

October 23, 2010
Pentecost 22

"Cheer Up, Christian, the Lord Hears Your Cries for Justice"

LUKE 18:1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ 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? ⁸ 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?"

Beneath the O'Hare Airport in Chicago is a long tunnel that connects two terminals. As you walk through this tunnel on a moving walkway, there is music and lights to keep you entertained. There is also a voice that keeps saying to you, "Keep walking. Keep walking. Keep walking."

In the words just read to you our Lord Jesus tells Christians of every age to "keep praying, keep praying, keep praying" as they walk through this life. He tells the story of a widow pleading with an unfair judge to illustrate how eager our heavenly Father is to hear our prayers.

Do we need to be encouraged to pray more? Are you satisfied with your prayer life the way it is right now? I know from my personal experience that there is so much more that I could be doing when it comes to my prayers. I believe it was Martin Luther who said that he had so much work facing him one day that he would need to devote at least three hours to prayer. Today we want to speak to you on this theme, "Cheer Up, Christian the Lord Hears Your Cries for Justice." Jesus tells a story to encourage us to pray

Once again we are impressed with the story or parable Jesus tells to help us not give up in praying. "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men." I can relate to that. We have judges like that today. They do not care about God or his commandments or natural law. All they care about is their own agenda and their own views on life.

There was also a widow in the land who needed this judge to defend her against someone who was taking advantage of her. "And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" Do people ever take advantage of widows today? Sure they do. Here is a widow who is ripped off by some contractor or salesman and she finds herself in court pleading to a judge for justice.

When tragedies come, it is not uncommon for people to think God is their enemy who

is cheating them out of life just as this widow was treated unfairly by her enemy. Last Friday, a son called his mother to let her know that he was going to go body boarding off the coast of California near Vandenberg Air Force Base. He had never been in swells that were coming in at eight and ten feet. She suggested that he take in the beauty of the waves and not try to body board that day. How unfair it seems that the life of her son was taken away from her by a great white shark. So it is whenever a child is taken from us in death. So it is when we lose our jobs. So it is when a debilitating illness comes to us and we lose our quality of life. So it is when the rich get rich and poor get poorer. Listen to the cry of the psalmist in Psalm 73, "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong." So it is when a self serving judge refuses to hear the case of a widow who is being unfairly treated by her enemy.

The widow is relentless in her pursuit of justice. She will not leave the judge alone. "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" Remember when you bought a new car and a year later, the transmission started giving you trouble. You went to the car company and told them you wanted them to fix the car. They told you, "It is no longer under warranty." You would not take "No" for an answer. You wrote a letter to the company. At first they ignored you. Then you called them on the phone and wrote them another letter and another letter, and finally they decided to fix the transmission in your car. I don't have that relentless tenacity, but my wife does, and I love her for it.

Picture yourself lying on the couch on Sunday afternoon. As soon as you start dosing off to sleep, a fly lands on your nose and starts crawling around. You swat at it. It flies away. Then it lands on your cheek, and then your forehead. The widow was there when this judge went to work. She was there when he ate his lunch. She followed him home and kept pleading for justice, until he finally gives in and offers to help her.

Our Lord Jesus is such a good story teller. He wants us to realize that our heavenly Father is not like that unfair judge who finally gives in and helps the widow with her problems. Our Father in heaven is eager to hear our prayers. It was Jesus who said in Matthew 7, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Then Jesus went on to say, "If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him."

Jesus applies this lesson about prayer

Here now is how Jesus applies this lesson about prayer. "And will not God bring about justice for us his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting us off? I tell you that they will get justice, and quickly."

Our God who hears our prayers is a God of justice. By his very nature as a perfect and holy God he must judge people by his own standard of justice and holiness. Romans 2, says, "Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth." When God says, "You shall not murder" he includes the sin of hurting people and

failing to love them as we should. We never measure up to what God expects of us. On judgment day God system of justice will be upheld when he condemns people for falling short of his glory. Romans 3 says, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."

In Jesus, a holy and perfect God satisfies his own system of justice. Our Father had Jesus his Son wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The punishment for our peace was placed on him. 2 Corinthians 5 says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Then it goes on to say, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

One of my favorite stories illustrating how God maintains his justice and but still saves us happened in New York City when La Guardia, the popular mayor, served as a judge. The story goes that a man was brought to his courtroom for stealing bread to feed his hungry children. He was obviously guilty, caught in the act and a policeman was there to testify to what he had seen. LaGuardia said, "The law must be upheld. The punishment for stealing is 30 days in jail or a ten dollar fine. Then in compassion for the man and his hungry children, LaGuardia reached into his pocket and provided the ten dollars to pay the fine.

From all eternity our heavenly Father saw that no human being could ever pay off the debt of sin, even one small sin. From all eternity God planned to send his Son to pay the ransom price in our place. Listen to these comforting words from 1 Peter 1, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."

From all eternity, God in his justice and mercy decided to have Jesus give his life for you so you could be his dear children. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Think of how hard it was for the mother to hear the tragic news that her son, her son whom she talked to that day, had been killed by a great white shark. God was willing to give up his Son to have him punished in our place. It was God's plan of justice for us. We know the words of John 3:16. This verse is followed by Jesus' words in John 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

Jesus says that our heavenly Father gladly brings about justice for his elect, his chosen ones. This amazing faith you have in Jesus' death and resurrection was planned for you from all eternity. Jesus said in John 15, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Our heavenly Father is committed to hearing our prayers because of the gift of his Son that he planned for us, and the gift of faith that he also planned for us. Now in his infinite love and wisdom, he plans to answer our prayers in the right way and turn everything for our good and his glory. Romans 8 says of this justice, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Then it goes on to say, "What then, shall we say in response to all this, if God is for us who can be against us?"

As walk down the path of life this week, we hear our Savior calling to us, "Keep praying. Keep praying. Keep praying." Cheer up Christian, the Lord is eager to hear your cries for justice and mercy and help. Amen.