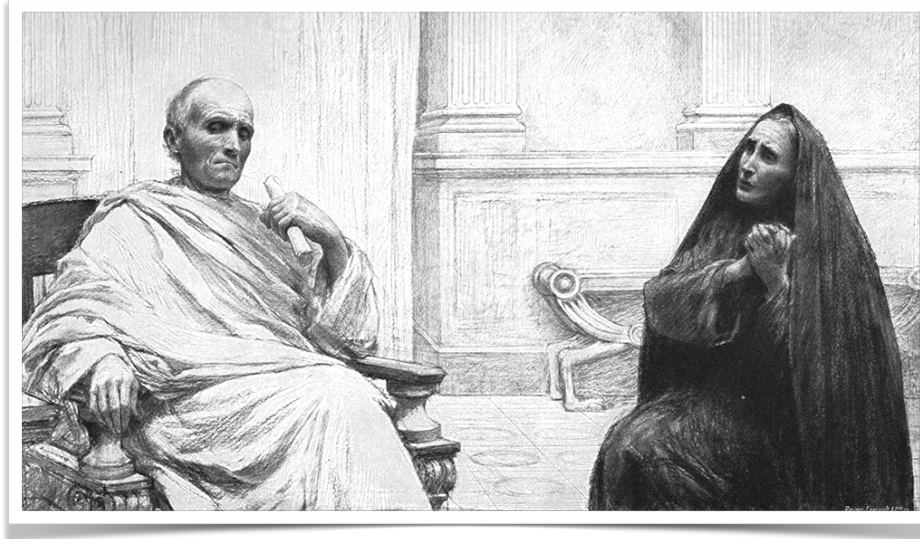


SUNDAY OF THE JUDGE

(LUKE 18:1-8)



This Sunday is dedicated to the idea of prayer, the aim of which is explained in the first lines of the Gospel reading of the day: “And He (Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they “ought always to pray, and not lose heart”.

The judge of the parable (by which the Sunday is named) is another “son of this world”, who “neither feared God nor had regard for man”. The other person in the scene is a widow, the victim of an iniquity, who asks the judge to do her justice. But the judge pays her no attention because he cannot make a profit from her. The widow, however, tirelessly presses her complaints before the judge, who, like the steward of the previous Sunday, was said to be “unjust”. The judge finally renders a decision only to get rid of her and sends her away.

The widow is a symbol of humanity which feels itself very weak in face of passions and other external violence. The human being, therefore, earnestly appeals to God to save him of those forces. Very often God is “long-suffering”, that is, He does not answer our prayers so quickly and in the way we ask him to. But the parable teaches us “not to lose heart”. If a godless and impudent judge finally submits to the supplication of the widow, shall not God, the good and the righteous, hear and “avenge His servants who cry to Him day and night?”

The teaching of this parable is encouraging particularly for those people who are suffering

and for those who are persecuted in their search for justice. But it is not enough to pray just saying: “Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men” (Psalms 140:1). It is necessary to be and remain a “servant” of God. Those who declare themselves in word or deed beyond the laws of God, can not secure His protection; but those who stay in His service and cry: “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth”, may receive an answer, sometimes, such as “rest a little longer”, for God has promised that He will avenge the blood of His servants on their torturers (Revel. 6:10-11, 19:2).

Therefore, beyond the faithful administration of the problems of mammon and life, earnest and perseverant prayer is one of the fundamental conditions by which a person might remain in his Father’s house and in the position he has there regained.

The last line of the parable concludes with the meaning of the Sunday, which is the seeking of justice through prayer. Further, it establishes the essential condition without which prayer could never be serving its goal. That fundamental condition is Faith.

In the meantime, however, the curtain is opened and we face the next Sunday: “Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on earth”?

Sunday of the Judge

Reading Luke 18:1-8

Meditation

We've all had the experience. It might be an uncooperative store clerk or manager who doesn't want to give a refund. It might be a landlord who doesn't give enough heat or make badly needed repairs. We have to demand repeatedly, persist and persevere until we receive satisfaction.

In today's parable, it was an unjust judge. A poor widow had a judgment coming to her, but the judge didn't want to be bothered. Probably he saw no profit for himself in the widow's problem. Imagine how that widow felt having to approach the powerful judge again and again. She was probably frightened. But she persisted and kept asking and asking until finally, he gave her what she wanted just to be rid of her.

