

**Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan**  
**The Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost**  
**October 16, 2016**  
**Luke 18:1-8a**

*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 about men. 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 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!'" 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.*

How many times can you hear the word “no” before you want to give up? I suppose it depends upon what you are asking for. Are you asking for a raise? A new job? A better grade? A new phone? A better cable bill? A date? A toy? How many times can you hear the word “no” before you want to give up? Normally, we can only hear the word no so long before we want to give up. It doesn’t matter whether we are asking for a raise, job, better grades, phone, cable bill, date, a toy or something else.

We can only take hearing the word no a certain amount of times before we give up. Do you ever get to this point when asking God for something? Do you pray for something again and again and again and again and again, and the only answer you ever seem to get is no? You ask God to help you get the raise at work, but he doesn’t move your boss’ heart to give it to you? You ask him to help you get a new job, but you don’t get it?

Or maybe you find yourself praying for someone else. Lord, will you please heal my spouse of their disease? Lord, will you please restore my wandering child? Lord, will you please give us honest leaders who are full of integrity? Lord, will you please grant x or y? We have many different things we can pray for, but how do we handle it when God’s answer always seems to be no? Do we become discouraged and stop praying or do we keep coming back to him even when the answer always seems to be no?

Our gospel lesson gives us an answer to our question about prayer and what to do when the answer we get from God always seems to be the word no. **“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”** Jesus knows we don’t like hearing the word no. He understands hearing it again and again is demoralizing for us and after a while when we’ve heard no too many times it makes us want to give up rather than keep asking God for something.

Jesus gets where we are coming from and he uses this parable to help us when we feel like giving 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 about men. 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 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!’”** Jesus tells us a story about a widow woman and her quest for justice. This widow has someone who is attacking her because she appears to be weak and vulnerable.

The widow is vulnerable to attack, but she isn’t weak. She has a strong resolve to try and get justice. She brings her case to a judge in order to get justice. However, this judge isn’t the greatest person to try and get justice from. He doesn’t care about others or what they think about him. He has no love for God or respect for him in his heart. He is the last man you would ever expect to give the widow the help she needs.

There are many strikes against this widow, yet she doesn’t care. She knows she is in the right and nothing (even a crooked and careless judge) is going to stop her fight for justice. The woman’s quest for

justice is impressive. **“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 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 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!’”** The judge finally grants the widow justice. Why? The only reason he granted her justice was because of her persistence. The widow didn’t get justice because she was right or influential. She got justice because the judge got sick of her constant request.

What can we learn from this widow? **“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 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.’”** Jesus tells us this widow teaches us the power of persistent prayer.

The judge in the parable doesn’t care about other people. He only cares about himself and what is best for him. The widow badgers him and pesters him into finally granting her justice. What does this have to do with the power of persistent prayer? Jesus wants us to contrast the unjust judge with God. The unjust judge doesn’t care about other people. He only cares about himself, but he finally grants justice because he is sick of the widow.

How does the unjust judge’s attitude contrast with God’s attitude towards us? **“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.’”** Jesus reminds us the Lord cares about us deeply. He won’t ignore us, but will listen to us and give us what is best for us.

How do we know this? Did you catch what Jesus calls us? He calls us God’s chosen ones aka God’s elect. What does it mean to be one of God’s chosen elect? It means God has chosen us to be his own. He valued us so much that he sent his one and only son into this world to die for us and make us his elect. He has had us in mind for all eternity and he personally knows each one of us because he has chosen us. He knows what we need. He knows our hopes and our fears. He knows what is best for us.

God loves it when his chosen ones bring their prayers to him. He absolutely enjoys it when his elect come to him again and again and again and again with their prayers. Why? The fact we keep coming back to him again and again in prayer indicates our trust in him. It shows we trust God will answer our prayers in the way he thinks is best and it shows our trust in him when we keep coming back to him over and over even though the answer seems to be no.

Why would God make us wait like this? Why would he keep giving us the answer no even if what we are asking for is a good thing in his eyes? Why won’t he heal our loved ones? Or help us get the much needed raise? Why does it feel like he is pushing us to the point of wanting to give up because we’ve

heard no so many times before? Why does he allow himself to appear more like an unjust judge who really doesn't care about us than he does a loving and caring Father in heaven?

**“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.’”** Did you notice what Jesus says about justice? He promises God will grant his elect justice. He won't keep putting them and their prayers off. He will take care of his elect and he will do it quickly.

Why does God sometimes answer good God-pleasing prayers with a no rather than a yes? It has to do with his timetable and what he thinks is best for us. God doesn't operate with the same concept of time which we do. The Bible tells us a thousand years is like a day in his sight. Yet, God's timing is always perfect. He knows what we need and when we need it. We might not understand his reasoning right now and maybe we never will at all, but our lack of understanding doesn't make God's answer wrong.

God's time table and our time table are often different. We think we know what is best, but God really does know what is best for us in our lives. He promises to hear our prayers and he invites us to continue praying to him even when it seems like the answer is no. He wants us to imitate the widow and her persistence because it demonstrates trust in God's promise to hear our prayers and to give us what he knows is best for us.

**“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 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.’”** Lord, please grant us the justice which you promise and give us the patience to trust you will answer our prayers in the manner which is best for us. Amen.