

Pentecost 19 10/19/25
St. Luke 18:1-8 24C

AND HE TOLD THEM A PARABLE TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY AND NOT LOSE HEART

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln once said, “I have often been driven to my knees by the realization that I have nowhere else to go.”

Abraham Lincoln learned the lesson Jesus is teaching us in the example of persistent widow in our parable this morning. God commands and invites believers in Jesus Christ to pray. But, as we live out our days on this earth, we become lazy, indifferent, in our Christian life, especially in our prayer life. Jesus tells the parable in our Gospel this Sunday to TEACH US THAT WE SHOULD PRAY ALWAYS, WITH PERSISTENCE, AND NOT LOSE HEART.

I. We, by nature, have no heart for prayer.

When they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden, do you recall what Adam and Eve did? That’s right, they hid from God. They were weighed down with the guilt and shame of their sin. So, they hid themselves from God.

We are not that much different from our first parents. We, too, try to hid ourselves from God. That feeling of sin and guilt which weighed Adam and Eve weighs us down still today. Feeling guilty, ashamed of our wrongs, instead of desiring to come into the presence of God in prayer, we try to flee God by not praying.

Luther once remarked that, “even a slight wounding of conscience” can make prayer difficult, and each and everyone of us knows the truth of that all too well.

Besides a lack of faith and guilt, we have no heart for prayer because

we are just too “busy”. This materialistic world in which we live makes it so easy for us to love the things of this world more than Jesus. Our greedy, coveting hearts can’t distinguish between what is a need and a want in our daily lives.

Have you ever seen a dog chasing after its own tail? We become so wrapped up in our family activities, our recreation, our hobbies, our TV, that we end up like a dog chasing after its own tail and we forget to make time to pray. The problem of our sinful flesh is that we allow these daily pursuits to have priority over our devotional and prayer life.

All of us are, by nature, more at home in the world and in the things of the world, than we are at home in the presence of God and in His Word and in prayer.

II. But, the Good News of the Christian faith is that God has brought us back into fellowship with Himself through the blood of His only-begotten Son.

In the Temple in Jerusalem, a curtain hung, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In that Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, in which Moses had placed the 2 tablets upon which God had written the 10 Commandments. Two angels adorned the cover of that ark, their wings pointed inward toward each other. It was there, above the ark, between the wings of those angels that God dwelt among His people.

God put that curtain there for a reason. That curtain was a visible reminder to His people. That curtain symbolized their sin – the sin that separated them from God. But, the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel for you, Dear Child of God, is that God Himself took it upon Himself to remove the guilt and shame of sin we had brought upon ourselves.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, only one man, the high priest,

would go behind that curtain with blood. And, the high priest would pour out that blood all over that cover of the ark – with the tablets of the Commandments, the Commandments which condemned the people for their sin -- so that that blood would “cover over” the people’s sin.

Only blood will cover over sin. The book of Hebrews says it this way, *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins* (9:22). The blood of Jesus has “covered over” our sin. Our Savior was condemned into the hands of men and nailed to Calvary’s cross. Better, much better than the blood of goats and calves, His holy, precious blood was poured out to cover over all of our sins.

At the death of Jesus, the curtain in the temple was torn in two. All of our sin was gone in the blood of Jesus. Nothing separates us from God anymore, so that we can, with boldness and confidence draw near to God’s throne of mercy to give grace in our time of need (cf. He 4:16).

The dark days and the long nights of the Civil War, made Abraham Lincoln see that he had no place to go but to his knees in prayer.

III. In the Christian faith and life, we pray for the simple reason that God has commanded us to pray and has promised to hear us. Jesus is teaching us that we are to pray, persistently, and not lose heart. And that, My Friends, gives us a heart for prayer. We walk by faith -- faith which trusts the promises of God to hear our prayers and answer our prayers in the way, and at the time, He knows best.

That’s why Jesus told us this parable. Humanly speaking, this elderly widow didn’t stand a chance of gaining justice against her adversary. She was poor; she couldn’t afford big legal fees; she couldn’t bribe the judge. And this judge “*neither feared God nor respected man*”. We could barely begin to imagine what a hard-hearted, cynical scoundrel he was. Humanly

speaking, to quote the old proverb, her chances were slim and none and slim was packing his bags to leave town. Yet, she persisted, day after day, and finally, just to get her off his back, the unjust judge took up her case and granted her the justice she sought.

Jesus, in the parable, said in effect, if that widow was finally granted her request under such seemingly hopeless circumstances, God, your merciful, kind, wise Heavenly Father, will have mercy and hear your prayer.

Look at the example of Jacob in our Old Testament lesson. You remember the story from your Sunday School days. Years before, Jacob had cheated his brother Esau. He had fled in fear of his life. Now, 20 years later, he was returning to his brother. And, he feared -- he feared that now his brother would exact his revenge upon him and his family. Alone, he struggled with God. Make no mistake about it, this was not just a spiritual struggle, this was a physical wrestling match. Yes, most certainly, God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, could have returned Jacob to the dust from which he came. But, God did not want that. He wanted Jacob to struggle, to wrestle with his doubts and fears. God did not want Jacob to be timid. God wanted Jacob to **cling** to Him in faith.

So it is that in our times of trouble, God wants us to call upon Him in prayer. God does not want us to be timid; God wants us to struggle so that our faith will overcome our doubts and fears. That's why He promises us, *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me (Ps 50:15).*

Jacob, after wrestling with God all night, had his hip put out of joint so that he would walk with a limp for the rest of his earthly life. That limp, with every step, reminded him on his dependence upon God.

In that same way, God wants us to remember our dependence upon

Him. Like Jacob and the widow in our Gospel, God wants us to be persistent in our prayer life.

Peter Marshall, the late Chaplain of the US Senate, once said in a prayer, “O Lord, forgive us for thinking that prayer is a waste of time, and help us to see that without prayer our work is a waste of time.” Remember the words of our Gospel. Jesus tells us this parable so that we may have a heart for prayer, that we might take time for prayer; that we be faithful, persistent, disciplined about prayers -- and that we never become discouraged and disheartened, and stop praying.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.