We ask things also of God. We do this in prayer. Sometimes prayer doesn't seem to make a difference the first time or even the third or fourth time. The message of the parable is not to give up hope but to be persistent. We might feel afraid because we're like that widow, small and weak, compared to the powerful judge whom she faced, or God to whom we pray. But there is a big difference between that judge and God. We know that God loves us and wants to respond to our hopes and fervent prayers. If that judge finally acknowledged the widow's wish, won't God, who loves us, hear us and be moved?

But we need to have something within us before we can pray to God and hear a response echo in our lives. The people God answers are those *who are listening*. It is faith that makes prayer not just productive but possible at all.

Prayer

*God, it is through prayer that we talk with you.
Through prayer we thank you for what you have given us,
and ask you for more blessings.
Although we may sometimes feel that you are
unapproachable,*

*We know from our faith how much you love us
and want to help us.*

For reflection

At what times do I seem to turn to God in prayer?

What is one way I can be more constant in my prayers?

Did you know . . .

The Sundays of Lent take us through the entire history of humankind, from creation to the glorious second coming. The hymns and Scripture lessons of each day support the meaning of the Lenten journey: that through prayer, repentance and Christian witness, we can draw close to God once again.

A LIVING FAITH Lesson on PERSEVERANCE

Theme: Persistence in Prayer

Object: An item that represents something that you wanted so much that you kept asking your parents again and again.

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8 (RSV or KJV)

Paree Looy!

Have you ever wanted something so much that you kept asking your mom and dad for it over and over again until finally they said "yes?" Maybe you wanted something special, a pet, or a new bicycle. If it was something that you really wanted, you didn't just mention it once, you asked for it over and over again.

Once there was a little boy who wanted more than anything to play in the band at school. The boy went home from school one day and asked his parents if they would buy him an instrument and let him sign up to play in the band. Well, the boy's parents didn't say yes, and they didn't say no. They said, "We'll have to think about it. After all, a musical instrument costs a lot of money and we aren't sure you will stick with it."

A few days went by and the boy's parents still hadn't said anything, so the boy decided he should ask again. The boy's parents didn't say yes and they didn't say no. They said, "We are still thinking about it."

On his way home from school the next day, the boy decided to stop by the local music store to check out the musical instruments. When he walked in the store, the first thing that caught his eye was a beautiful, shiny trumpet. It wasn't new, but it was in very good condition and it had a really cool fake alligator skin case. It was just what he wanted.

That night at supper the boy said to his parents, "I went by the music store today after school and they have a really nice used trumpet. It is exactly what I want and it only costs \$100."

The boy's father turned to his wife and said, "I guess we had better go take a look at that trumpet or we are never going to hear the end of this." The next day, the boy went to the music store with his parents and they bought him that trumpet.

The boy joined the band -- and he did stick with it. He played in the band all through high school and when he graduated from high school, he went on to college and studied music. After graduating from college, he became a music teacher and a great musician. I wonder how differently his life might have turned out if he had asked his parents for that musical instrument one time and never mentioned it again.

The Bible teaches us that just as our parents want what is best for us and will give us what we ask for, God, our Heavenly Father, also hears and answers our requests. Sometimes we ask God for something one time and never mention it again. Maybe that is our impatience showing. When we ask for something, we want God to say "yes," and we want Him to say it right now! Our Lord Jesus said that we should always **persevere** in our prayers and not give up. Perhaps God just wants us to show that we are really serious about what we are asking of Him. Does this mean that if we keep asking for something over and over again that God will always give it to us? No, but He loves us and wants what is best for us, and He will answer, "yes" if He knows that's good for us.

Dear God, teach us to pray - and teach us to be patient, **persevere**, and be persistent in prayer. If we desire good things, remind us that we need to pray and pray again. Amen.



Great Lent

Great Lent (Medz Bahk) commemorates the time when Jesus went into the wilderness. While he was there, he did not eat or drink. He was tempted by the devil to turn away from his mission. But Jesus did not. After 40 days, the angels came to Jesus and cared for him.

Just as Jesus used his time in the wilderness to prepare for his mission, we use Lent to prepare ourselves for Jesus. The church helps us do this

through Bible readings, practices, and services that help us think about our relationship with God and how we can improve it.

Here is a chart of the Easter Cycle from Poon Paregentan through Easter. Great Lent starts the Monday after Poon Paregentan and ends the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Study the chart to see how we progress and prepare ourselves for Jesus.

