

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
October 16, 2016
St. Luke 8:1-8
Real Courage Keeps Seeking Justice from God
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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

We may indicate elements of our prayer lives as God's "chosen ones" with three Ps; place, people, and positions. We pray at home, in church, and during the day most likely to ourselves at work and in school. We pray for family members, fellow believers, our leaders, and even our enemies. We pray with hands folded, heads bowed, even on our knees in humble submission.

Jesus reminds us with his parable of the persistent widow of that fourth P, persistence. We are to keep praying, and not give up in faintness of heart or cowardice of spirit. St. Luke is very clear and direct about this parable's meaning. "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

We used to call this the parable of the unjust judge. It is better now that we call it the parable of the persistent widow. Her courage that kept seeking justice is the focal point. That leads to our theme, **Real Courage Keeps Seeking Justice from God**. God will bring about justice to his chosen ones. God will see to it that we have faith to pray.

Who hasn't given up in frustration when our requests are ignored over a period of time? The widow did not give up. She had the challenge of dealing with a judge who repeatedly refused to adjudicate her case against her adversary. This judge did not fear God or care what people thought about him. Finally, this poor excuse for a public servant did give in. He gave in only because he did not want her to bother him anymore, and was afraid she would bring charges against him.

The widow showed real courage that kept seeking justice. Do you show such courage of faith and keep coming to God for with your prayer requests? The apostle Paul exhorts us, "Pray continually." [1 Thessalonians 5:17]. James wrote, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." [5:16] It is proper to keep coming to God with our prayers and never give up; even if the Lord does not respond the first time.

Sometimes God answers our requests for daily bread, for relief from pain and sorrow, for justice against our adversaries right away. Why does God at other times wait? God does not wait because he is like the judge who doesn't care. God waits to teach us patience. He waits to encourage persistence. He waits to look for insistence in our faith.

These lessons learned enable us to come to God as he commands us to come. These lessons prevent us from becoming spoiled, and demanding in the wrong way. When God does answer our prayers it is not because he has grown weary with us. These lessons of patience and persistence prevent us from wrongly charging God with not caring, sadly as some wrongly accuse him. God gives us our needs and justice when he knows it is the right time to open his hand and satisfy our desires.

God will bring justice to his chosen ones. He will never grow weary of us as we keep coming and coming to him in prayer for material and spiritual blessings. This is especially true as we pray for the forgiveness of our many sins. "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more," Paul wrote to the Romans. [5:20]

That forgiveness increases our faith. Faith is not just the source of our persistence in prayer. Faith is also our persistence to receive the Lord's answers to our prayers in his time and accept his will. Faith really is courage. It is real courage that keeps seeking justice from God. God will see to it that we have faith to pray.

Jesus promised us justice. "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?" Our Savior promised that his Father will hear and

answer our prayers of faith. He also promises in this last verse that he will keep us in faith. We understand Jesus' question to expect a "yes" answer. The Son of Man will find faith on the earth when he returns. Why? Because through the gospel in Word and sacrament he will keep his chosen ones connected to him. God will see to that our faith continues and preserves us to the end.

God has chosen us in Jesus Christ. We are his "chosen ones." As God's own, our faith is our courage to seek justice from God. It is our courage that God will hear our case and render a just verdict. It is our courage to continually seek his justice. That justice punished Christ and our Savior satisfied it. It is God's verdict that our sins are forgiven and that we go to heaven even though we are still sinners. We rely on that justice when we die to hear God say, come and inherit the eternal kingdom prepared for you before the creation of the world.

Faintness of heart and cowardice of spirit try to overcome us when seemingly, and I stress seemingly, God is putting us off. It is sinful human nature to give up easily, especially if we are not getting our way. Our hearts might make horrific accusations against God, that he is like that judge of the parable, unjust and uncaring. Or, we hope that if we keep repeating prayers with the same words over and over without thinking about what they mean that God will grow weary of us and finally answer just to get rid of us. For those sins, forgive us, dear Lord, for Jesus' sake.

How often are we to bring that request to the Father? Over and over again. How often are we to take it to the Lord in prayer whatever it may be? Constantly. What if it seems God is neither listening or answering? Keep coming, be patient, persistent and insistent. Why did Jesus tell this parable? Listen again to St. Luke. "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."

Continual prayer that is powerful and effective when offered to the throne of grace by the righteous person is not an exercise in futility. It is real courage that keeps seeking justice from God and keeps receiving it. Amen. <SDG>