

Can you remember a time
when one of your kids or you wanted something?
I don't mean gave it a passing thought,
I mean really wanted it.
At first, it was probably said, "Not right now," or
"Let me think about it," or "No, I don't think that's a good idea."

Truth is, we've probably all responded in all of those ways.
But, kids being kids, wouldn't take "No" for an answer.
Kids are really smart.
They wait until the time is right and come again.
You say, "I promise you that if you keep asking me, you'll never get it."
They wait some more.
You begin to notice that they are extra nice to you;
they're even nice to their siblings.

Then comes the list, written on a piece of paper.
"Mom, I've been thinking..."
Huh oh! You see it coming don't you?
They read their list: Dad, I promise to take the trash out for a month,
clean my room every day, do laundry,
and feed you breakfast in bed for the rest of your life...
if, if only you'll get me what they want.
Parents may resist for a while, but they are persistent,
relentless, and untiring in their mission to get what they want.

Eventually you caved. Come on, admit it.
You know you did! I did too.
Why does that happen?
And we swore we would never let it happen again.
How did it happen? The answer is quite simple:
They just flat wore us down until they wore us out!
If this has ever happened to you,
then you are in a good place to understand
how the woman in Jesus' parable got what she wanted.

There's a much greater lesson to Jesus' parable
About persistent faith that I hope we can learn this morning
so let's turn to Luke 18:1-8 and read together.
It's always important to understand the context
of what Jesus is saying so we have to go back to Luke 17.

In Luke 17, before we started this series,
Jesus was teaching the disciples about
what would take place at His return.

In verse 26, Jesus said, **"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also it will be in the days of the Son of Man."**

What will it be like when Jesus' returns?

It will be like it was in the days of Noah.

Meaning a time when there was not much faith on earth.

Jesus wants to prepare His followers
with a persistent faith for that day.

When we turn to Luke 18, and the beginning of our parable, we read,

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

This is such an important word from Jesus.

Jesus told a parable to show His followers that
they should always pray and not give up.

Pray. Don't give up. Other translations say,

"Pray and not lose heart," "pray and not become discouraged,"

The Greek word translated "not give up" means,

"to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted."

I know that every single person here this morning
can relate to being utterly spiritless, wearied out,
and exhausted by the troubles and trials of life.

This is true of all of us, but remember,
this section of Scripture is really linked to
what Jesus had to say in Luke 17 about
His return one day and finding us faithful.

There are only two characters in Jesus' parable.

There are the widow and the judge. Look at verse 2 with me.

2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.

We don't know the name of the town,
but we do know the character of the judge.

Jesus said he "neither feared God nor cared about men."

I have no idea how much judicial experience this judge had;

I've never read any of his decisions,

but I can tell you he was not a good judge
because he lacked wisdom.

You may wonder how I got that out of this one verse?

I'll show you. In Proverbs 9:10 we read,

10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

This judge didn't fear God, and the writer of Proverbs tells us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. And this judge loved neither God nor his neighbor. The evidence Jesus gives us is that, in fact, he wasn't a good judge.

In verse 3, Jesus tells us that a widow in the town of the judge kept coming to him. She wanted justice, and if you want justice, then you are supposed to be able to go to the judge. She did what she was supposed to do, but he refused. She was a nobody. She was in a challenging, tough situation. Her husband had died, and she had no man in her life: no father, brother, or uncle to defend her.

How do we know that?

Well, the court system was for men, not for women.

No woman would come to the court unless they had no man in their life.

The court system was not like it is today.

She, like so many widows, was powerless and helpless, but the judge wouldn't help her even though by God's command widows are supposed to be supported. How unlike God was the judge who didn't want to be bothered by the widow?

Well look at Psalm 68:4-5.

4 Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds-- his name is the LORD-- and rejoice before him. 5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

Unlike the unjust judge, God is a defender of widows.

But the woman was so desperate she wouldn't take "No" for an answer. She kept going back to the judge. She met him as he arrived in the morning to take his gavel and put on his robe. She was waiting for him at the end of the day

when he just wanted to get home.
She would show up in his courtroom
with a sign that read, "No Justice! No Peace!"
She would not let the man rest until she got what she deserved.
Finally, we read,

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

Even though he didn't fear God or care about people,
the judge gave in to the woman's request
because she would not stop bothering him.
It wasn't love that moved the judge,
it wasn't justice that moved the judge,
it wasn't compassion or wisdom that moved the judge.
The judge gave in for selfish reasons—
he was tired of being hassled by the woman.

