

Luke 18:1-8
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
October 19, 2025

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Almost *unique* to this morning’s parable is the way that St Luke introduces it. So often, we hear parables introduced very simply: “And Jesus told them a parable.” Or “And he told them this story.” Or, “He said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like.’” But, on this occasion, Luke does something he has not done, for example, in all those parables of the last four chapters. (Remember how we’ve heard so many parables in the last two months?) Here he does something unique: Luke states *up front* the reason for the parable— “Jesus told them a parable **to the effect that they ought always pray and never give up**” – he states that reason *up front* as if Luke knows his hearers would otherwise be prone to misinterpret the parable and want to assign it a different meaning. (That’s not *Jesus’* fault in how he gives the parable, that’s *our* fault in how we *interpret* the parable.) So Luke interprets the parable for us *ahead* of time so that we may hear it rightly and take comfort in it.

... because, otherwise, what are we sinners apt to do but hear, “Oh, here is this unrighteous judge... and how much ought we *compare* him to God!... for God never seems to care about man or answer man’s prayer, just like this judge in this parable doesn’t care about this poor widow. This poor widow comes to him repeatedly, and he doesn’t listen to her. He sees her as a nag, as whining before him, as unworthy of his time... and, boy, that’s how I seem to lose out before God all the time! He calls me to pray; but He never seems to hear or answer my prayer.”

Isn’t that how we sinners would be quick to interpret the parable (and perhaps even our daily life) if Luke didn’t step in and say, “No. that’s not your daily life, and that’s not how you are to hear this parable. Jesus told this parable so that you ought always pray and not lose heart. For, will the Father not hear his *elect*?” Note that word: “elect.”

In other words, it’s as if Jesus is telling this parable to say, “As wrong as it would be to compare *God* to the judge, it would be *equally* wrong to compare *yourself* to the widow!” How so?

On the one hand, like the widow, we have nothing about us to contribute to the economy of salvation. That’s not why the word “elect” is used. Recall, last week we heard about Naomi – whose husband and two sons died; and she told her daughters-in-law, “Go back to your people. What have I, to give you reason for hope?” Yes,

destitute – that is the lot of us Lazaruses, us poor, miserable beggars. In that way, much like the widow.

But Jesus does not compare us to the widow. He calls us ‘the elect’... not as the *means of our salvation*, but as the *certainty* of God’s remembrance of His dear children. The widow was not the *chosen* of the unrighteous judge; but God *loved* us and *chose* to save us in Christ Jesus. So, a widow may be forgotten by society, but the children of God will never be forgotten by their heavenly Father. We *are* Lazarus – known *by name*... and the Lord will never forget nor forsake those he knows by name. They are *always* safe in clinging to their baptism: not ‘widows of society,’ but ‘children of the household’... so that Ruth could confidently say, “Your God shall be my God.” Yes, Naomi, do not be ashamed of your God, as if he has left you, when the whole reason you were returning to Bethlehem in the first place was because of the news God had remembered and provided for and benefited His people!

Yet, we are so apt, so quick, to doubt. Even if we recognize we are no mere widow, but are the children of God and those He has chosen to save by His Christ, we still in our doubt convince ourselves to compare *the Lord* to the parable’s unrighteous judge.

This interpretation should be dismissed immediately, because the unrighteous judge is said to “not fear God.” How would God contradict and not honor himself?! *This* judge “neither feared God nor respected man.” The complete *opposite* of the Creator of

Man and Judge of the earth. Jesus is not *comparing* the parable's judge with the true Judge; He is *contrasting* them! If even this unrighteous, scornful, slothful judge will *eventually* listen to the poorest of the poor, miserable sinners; how much *more*, how much more *quickly* will the righteous Judge answer those whom He loves? Yes, what comfort: you are not those He *loathes*, but those He *loves*. Will He not answer speedily? He will not leave you as a widow, for the Son has become your husband! He will not leave you as an orphan, for He has adopted you as His own child. Will he now not *answer* you?

How does Jesus rhetorically ask it?: "And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?" [That's an interesting description; His elect are known by crying to him day and night. Doesn't that imply that ours is to be a life of prayer? Let *that* hit home. God grant that Jesus' words sink deep into our hearts and move us to pray.] And yet, such an *admonition* is not his goal here, but his words are rhetorical *comfort* that leads us to pray in *confidence*, not by *compulsion*. Comfort for those who believe their distress is not *known* by, their cries are not *heard* by, their God:

"Will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily."

Would you describe the Lord's deliverance as coming *speedily*?

Probably not. The apostle even knows that we would rather count it

as 'slow' when he says, "The Lord is not slow as some count slowness." That's *one* answer to calm frustrated hearts. *Another* may be this: Do we consider God's answers as slow because we expect them the way we want them, rather than the way He has given them? Do we expect Him to work according to *our* word rather than His Word?

Next Sunday, will we not hear him say, "Remain in My Word... and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The truth delivers us from our fears, from our fretting, from our frustrations, as it conforms our will to God's and proclaims to us the completed mission of His Christ, the fruits of Christ's labors, and the trustworthiness of His promises. *That* sets us free to live with confidence... confidence that He will speedily, suddenly come "like a thief in the night." You know what that phrase Biblically points to; it points to the final day... which is where *Jesus* points at the conclusion of our text: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

That's a stunning conclusion to Jesus' explanation. It's as if he says, "It's not God's faithfulness that is uncertain; it's *your* faithfulness that is uncertain."

