

## Scripture Reading:

**Luke 18:1-8** “Then [Jesus] spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

# *"Being Persistent in Prayer"*

In this morning's text we come to another parable told by our Lord, and again we should remember the context: Jesus has turned to His Disciples after the Pharisees asked when His Kingdom would come. Jesus told these Pharisees “The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘see here’ or ‘see there’! For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” Jesus then turned to His disciples to teach them three important lessons:

- They must focus on the Kingdom of God
- They must be persistent in prayer
- They must remember to be humble

This week we come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson that Jesus gave regarding His Kingdom:

- We are to be persistent in prayer...
- This is THE lesson we are to learn from this parable!
- We are not to think that God is like the unjust judge nor to think of ourselves as nagging widows!

Those would be the wrong lessons to learn: Jesus gives a simple parable telling them right up front what is the right lesson to learn: “Then [Jesus] spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart”

Paul gives this challenge to the Saints at Thessalonica saying: “Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

- We can better learn how to obey this great command to pray without ceasing by hearing the parable that Jesus gives:

We are quickly introduced to two characters: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.'" Neither is put in a good light: Since the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is fear of the Lord and the chief responsibility of a judge is to uphold the rights of men, he is rightly called the unjust judge. The woman seems a little pushy but appears to have a just cause in asking the judge to help her against her adversary: We are not given details, and thus they are not important.

4 "And he would not [help the widow] for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

He is willing to act, NOT because she brings a convincing case but because she continually comes: At bottom this is a very selfish act on the part of this judge!

" 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily."

- Jesus has told us why he gave this parable: "that men always ought to pray and not lose heart!"

**BUT** we need to remember this is a lesson in contrasts:

- Jesus is NOT the unjust judge
- Our prayers are not me-me-me!

Jesus does not want us to put that picture of the new Lexus on the refrigerator and pray until we get it! Jesus does not want our prayers to be a long list of what "I" need! We are to be praying for the advancement of God's Kingdom: And persistent prayer toward that end will insure that we do NOT lose heart as God advances the Kingdom – According to His eternal plan –

As Peter reminds the Saints in His final letter: II Peter 3:1 "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle ...that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, 3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? ... 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

When Paul tells the Ephesians to gear up for our battles against spiritual hosts in high places he concludes by sayings, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”

We are to be serious about the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom with faithful prayers, with passionate prayers and with powerful prayers. We can look to the Scriptures for examples & instruction if we struggle in our prayers...

Listen to how Paul faithfully prays for the Saints at Ephesus... As we listen to the heart of Paul, ask yourself if we are praying for the Saints here at Church of the King or Christ Covenant in Menlo Park or our brothers and sisters at Reformation Covenant Church in this way on a regular basis...

“15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:15-23

We also have many examples of prayers in the Old Testament to look to and great examples of praying without ceasing... Think of Nehemiah or better yet, make this your homework... Underline all the references to his prayers!

But when we think of passionate prayers we must turn to Daniel chapter nine as he turns to God in prayer realizing that the seventy years of their captivity in Babylon was coming to a close as the Prophet Jeremiah had promised...

“4 And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, 5 we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. 6 Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day--to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness

which they have committed against You. 8 "O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. 10 We have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. 11 Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. 12 And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before Jehovah our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for Jehovah our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day--we have sinned, we have done wickedly! 16 "O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us. 17 Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

➤ IF we prayed like that, perhaps we might have angels dropping by or the building shaking as well!

➤ Seriously, we should pray like Daniel, not for affects here and now, but again for the advancement of God's Kingdom!

Finally, we need to lift up before God powerful prayers... Yes those imprecatory prayers that call upon God to exercise His judgment on His enemies: We have many examples of these in the Psalms. Consider how the early Saints used them when praying after Peter and John had been arrested and commanded them to NOT speak nor teach the name of Jesus!:

"24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said [quoting directly from Psalm

**2]: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.'" Acts 4:24-31**

- **These Saints prayed boldly for the judgment of God to come upon the enemies of the Church!**

**They prayed against enemies like King Herod who killed James the brother of Jesus and Saul of Tarsus who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen and greatly persecuted the Church.**

- **And more importantly we see God answering these prayers as Jesus promised in the lesson this morning!**

**King Herod was struck dead suddenly, eaten by worms in the midst of his pride**

**Saul of Tarsus was struck down on the road to Damascus to be reborn as Paul the Apostle who would carry the Good News to the Gentiles!**

**We must also remember that this small band of believers prayed against the leaders of Israel and the Governor of Rome...**

- **Just a few centuries later Jerusalem would lay in ruins and Rome would have fallen, but God's Saints were still praying for the advancement of the Kingdom of God!**

**These are BOLD answers to BOLD prayers and this exactly the type of prayers that Jesus wants His disciples – That would be us – to be lifting up to the throne of heaven where God sits waiting to answer.**

**This is why Jesus ends this parable & lesson with a probing question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"**

**This should take us back again to that Gentile Centurion in whom Jesus found great faith: Luke 7:7**

**“Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"”**

**This is the great faith Jesus will be looking for at His coming and all the years until that Great Day: Saints who are praying and believing, ‘Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!’**

**Faithful people who are consistent and persistent in their prayers knowing, in faith, that God will avenge His own elect speedily just as Jesus promised!**

#### **Communion Meditation:**

***Revelation 2:8* "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,' These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.' "**