**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #30**

**Persistence and Encouragement**

**Luke 11:5-8, 9-13**

**Luke 11:5-8 – The Persistent Friend**

***5*** *And he said unto them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, ‘My friend, lend me three loaves;* ***6*** *for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him’”?*

[***7***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-7.htm) *And he from within shall answer and say, “Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give you anything now.”* ***8*** *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*

**Notes and Studies**

1. If you “have a friend who will come at midnight.” Here we see a scene from Palestinian life of a traveler who arrived at a house of a friend at midnight and obviously was hungry.
2. Notice the reparative use of the Greek word ***Philos*** (friend). It is at the core of the parable where hospitality is a duty.
3. Many NT scholars understood the reference to “three loaves of bread” what is required to give for a hungry person.
4. Midnight was never the best time for asking for aid, let alone for bread.
5. The scene is that of a family living together in the same bedroom where it is either the warmest place in the house or the best cool place in the summer.

**Persistence or shamelessness**

1. “Persistence” here means literally “shamelessness” and importunity for begging at this late hour of the night. But whose shame is it?
2. In Palestine houses are joined, and so a knock on the door at midnight must have been heard by all of the neighbors. The community would think that to refuse even a midnight call is unthinkable.
3. What our Lord is teaching on ***anaideia***, which has been misunderstood, is not persistence of the one who is knocking but the one who is inside the house who can’t face the community because he refused to do what is required and normally accepted. So the focus is on the one who must give “*as many as the caller needs.*”
4. This parable was misunderstood because some read it through the later parable of the unjust Judge who was not kind to the widow (Luke 18:1-8) which deals with another theme. Let’s look at that parable.

**The Parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:1-8**

Luke provided us with the interpretation of the parable before he wrote it. “*Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*” The purpose of the parable is in this one phrase: “Pray and never give up”

1. Some of us pray at some point and then give up. Jesus is addressing in this parable prayers that are often unanswered.

2. The parable is an encouragement to his disciples to be persistent in prayer simply because it is a hard thing to do. When prayers are offered God for healing and sickness remains, persistence is needed. It’s hard to pray when you continually call out for justice and justice is not done.

3. Here, we have two characters, an unjust, judge, and a nagging widow who is treated unjustly. The Judge doesn’t fear God or care about what people think of him. We’re not told if the Judge cares about keeping the law. Some judges, their reputations are sullied by words like corruption, greed, unjust. Was this Judge one of them, we may guess that he was.

4. The Second character is the persistent widow. She is among the vulnerable underdogs who needed help. The fact that she is a widow means she is an “at risk citizen.” Widows were vulnerable in many societies and very often are victims to all kinds of corruption, especially if they had no sons or brothers to defend them. Evidently this woman didn’t have sons or brothers to defend her.

5. This judge didn’t care about this widow. He didn’t believe in God and therefore he wasn’t constrained by the Law who demands defense and protection widows. Furthermore, he had no regard for the judgment of humans.

6. This widow had no son or brother to stand with her in court. She had no money to bribe him. The only weapon in her arsenal was her persistence. She could hound him. She could pester him. She could become a thorn in his flesh. Someone might ask, “Why, then, didn’t the judge throw her out of court?” He had all this power. Surely, he could keep this nagging woman from becoming a big headache. Continually she leaned on the gates of justice, coming to court again and again saying, *“Grant me justice against my adversary*.” The unjust judge ignored her as long as he could stand it. Finally, in a state of exasperation he said to himself, *“Because this woman keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming.”* The phrase “*wear me out*” literally meant “hit me under the eye.” The judge is saying, “I’ve got to give this woman what she wants or she’s going to give me a black eye.” It’s funny; the judge who neither feared God or man had a healthy respect for the left hook of this persistent widow.

**The Purpose of the Parable - Persistence**

Jesus is using this unjust judge in Luke 18 to teach us something about God. It’s an argument from the lesser to the greater. If an unjust judge will respond to the pleas of a widow whom he doesn’t care for, don’t you think God, who knows you and loves you and calls you his own, will listen to your prayers and answer you all the more? The only thing God and this unjust judge have in common is the ability to respond to pleas for justice. Although we may sometimes believe God is slow to respond to our pleas, we should be assured there is no lack of concern. So don’t give up and don’t stop praying. God still hears and responds to our prayers.

**Persistence and Being a Partner with God**

1. Why should I have to keep on asking? Why doesn’t God answer me the first time I ask? Does God get some perverse pleasure out of my begging?”