So often we think it's God's faithfulness that ought be questioned... judged, of course, by my expectations. "I've lived all these years and prayed all my days, and it doesn't seem God is answering as *I* want. He is *slow* in answering. He is *unfaithful* in

answering. His ways are not *just* – that unrighteous judge!” And we think the “Gospel answer” is for God to show us proof that He really is faithful and will promise to do better in meeting our expectations. But the real answer to that complaint is to hear Jesus use a bit of tough love: “Will the Son of Man find faith on earth?” ‘It’s not *God’s* faithfulness that is in doubt. It’s *your* faithfulness that is in doubt.’

At one place in the Scriptures God even says to His grumbling people, “Are my ways not just? It is your ways that are not just!” God is just. God is righteous. God remains faithful, for (as we heard in the epistle to Timothy last week), “He cannot deny himself.” God’s faithfulness to His plans is certain, so that you can say, “He will vindicate me. He will avenge me.”

We often think of *that* as the end of our earthly life, “He will guard and protect me and these 80 years will end all too quickly and suddenly, speedily he will deliver me out of this valley of sorrows and bring me home (or, as in the parable from a few weeks ago) bring me to Abraham’s bosom.”

But, is it just our *individual* end to this life to which Jesus refers here in our text? No – “*When the Son of Man comes*, will he find faith on the earth?” The vindication that is ours, the vengeance that is his (and he graciously shares with us) over sin, death and the grave, the final deliverance is “when the Son of Man comes.” *That* is our future hope. The cross is done. The salvation is won. The forgiveness of sins is ours. What we *hope* for is when the Son of Man

comes. That is the ultimate answer to our prayers, and regarding it we easily begin to doubt.

And to reassure our doubting heart that He is not slow or unfaithful regarding that promise of the End, He speedily comes each week to serve and care for His people, those He knows by name, the Lazaruses.. poor, miserable beggars that we are, yet He knows us by name... the name of our baptismal adoption... and He answers our current need speedily.

And that's not just answering our prayers for 'daily bread,' (which he does); it's not just answering our prayers for new temporal health (which he does); it's not even just about answering our prayer 'forgive us our sins' (which he does). It's about Him answering speedily your worry about whether you will be called from the grave; He comes and reassures us we *will* be called from the grave, when He will bring vindication and justice to the faithful, vengeance upon the wicked.

That's the season of the church year we're now entering, isn't it? Isn't next week (Reformation) about His care for the Church militant through His trustworthy Word that will remain forever? Is the week after (All Saints) not about the promise being realized that He brings his faithful out of the great tribulation and into eternal rest? Is not the *month to come* all about looking forward to that great day – that Last Day – when He will speedily arrive to

undeniable sight and vindicate His Church as He reveals Himself
Judge of both the living and the dead...

...*not* the unrighteous judge, but the righteous judge, the judge who is our flesh-and-blood brother, who endured all for us, who now *advocates* for us, who hears our prayer and responds speedily by gathering us together to give us a first-taste of the resurrection and the life of the world to come, precisely by giving us a taste of his own body and his own blood – the firstfruits of that inheritance that awaits us. Every time He gathers us together, He says, “You *need* this sustenance; you *need* this strength; you *need* immediate reassurance that you will not be forgotten in this old, fallen world. So, ‘take, eat. This is *my* body – my crucified and resurrected body; my ‘firstfruits of the resurrection’ body... take, drink, this is my blood shed upon the cross for you, that I may now pour out to you the *lifeblood* of the resurrection.”

So, He the firstfruits of the resurrection gives us a taste of himself, that we might remain confident in our preparation to be the secondfruits of that resurrection. The body and blood of our Lord – the tangible divine gift of the Sacrament – is our weekly vindication, by which we can wait patiently, our very bodies and souls strengthened for daily life in faithful patience for our final vindication to come.

He *will not* forget this; He *cannot* forget this... for (if you will) He was the first to be vindicated; for in the same body and blood

with which we struggle and suffer and know our afflictions, in that same body and blood He laid down His life in death, when the whole world mocked and jeered His suffering... and He descended into Hell to proclaim to the devil himself the fulfillment and vindication of God's promise from Eden, and after three days He rose again and destroyed death in His victory and thus vindicated *Himself* and all who hope in *Him*.

Thus, we have reason to live every day of life with confidence in our God, who is not some unrighteous and indifferent judge, but who is the just, righteous, and merciful Judge... Who responds *speedily* to the needs of his elect... so that we can pray boldly not just as if God cares only for the needs of *eternal* life, but also cares for the needs of daily life. And yet, doubt it not: we sinners may pray not *just* for the needs of *daily* life, but we may *even* boldly appeal for our final deliverance into *eternal* life. Sound too good to be true? Doubt it not: that when the Son of Man comes again, He would find not just a smoldering wick of faith upon the earth, but the bold, burning confidence of those whom He has raised from the grave and who now see with their own two eyes the joy of their full flesh-and-blood inheritance.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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