

The title for today's message is: **Persistence in Prayer**

Jesus said: ***When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth***

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

As we begin we see Jesus telling His disciples another parable that they should always pray and not give up.

Here Jesus is training and preparing them for when they would no longer see Him walk the earth but would, instead, have to “watch and pray.”

Jesus was teaching His faithful about faith in Him, and the life of prayer, which flows from such faith.

In the parable, we find a dishonest judge who doesn't fear God or people, and probably has sticky fingers, expecting a bribe.

The person appealing to this judge is an irritating widow. One who keeps showing up in his courtroom day after day, demanding justice.

The judge, however, couldn't care less about justice. Yet, he is tired of this woman's persistent petitions.

So he finally gives in and gives her what she wanted. Hoping she would finally leave him alone.

Okay, so what's the point of this parable you might ask. Well, Jesus points us from the lesser to the greater, another words from the judge to God.

However, God isn't like the judge in the parable. Sure, He too is a judge, but there's a big difference, He's not unrighteous.

God is the righteous Judge whose pronouncements are pure and holy. Okay, again, what's the point?

The point is if the persistent petitions of a widow seeking justice can persuade a dishonest judge, how much more will God work justice?

Finally, we come to the point of the parable, its about being patient and having persistence in prayer that flows from faith in Christ.

John said in chapter 9: ***“God does not listen to sinners.”*** And the writer of the Hebrews chapter 11 said: ***“Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”***

God will only hear the prayers of those who have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, and those washed clean by His blood.

That's why it's pointless to think that an unbeliever can truly pray. True prayer is not an exercise of unbelief; prayer is nothing less than an act of faith.

True prayer is trusting in God's promise that He will hear your prayers and answer you with a yes, or no.

So why do we at times lose heart and fail to pray as we should? Is it our impatience or our lack of faith?

Look, prayer is an exercise in faithful patience. and persisting in the face of difficulty.

Faith is long-suffering and enduring. In the parable, the widow keeps coming back to the judge. She just doesn't give up.

Yet for many of us today we do give up. We often lose patience in our life of prayer. We don't get what we want or we do, but not fast enough.

Our prayers are shallow, sporadic, undisciplined, and anemic. We pray like we often exercise, like me.

We go to the gym lift a few weights, and then decide, “This exercise stuff is for the birds.

But the apostle Paul encourages us in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. He said **“Pray without ceasing.”**

But again we quickly lose interest, thinking, “What’s the point, prayer doesn’t seem to do any good anyway.

Jesus says, “Won’t God grant His chosen people justice when they cry out to Him day and night?” The answer is, “Yes.”

But many have this crazy notion that God is a divine-vending machine. Drop in your quarters for prayer, and out pops the blessing you demand. Not so.

We need to understand that Some problems get better; some don’t, and some just stay the same. That’s what faith is all about.

Look, as children of God, we should pray day after day, week after week for relief from the problems that afflict us.

Because we wrestle with God in prayer. Just like Jacob, we walk with a limp, for we walk by sight and not by faith.

Yet, walking by faith isn’t all that troubling, for when we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in the strength of God. Look at Jesus.

He prayed in Gethsemane for His suffering to be taken away--if there were another way to save you. Yet, He still prayed, **“Not my will O Father but yours be done”**.

He prayed for those who scorned Him: ***“Father, forgive them, because they don’t know what they are doing”***.

Jesus prayed the 22nd Psalm when the Father seemed oblivious to His suffering. He prayed, ***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”***

Jesus prayed in His dying breath, in the deepening darkness, to the seemingly silent Father, ***“Father, into your hands I place my spirit”***.

Jesus prays for the world, for His Church, and for you. He intercedes at the right hand of the Father, reminding Him of His once-for-all Sacrifice.

For only Jesus wrestled with God in your place. And He didn’t lose. Yes, even though He lost His life saving us bringing us into an intimate, divine life with God.

Now if we are to see God’s goodness even in the corrupt character of the judge, who then are we to see in the widow?

She’s doesn’t represent you or me. No, she represents Jesus. Jesus persisted where we failed and faltered.

He pleads for justice in the courtroom of God and wins salvation for you. He has done what God’s justice demands.

And so God the Father always hears His prayers. And through Jesus, in His Spirit, the Father hears our prayers, as well.

After all, we are to pray in “Jesus’ name.” Prayer is not an empty, religious exercise.

Prayer is the voice of faith breathing out. Prayer breathes out what God has breathed in through His Spirit-breathed Word.

Praying is going to your gracious Father, through His Son, in the Holy Spirit. It is the family conversation of God's household.

Where our deepest longings and hopes, our yearning for forgiveness, life, and salvation are placed before our Father, where He hears and answers us.

In our Old Testament reading for today, Jacob rejoiced, ***"I have seen God face to face, and I have been delivered"***.

And where is the face of God for you and me? Jesus told His disciples, ***"The one who has seen me has seen the Father"***.

When you wonder how God can still be patient with you, a sinner, remember today's parable. God will not fail you, because Jesus has not failed you.

Jesus is persistent. Jesus still saves. He still comes to you today, doing just that: persistently and patiently saving you.

Here, in the Divine Service, you see God face to face and are delivered. Here, God comes to you in His Word and Spirit, where He forges your faith ever stronger and stronger.

Here, God shapes and feeds your faith. And here, the faithful people of God are moved toward a life of persistent and patient prayer.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.