

Sermon on **Luke 18:1-8** for the 19th Sunday After Pentecost
St. Paul's Lutheran – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

How are you at waiting? How long are you willing to wait in a drive thru line at a fast food restaurant? We are blessed with a few drive thru-s in this town. How patient are you? Maybe you've done what I've done and you get in line, but it is long and you are creeping along. I can't stand it and drive off in search of something quicker. And this is a relatively unimportant thing. Not many of us are good at waiting. We drive off, or if we can't we stress and struggle as we wait for test results, wait to see if we have a gene that will show a propensity for cancers, wait to see if the doc can hear a heartbeat, wait for a loved one to step off the plane, wait on God to answer my prayer, my plea. It is this last one that gives us great trouble sometimes. We might expect injustice or delays from sinful human beings, but sometimes it seems like God is not answering, can't hear, maybe won't hear because of our sin, or simply is taking his time. Do we just drive off? With a pointed parable, Jesus shows you God has given you every reason to always:

Trust God. Pray and Don't Give Up.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary." "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 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? 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?"

Jesus taught his disciples with a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning that usually centers around one main focus or take-away. Jesus gives often impatient disciples a light-bulb moment.

Jesus had just revealed that the last days will be difficult. Jesus would be gone from their eyes for a time. We'll long for Jesus' coming on the Last Day. As we wait, we'll have difficulties, rejection, and crosses to bear. With what they faced they might want to doubt or despair, and drive off, but Jesus teaches them to **Trust God. Pray and Don't Give Up.**

Jesus' highlights two characters - an unjust judge whose most known characteristics are that he's awful: 1) He doesn't care about God, 2) He doesn't care what people think. This is a deadly combination. Nothing is there to keep him in line. The man has no shame, only serves self. He's the worst. The other is a widow in tough straights, being taken advantage of, and who could not get justice against her adversary. The judge wouldn't act, wouldn't act, wouldn't act, seemed like he'd never hear her case or do anything about it. She was only a bother to him. Yet with no one to help, and a judge who didn't want to help, she kept pleading her case, pleading her case, pleading her case to this unjust judge. She didn't give up. He did not care at all for her, but true to a parable, we get to hear the judge's self-centered heart. He grants her justice only to keep from being worn out and bothered as though he'd be given a punch to the face. This judge cared nothing for this poor no-one-to-help-her woman, yet granted her justice.

Jesus says, *"Listen to what the unjust judge says."* He wants you to see that in this sinful world, even for all the wrong reasons, this lonely widow got justice. She was a nobody. She was hopeless. The judge was awful. Yet, she didn't give up. Jesus brings us to the point and as he does so he calls us out and gives us tremendous comfort to **Trust God. Pray and Don't Give Up.**

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? Jesus expects an answer, and will answer it himself, but he is calling us out here. I asked you earlier about waiting. What does waiting do to you? Does it strengthen your resolve to wait longer

and be more persistent? Or do you gauge the one you're waiting on and determine whether you should give up or wait? You ever driven off without ordering your food? I have. What about with God?

Does your prayer life resemble a consumer who is antsy and fed-up with waiting and you give up and drive away? Jesus teaches us to **Pray and Don't give up**. The Bible says, *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Too often I doubt when I don't see my prayer answered in the moment. We sometimes train ourselves to not pray. We take for granted the meal we eat and forget to pray. Maybe we assume our children know God is most important to us and we fail to lead them in prayer before bed or during the day. And "I didn't grow up that way" can't be our excuse.

My prayer life often becomes more fervent and faithful the more desperate my situation, the more guilty my conscience, the more desirous I am for a certain specific outcome. Am I just a selfish consumer before God? Praying to get, but quickly disregarding regular prayer when I have what I want, or forgetting Him when God doesn't give it as fast as I want it – putting the car in drive and rolling off looking for something else to fill the void. What are we saying about God? He has commanded us to pray, yet sometimes we don't, or we half-heartedly offer up something God. The question he closes with is one we need to hear lest we drive off from Jesus, *"When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"* We need this Word of God today. We need to know Him! He answers his own question.

Jesus said, *"I tell you, he (God) will see that they get justice, and quickly."* Who is it you pray to? God invites and commands you to pray. He says, *"Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be open to you."* He listens to every word you speak. Don't use his name in vain. Use his name to pray – bringing your requests for others, for yourselves as you work, play, think, requests for his church and the Gospel. He hears you. He knows what is best. He puts a plan in motion, as he promises, to give you justice, and *quickly*. God's *quickly* is the perfect *quickly*. It's the right time, the right measure, just what we need and more. He's on it. And he loves you to be persistent, to keep asking, to trust that he hears you. Remind him of his promises.

When Mary, Jesus' mother, understood that she would bear the Savior of the world, she said *"He (God) has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors"* (Luke 1:54-55). God always remembers his promises and is faithful even when we are faithless. God never drove off on you. God's love for you is perfect. We read in God's Word, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Jesus lived perfectly for you, prayed to our Father perfectly for you. Jesus came and died for us his enemies, us, to pay the penalty of our ingratitude, our impatience, our doubt and faithlessness, so we can come together to confess our sins, and receive his forgiveness won for us on the cross, so we can pray to him as a church, as individuals, and know with full confidence that he hears us, so that even while he calls us out, he comforts us to know he is still standing right there waiting to hear us and grant us all we ask according to his will. Put the car in park and go inside. He's waiting at a table to hear you and provide you with everything you need. He hears you. Jesus died and rose physically from the grave. He knows how to grant your requests too.

Trust God. Pray and Don't Give Up. This is a parable of opposites. The unjust judge who cares neither for God nor man and only serves self is the exact opposite of our God who cared enough about you that he sent his own Son, God in the flesh, to suffer and die for your ransom, your forgiveness, to grant you eternal life. He loves you, loves to hear from you – prayers of petition and praise. The poor helpless widow is the opposite of who you are. You are God's chosen child, a blood bought heir to everything, elected before the creation of the world to be his own. You have everything you need in him. He will hear you and act for you day and night.

Knowing who it is you pray to, make every effort to put this into practice in your life. Sit down with God, with his Word, and pray. Pray before your meals. Pray before you go to bed. Pray out loud with your children. And if you doubt what to pray – Jesus taught us a perfect prayer – the Lord's Prayer. Just talk to him. He loves you. He will answer you. **Pray**, dearly loved child of God, and **Don't Give Up**. He won't give up on you. Amen.