

“Will He Find Faith-Prayer?”

“Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” With this parable Jesus is instructing His disciples and preparing them to live in the last days – when they will no longer see Him – but would have to “watch and pray.”

Thankfully Jesus even tells us what this parable means – otherwise we would have missed the point altogether – because it seems out of character to us. God is represented by a judge who neither fears God nor respects man. The faithful disciple is a pesky widow who keeps showing up in the judge’s courtroom pleading for justice.

Even though the judge could care less about this woman – he gives her justice for no other reason than she is beating the tar out of him with her persistent petitions – and that, my friends, is a picture of stubborn faith in God’s justice.

The point of comparison here is from the lesser to the greater. God is NOT an unrighteous judge – He is the Righteous One whose judgments are pure. IF an uncaring judge can be persuaded by the persistent petitions of a widow seeking judgment – HOW MUCH MORE will God, the Righteous Judge, give justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night? “Will He delay long over them?” NO, He will “give justice to them speedily” – you have Jesus’ Word on it.

The key in all this is faith which cannot help but pray – a faith that trusts in God and His justice. Jesus has been teaching His disciples about the last days – and key to all this is what He says at the end of this text – “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”

Will the Son of Man find you praying in these last days? That question makes us nervous, doesn’t it? The truth is that we often loose heart and fail to pray. We are impatient. It’s now or never. We get frustrated by stop lights! We don’t want to leave a voicemail – or stand in line – we want what we want NOW.

Prayer is an exercise of faith, which includes patience. After all, we are praying to the God for whom a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day. This could take a while, or not – so faith trusts in God, and His timetable.

Patient endurance is even harder in the face of suffering. This widow keeps coming back to this judge because she has no place else to go. Even if the judge is unsympathetic to her cause – she keeps coming back to him day and night because there is no one else who can give her justice.

We, on the other hand, lose patience. If we don't immediately get what we want – we quit, or look for other options. It's like going to the gym, lifting a few weights – and then quitting because we don't see any results. We rush into it like a sprint, cramp up, and quit. "What's the point" when nothing seems to happen?

"Will not God give justice to His elect [His chosen ones], who cry to Him day and night?" We pray for these people in the Prayer of the Church week after week. Some get well, some die, some stay the same. But we keep on praying because that is what faith does.

We are trained by the world in which we live to see God as some kind of a divine vending machine who spits out what we want. Sadly, there are plenty of preachers willing to serve up this kind of a God to an instant gratification crowd – but don't buy into it.

As Jesus teaches us today, faith is persistent and patient. God isn't a vending machine. You know what happens when you lose patience with a vending machine – you kick it, rattle it, pound on it, and curse it – and then look for a different one that will give you what you want.

Prayer comes from faith that trusts God. Prayer is not coercing God to do something He doesn't want to do. We are not the puppet-master pulling the strings and making the puppet do our bidding.

Prayer is like Jacob wrestling with God in the wilderness. Jacob pins God down and won't let Him up. Even with his hip out of joint, Jacob will not let God go until He blesses him – the very thing God has promised to do. That's the stubbornness of faith – taking God at His Word – trusting Him to do what He has promised to do.

Jacob received a new name – Israel – "one who wrestles with God." That's who you are as the baptized children of God – ones who wrestle with God in prayer.

Like Jacob we walk with a limp – that is, we walk by faith, and not by sight – but that is our strength. We pray with a disjointed hip – as those who are weak – as those who trust that GOD ALONE is our strength.

Our strength is Jesus – Jesus who prays for us. He prays that the cup of God’s wrath be taken away from Him – yet, “not my will but yours be done.” He prays for those who mock Him – “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” He prays to the Father even when He doesn’t seem to care – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He prays with His dying breath – “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

Jesus prays with faith in His Father – trusting Him to do what He promises. He is our Great High Priest who constantly stands before the Father – with His “once for all” blood poured out to atone for the sin of the world. He wrestles with God as One who loses His life – so that the Lord might bless us with His salvation.

He is like the widow pleading to the judge for justice. “I tell you,” Jesus says, “He will give justice to [you] speedily.” Not long after this parable, Jesus is hauled away to stand before an earthly judge, to be sentenced to death – to shed His blood as the atoning sacrifice for all sin. That death, that blood, that sacrifice is your justice – your forgiveness – your justification before God.

If Jesus comes this week “to judge the living and the dead” – will He find faith? Will He find you praying? NO, not praying 24/7 – but living, and looking to God in faith – calling upon Him in every trouble, praying, praising, and giving Him thanks?

Jesus is your “speedy” justice – already yours by faith – not seen, but trusting that all God has promised is certain and sure, as good as done. And when the Son of Man comes again – you will see Him, and the fullness of all that He has promised to you – that your sins are forgiven, the resurrection of your body, and a life without end. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.