

Sermon – Year C, Proper 24
Jeremiah 31.27-34 or Genesis 32.22-31; Psalm 119.97-104 or Psalm 121; 2 Timothy
3.14-4.5 and Luke 18: 1-8
The Widow and the unjust judge

Jesus is certainly a great storyteller, isn't he? He is even more well-known in the non-Christian world than Aesop and his fables. The stories that Jesus tells, much like Aesop's fables, with their ethical and moral implications, are known as parables.

According to the website Wikipedia, A **parable** is a brief, succinct story that illustrates a moral or religious lesson. It differs from a fable in that fables use animals, plants, inanimate objects, and forces of nature as characters, while parables generally feature human characters. It is a type of analogy. The word "parable" comes from the Greek "*παραβολή*" (*parabolē*), the name given by Greek rhetoricians to any fictional illustration in the form of a brief narrative. Later it came to mean a fictitious narrative, generally referring to something that might naturally occur, by which spiritual and moral matters might be conveyed. A parable, then, is a short tale that illustrates a universal truth, one of the simplest of

narratives. It sketches a setting, describes an action, and shows the results. It often involves a character facing a moral dilemma, or making a questionable decision and then suffering the consequences. A parable is like a metaphor that has been extended to form a brief, coherent fiction.

The **parables of Jesus**, found in [Matthew, Mark and Luke], are a key part of the teachings of Jesus, forming roughly one third of his recorded teachings. Christians place high emphasis on these parables, since being the words of Jesus they are believed to be as what the Father has taught, as indicated in the Gospel of John.

Many of Jesus' parables refer to simple everyday things, such as a woman baking bread (parable of the Leaven), a man knocking on his neighbour's door at night (parable of the Friend at Night), or the aftermath of a roadside mugging (parable of the Good Samaritan); yet they deal with major religious themes, such as the growth of the Kingdom of God, the importance of prayer, and the

meaning of love. The parables of Jesus remain some of the best known stories in the world.

So with that being said how do we wrap our minds around the story of the poor widow and the unjust judge? A line from a political campaign a few years back came to mind, “Nevertheless, she persisted.”

We must pay attention to the first line in Chapter 18 of Luke’s Gospel. “Jesus told the disciples a parable *about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.*” In other words, persist! This is in response to questions posed earlier in the Gospel of Luke from both the Pharisees and the disciples about “when”. When would the kingdom of God come? When will all things be made right?

So Jesus told them a story ... a fictitious story that would perhaps help them understand the reality of the kingdom, the need for persistence in prayer, and the understanding that this

persistence leads to faith and faithful action and that it is when God and humankind merge into this faith that God will answer requests.

It would be easy to think of the “unjust” judge as God and the woman representing the poorest of humankind in this parable. But that was not Jesus’ intent. The intent was not to compare but to contrast the *unjust* judge to the *very* just God. “Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?”

You see, it is in persistence in prayer, that we become altered, and changed into those persons God intends us to be. But it is not simply in repeated Christmas wish list type of praying that gets the response. It is not in telling God exactly what God must do to make us happy that gets the response. It is in the prayer that is two-way communication with God that gets results. We must take the time to listen for God. Listen, very carefully, to what God is trying to tell us. Listen to hear when we are out of synch with God and God’s plan.

“Thy will be done”, the Lord’s Prayer says.

“Thy will be done.”

When we understand that God is *always* speaking to us ... even when we aren’t listening ... or even when we don’t know how to listen ... God is trying to get our attention. God invites us to something beyond ourselves. And in that invitation, our faith strengthens and we see a bigger, broader picture of what God has in mind. It’s like being able to see the difference in the view from our pews here and the view from the top of a mountain.

When God sees that we are seeing the same thing, God will act, and act swiftly in our behalf. When God is certain that we are in accord with God’s will, and now our own personal situations, God will know that our faith has grown to the point where we can finally hear God’s voice; obey God’s commands and work to do God’s will. God will indeed find that “when the Son of Man

comes, he will find faith on earth,” as our Gospel concludes this morning.

I pray that God will lead us as faith-filled people into God’s will for our identity, our being, our privilege and opportunity to show that we are indeed God’s people and the sheep of God’s pasture. That we are here to do the work that God, and not we ourselves, has called us to do. I pray that we hear the call clearly and are able to live into God’s will for not only our lives and for the future of St. Paul’s. God knows what we need in this time of displacement of many in our world and for all disfunction that takes from us our God-given capability to love beyond all measure and for justice in all of its forms to come raining down.

And so, dear ones, persist ... or persevere ... in prayer. It is through this action alone that God’s actions will prevail in this world and that we will grow in faith as Jesus desires for us. It is where we will learn how St. Paul’s is called into being at this time

in history. And as we do, we will become walking, breathing,
living prayer ... just as God has intended.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit. Amen.