

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE PERSISTENT WIDOW”

Big Idea: Pray and don't give up!

We've all experienced it: the black hole of telephone customer service, where finding a sympathetic ear to talk to becomes a tortuous journey through aggravating automated messages and touch-tone instructions. More often than not, when we do finally get a hold of someone, we receive zero sympathy from the human turned protocol droid on the other end of the line. Sometimes all we hear is “Well, that is our policy.” or “Please hold while I transfer you...” starting the cycle all over again. Exasperated, we just give up. It's not worth it!

The point illustrated: *A tenacious widow and an unjust judge* (vv. 1-5)

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus shares a story with his disciples of someone who did not give up despite impediments: **the persistent widow**. Her diligence and determination in bringing her case before an apathetic judge eventually led to justice. The parable is used by Jesus to illustrate two important principles: we must persevere in prayer, and God will preserve and protect his beloved people.

- *The Parable of the Persistent Widow* follows the eschatological thread from Luke 17:20-37 and emphasizes the importance of persistent prayer while awaiting the consummation of the Kingdom of God. Read Isaiah 35:3-4 and Hebrews 12:12-13. Why should we persevere and not “lose heart”? How does this type of perseverance contrast with Jesus' warnings against the type of kingdom indifference described in Luke 17:27-28?
- Read Luke 11:5-13. How does the man with the visitor finally obtain what he is seeking? Discuss the parallels to the persistent widow.
- Think about your prayer life. When have you been tempted to pray less or not pray altogether? What has caused you to lose heart and want to give up?

The point applied: *how much more can a beloved people trust a just God?* (vv. 6-8)

Jesus concludes his lesson on the importance of persistent prayer by asking, “And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?” He then goes on to assure them that his justice will be swift and certain (v. 7). South African missionary Andrew Murray encouraged his parishioners to not despair and remember God's promises: “*Child of God! Give the Father time. He is long-suffering over you. He wants the blessing to be rich and full and sure; give Him time while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: ‘I say unto you, He will avenge them speedily.’*”¹

- Read Psalm 55. How does David show persistence in his prayers? How does David affirm the reality of answered prayer? Can you think of times when you have cried out to God morning, noon, and night?
- In the New Testament, we find Jesus often using a *fortiori* logic (drawing a conclusion that's obvious or convincing) as a didactic tool when instructing his disciples. For example, in Luke 11:13 Jesus states: “*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*” When using a *fortiori* phrases like “even more so” or “how much more,” Christ highlights the trustworthy character of God. Read Luke 11:9-13 and 12:32. In what ways is God different than the unjust judge?
- The passage ends with an open, unanswered question in verse 8: “*When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*” John Piper explains that the question refers back to Jesus' earlier conversation in Luke 17:20-37. According to Piper, Jesus is asking, “*Will the Son of Man find us trusting him?*” He summarizes, “*Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer.*”² Read Hebrews 11:1 and 1 John 5:4. How is faith related to prayer and why is it so important to pray, while at the same time trusting in God's promises?

DATE: February 11, 2024

SPEAKER: Brian/Wil

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 18:1-8

Family Dinner Table

A Gospel-Centered Prayer Life

If you desire to grow closer to God, according to Tim Keller the focus of your prayer life should be Gospel-centered. Keller explains: “*How can we very practically move toward a Gospel-centered prayer life that aims primarily at knowing God? Meditation and communion. Meditation is a ‘crossing’ of two other disciplines: Bible study and prayer. Meditation is both, yet it is not just moving one to another—it is a blending of them. Most of us first study our Bible, and then move to the prayer list, but the prayer is detached from the Bible you just studied. Meditation is praying the truth you just studied deep into your soul till it catches ‘fire.’ Meditation is working out the truth personally. The closest analogy to meditating on the truth is the way a person eagerly reads a love letter. You tear it open and you weigh every word. You never simply say, ‘I know that,’ but, ‘What does this mean? What did he or she really mean by that?’ You aren’t reading it quickly just for information—you want to know what lies deep in the clauses and phrases. And more importantly, you want the letter to sink in and form you.*”³

- Read the following prayers aloud: *Matthew 6:9-13; Ephesians 1:17-19, 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9-12; and 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.* What do you notice about these prayers? How does each passage teach you to pray? And what does each of these prayers teach you about God?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS
Bridges Community Church,
Supported church plant
PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS
Melanie and Bill, supported
missionary partners

¹Murray, Andrew. *The Power of Persevering Prayer*. <https://www.path2prayer.com/holiness-and-spirituality-writers/andrew-murray-holiness--spirituality-writer/andrew-murray-persevering-prayer>

²Piper, John. *Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart*. January 9, 1983. Desiring God.org. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/always-pray-and-do-not-lose-heart>

³Keller, Tim. *Prayer and the Gospel*. 2007. Redeemer Ministries. https://www.redeemer.com/learn/prayer/prayer_and_fasting/prayer_and_the_gospel