Then, in verse 6, Jesus said,

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

The Greek word used by Jesus is an imperative.
"Don't miss it!" Why did Jesus highlight what
the unjust judge said for His disciples?
That's a great question, and the answer is that
he wanted to draw a sharp contrast between
the unjust judge who finally gave in and the Judge of all humanity,
who is so unlike the unjust judge.

Jesus' final words are found in Luke 18:7-8.

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?

Now, I need to make something really clear.
The point of the parable is not that we are to nag God,
keep badgering God over and over again,
or to pray long, rambling, repetitious prayers
until we finally wear God down
like the widow wore down the judge.
One of the points of the parable is the stark contrast
between the unjust judge and our God.
When you understand the character of God,
God's love and desire for you,

then you will know that God is our Refuge and Strength,
God is our Hope and Deliverer, God is our Strength
and Ever-Present-Help in our time of need.

When Jesus asked, “**And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?**”

it is intended to be answered with an emphatic,
“You better believe God will!”

The widow was nobody to the unjust judge,
and yet Jesus points out that all who
have believed in Him are God’s “chosen ones.”
Those who belong to God, chosen by God,
are to “cry out to God both day and night.”

Did you see that in verse 7.

Does that phrase characterize your prayer life?

Do you cry out to God in the morning,
throughout the day, and at night while you are lying in bed?
I would say that most of us probably cry out to God
when we are in trouble or facing things in life that we just can’t handle.

A lady came to G. Campbell Morgan,
the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London in the early 1900s.

She told the pastor,

“I only take the big things to God.

I don’t take the little things to God.”

Morgan looked at her and said,

“Ma’am, anything you take to God is little.”

We should see all of life, every moment of every day,
every decision we must make
as an opportunity to take it to God.

Not only should we take everything to God,
but we can take everything to God. Isn’t that mind-boggling?

But those of us who follow Jesus might ask

“Will he delay long in answering them?”

Despite his own response, we would have to say,

“Well, yes, in our experience, God delays. Sometimes painfully so.”

It isn’t a stretch to say that there are those among us
who have worn out their knees and shed
many tears in persistent prayer and are unable
to see an answer that comes close to answering their pleas.

That what is being asked here might
seem more as a burden than a blessing.

But we have to remember that
what seems slow to us isn't slow to God.

"Nor are your ways my ways" (Isaiah 55:8 NRSV), and all that.

"A thousand years in your sight are like yesterday" (Psalm 90:4 NRSV)
doesn't sound like a quick response.

And it has never been our responsibility
to give excuses for God or explanations.

And God always answers our prayers,
but sometimes they are not the answers
we are looking for or the answers we desire.

Tim Keller, the former pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York,
wrote, **"God will either give us what we ask for prayer or give us what we would have asked
for if we know everything God knows."**

When we don't get the answer we want do we
turn away or do we continue to seek God with all of our hearts?

We must pray or we will most certainly lose heart.

Then the last verse for this morning found in Luke 18:8.

I want us to focus on the last sentence.

**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?"**

Is this a parable about how to pray,
or is it about living the life of a disciple?

Well, yes! Both, of course.

Praying is doing, and doing is praying.

The woman in the story was praying as she
stood vigil at the judge's door.

She was praying as she pleaded for justice.

She was praying so persistently that she became a nuisance,
to the point where even someone who cared for
neither God nor human beings finally
caved and gave her what she clamored for.

Em Bounds said **Persistent prayer is a mighty move of the soul toward God. It is a stirring of
the deepest forces of the soul toward the throne of heavenly grace. It is the ability to hold,
press on, and wait.**

When we're told to be persistent in prayer,
it means moving our feet.

It means knocking on doors.
It means advocating for justice.
And don't lose heart.
Don't give up when it doesn't seem to bring the desired change.
Because part of the change is in us,
as we are shaping our hearts into the mold of his heart.
Pray my friend.
Don't give up, don't lose heart.
Find your faith.
Pray and cling to the Father.
Be persistent in your prayer and in your faith.