2. God’s pleasure is never perverse. He has a plan that has a restoration of all things (Acts 3:21), so the answer has nothing to do with perversity. We see our chapter only in the life of our nations and in the life of the cosmos. But God sees all chapters.

3. We see the first part but the end which is not seen by us may become known to us or remain unknown.

4. In the divine plan God delights in our cooperation in his work. God may be attracting us into a place where our passion and his power combine in a mysterious solution of divine providence. He leaves room for our passions to find expression and outlet. This is one of the best lessons of the book of Psalms. God empowers us to alter the structures of justice through the act of prayer.

5. Wilberforce, when he was submitting the bill to the English Parliament year after year to abolish slavery he needed reminding to be persistent in prayer.

6. Christians in China and North Korea, Pakistan, Sudan, and many other places who cast their prayers out for divine protection from the persecuting arm of civil or religious authorities. How long must they pray? When will God intervene? When will the church be freed from persecution and feel safe to gather in public places to exalt the name of Jesus?

7. Jesus is saying, “Don’t give up. Don’t stop praying.” Don’t resign yourself to the defeat of your cause, even if it appears the heavens are silent and God does not hear. I don’t know why, but it might be years or generations before God answers our prayers. In the letter to the Hebrews chapter 11 we have a list of great persons who lived by faith until they died. They didn’t see the things promised, yet welcomed them from a distance for they had hope. God’s answers were better than they imagined and even hoped for in their petitions, and so they walked by faith to the end of their days. Israel was released from Egyptian bondage after 400 years. Religious liberty didn’t arrive for 1800 years after the birth of Christ. There was no homeland for the Jews until 1948. The end of slavery in America required over 200 years and a Civil War. Some of the great spiritual revivals and social revolutions came only after generations of persistent widows, persevering men, tenacious teenagers, motivated mothers, and faithful fathers knocked on the doors of God’s justice until it burst open in righteous provocation.

**Conclusion**

1. We need encouragement and that is why Jesus offered this parable. If prayer was a “one and done,” there would be no need for encouragement. There would only need to be instruction or a reminder. Jesus instead gives us a parable of encouragement. He understands the pervasiveness of injustice. He knows the wickedness of so many in the halls of power. He sees the plight of his people and hears their cries for liberation. And he will act. He has acted in the creation of his covenant with the people of Israel. He has acted in the incarnation of Word become flesh. He acts in the sending of his Holy Spirit to encourage, direct, comfort, and guide. God is going to act on your behalf.

1. If you are facing an unjust judge in your life, don’t give up. Keep praying. If you are confronted with a dilemma and you see no way out, don’t give up. Keep knocking on God’s door. If you are seeking an answer from God in the face of a death in your family or the end of relationship with a church family that has meant so much to you for so many years, don’t quit the faith. Keep gathering with the people of God, offering praise to God, and seeking the will of God. God will strengthen you in your worship, speak to you through his Word, and guide you to a place where healing and wholeness take effect. Be not weary in your prayers. God will answer. He has given you the divine task and privilege of asking, and like a father who knows and loves his children; he will answer your prayers in his divine and perfect time.

-- See Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Combined edition) and also his book: *Finding the Lost Cultural Keys to Luke 15* (Concordia Scholarship Today)

**Luke 11:9-13 – The Encouraging Words of Jesus**

[***9***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-9.htm) *And I say unto you: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* [***10***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-10.htm) *For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.*

[***11***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-11.htm) *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?* [***12***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-12.htm)*Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?* [***13***](http://biblehub.com/luke/11-13.htm) *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

**Notes and studies**

1. Jesus insists on our continuation in prayer. We are given a new and a corrected vision of God as the loving Father.
2. Jesus takes his attitude to human love seriously enough and makes it the ground for his teaching on divine love.
3. Compare between fish and scorpion, a father will never give a scorpion to his son if he asks for a fish. So also a stone and bread. If we can’t do such evil, how about “Your heavenly Father”? Will He not give you the best he has that is the Holy Spirit?

**A Note from Philemon**

Did you notice that our Jesus told those who were listening that God is their heavenly Father? I wondered for days, how is this so?

1. They were not believers or members of a church but still living under the old covenant.

2. They never confessed that Jesus is Lord, but nevertheless God was their heavenly Father. This was also repeated in the Sermon on the Mount, where the crowd were told that God is their heavenly Father.

Being perplexed, I sat at the feet of the teacher of Truth, and He told me that it is not our faith that changes the Father and makes Him Father, but our faith should change us to see Him as Father of all.

***Pope’s Notes***

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