you exercise faith?"* You could say, *"I pray."*

Hebrews 11:6 - *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

Conclusion: Remember how Luke began his book?

Luke 1:3 - *it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus*

To do that, Luke presents a scene and then let's us watch how Jesus uses those moments to teach truths about himself and his kingdom.

In Luke 18, there are five different scenes involving different people and the exercise of faith.

- 1 – The widow and the unjust judge
- 2 – The Pharisee and the tax collector
- 3 – The children and the disciples
- 4 – The rich young ruler
- 5 – The blind beggar

In these people, Luke is giving us Jesus' definition of faith.

As in Luke 17, Jesus is asking us to trust him even in difficult circumstances. How do we exhibit that trust?

According to Hebrews 11:6, prayer is the result of faith. Prayer demonstrates faith

- 1 – Faith believes God is (even when you don't see "*the days of the Son of Man*")
- 2 – Faith believes God rewards prayer

So, what should we do in response?

- a) Pray. Are you?
- b) Keep praying. Are you?
- c) Trust in God's character. Do you?
- d) Trust in God's timing. Do you?



CG Questions: Luke 18:1-8

Observation

- 1 – Who are the main characters in this parable?
- 2 – How would you characterize each?
- 3 – What does the woman do?
- 4 – How does the judge respond?
- 5 – What eventually influences the judge to respond?
- 6 – How does Jesus contrast God with the judge?
- 7 – What does he say God will do in answer to prayer?
- 8 – What question does Jesus ask at the end?

Interpretation

- 9 – How does Jesus introduce this parable?
- 10 – What is the point of the parable?
- 11 – Why do you think the widow's persistence is highlighted in this parable?
- 12 – What does the judge's reluctance tell us about him?
- 13 – What does v 7 say about God's relationship to you?
- 14 – What kind of faith is Jesus looking for in v 8?

Correlation

- 15 – How does this parable resemble Luke 11:1-13 or Matthew 7:7-11?
- 16 – How might Romans 8:28 or Revelation 21:4 offer hope while we pray?
- 17 – How does the farmer/s patience in James 5:7-8 compare to the widow's persistence?

Application

- 18 – What is the hardest thing about prayer for you?
- 19 – What is the relationship between prayer and faith?
- 20 – What does this parable teach us about persistence in the face of problems?
- 21 – How do you reconcile “speedily” in v 8 with waiting for God to answer prayer?
- 22 – What have you been praying about for a long time?
- 23 – Would you characterize your prayer life as persistent or hit-and-miss?
- 24 – How can waiting on God foster a deeper relationship with God, even/especially when it seems our prayers are unanswered?



Mon, June 2nd. Luke Read 18:1-3. **Be persistent in prayer.** Prayer is not a one-time request. It is a conversation with God in which we share our concerns, problems, desires and pray for his kingdom to come. The widow's persistence teaches us not to lose heart in prayer. Have you been praying about something for a long time? Trust God and don't stop praying.

Tues, June 3rd. Read Luke 18:4-5. **God is just.** Jesus uses the unjust judge to teach us something about God. He is not indifferent to your prayers, but he uses prayer to establish and maintain your relationship to Him. Change your perspective on prayer from a one-time moment to a series of ongoing conversations with God in which you get to know, trust, love and serve Him.

Wed, June 4th. Read Luke 18:6-7. **God answers prayer.** The widow's persistence leads to answered prayer from an unjust person. But God is different. He is just and is much more willing than the unjust judge, to hear your prayer and deliver you. The certainty of answers should encourage us to pray. Have you questioned God's ear?

God's heart? Let this parable encourage you to trust God will answer your prayer. And pray.

Thurs, June 5th. Read Luke 18:8. **Have Faith.** God has reasons we do not know for the timing of his answers. He is just and will answer you. But will you be faithful to pray, trusting God for the timing of his answer? God's character is never in question in this parable. Our faithfulness is. And faith, according to Jesus, is demonstrated in persistent prayer. Encourage your heart by this parable. Have faith in God and pray.

Fri, June 6th. Read Luke 18:1-8. **Model your faith in prayer.** The widow's persistence is a model for us in this parable. And God's response is more than anything anyone in this world can and will do for us. Our part is to persist in faith, knowing that God will answer us in his time and way. But that does take faith. So, faith will encourage your prayers and praying will increase your faith. Model your faith by persistent prayer.