

KEEP ON PRAYING

Luke 18:1-8

Pastor Danny Han

Sunday, May 22, 2022

Scripture Reference:

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

18 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?”

⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Sermon Message:

Keep on Praying!

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to you, O Lord our strength and our redeemer.

>>**INTRODUCTION** Thank you for allowing me the privilege to bring a word from the Lord this morning. My name is Danny Han and I’m an associate pastor at the OTHER KCC – Kaimuki Christian Church. My wife’s name is Kyunghee, and we’re honored to join you this morning in worship.

Before we get into our message this morning, I wanted us to listen to a recording of a famous speech. Take a listen.

[VIDEO: WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE BEACHES]

>>WE LOVE STORIES ABOUT NOT GIVING UP

“We shall fight on the beaches” was delivered by Winston Churchill before the British Parliament on June 4, 1940. He had to break the bad news: France had fallen to Nazi Germany in 6 weeks and the British Expeditionary Forces were beaten back to the coast. The possibility of a German invasion of

the British Isles was becoming a reality. It was only 20 something miles across the English Channel. You know we love to hear stories about not giving up. Overcoming the odds. When the world is falling apart, to press on and carry on.

To never surrender. To never give up.

Even in popular culture the theme of never giving up; never surrender has become an anthem.

Songs like Don't Stop Believin' by Journey or I Won't Back Down by Tom Petty.

My daughter just sang a song at our school's family fun night with her classmates. "This is Me" from The Greatest Showman -- about not giving up on your dreams.

Disney and Pixar have mastered this theme. A father clownfish looking for his clownfish son in the entire Pacific Ocean. And finding him in an aquarium in a dentist's office in Sydney Australia and guarded by Darla Sherman the fish terrorist? Talk about not giving up!

Or ... a young Anna trying to save her big sister and the kingdom of Arendelle from an icy curse and a prince who finishes her sentences?

We even see it in real life too. People not giving up. Do you remember the story of the boys who were trapped in a water filled cave in Thailand several years ago?

12 boys trapped.

18 days in the dark.

The loss of a life but finally they're rescued -- every one of them.

You have your own stories of not giving up despite the odds.

We love it when people don't give up. Did you know that Jesus does too when it comes to prayer?

We're going to take a look at a principle that Jesus shares about prayer and not giving up in Luke 18. **[SLIDE]**

Now before we dive into the passage, I want to point out a little header that appears at the top of the passage in some translations. Of course, those aren't the words of Luke but were inserted by Bible translators to help break up the passages a bit.

>>**THE WORD PERSISTENT**

If you have an NIV Bible, you'll notice the title "The parable of the persistent widow." Now if you type "persistent widow" in Google, you're more than likely to get this passage as one of the first hits. It also goes by the Parable of the Unjust Judge, but I think that header places emphasis on the wrong character.

I like the title "The parable of the persistent widow" because I can identify with that a little easier.

Some of us may think that the word 'persistent' carries a negative connotation. I guess it depends on whose frame of reference we're talking about. If I were the one being persistent, I would probably see that as a positive.

So that's why I think it's important to focus on the widow and not the unjust judge that we're going to read about in a moment.

The word persistent is defined as "the firm continuance in a course of action despite the difficulty."

[SLIDE]

So remember that as we study the passage together. "The firm continuance in a course of action despite the difficulty."

Even Jesus wants us to firmly continue in the action of prayer. So that bring us to our first point in this message. Jesus wants you to be persistent in prayer!

POINT 1: Jesus wants you to be PERSISTENT IN PRAYER! [SLIDE POINT]

He wants to show us that we should "always pray" and we should "never give up." To persist in prayer.

>>THE PARABLE

We're going to read a story. A parable. And we have to understand that parables are lessons. They help us to see comparisons between ourselves and the people in the story, or a contrast to how God is compared to people. A lot of times they're lessons about people -- people just like you and me. Because of that, we can empathize -- we can put ourselves in the shoes -- of the people in those parables.

Let me go ahead and read this parable.

LUKE 18:1-8

[SLIDE] 18 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. **[SLIDE]** 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. **[SLIDE]** 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

[SLIDE] 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, **[SLIDE]** 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

[SLIDE] 6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. **[SLIDE]** 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? **[SLIDE]** 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

THE UNJUST JUDGE vs THE WIDOW

A good story draws us in. I think this parable does just that. And hopefully we're drawn into the story with empathy towards this widow. She keeps pleading with him: "Grant me justice!"

And I hope we are not empathizing with the judge here. “Oh man, her again? Stop bothering me already.” Well actually, that reminds me of a story.

>>STORY ABOUT SWIMMING POOL

When I was a kid, I kept bugging my mom to take me to the swimming pool. Here’s the thing. I didn’t even know how to swim! But I kept telling her to take me, mom. Take me, mom! And she got so bothered with me, that she took me to the swimming pool at the condo we lived in -- I’m all excited now because I’m going to the pool! -- and she just threw me into the deep end.

Seriously. She just threw me in. And I have to make a choice. Sink or swim?! Well I need to swim and get out of here right now!

Now I say all this so that we don’t COMPARE God to this annoyed judge or to an annoyed mom who’s tired of hearing, “Take me to the pool!” I’m picking on moms but really, but I’m a father and my kids sometimes annoy me too. God is NOT like that! And in this part of the parable, we are seeing a CONTRAST between what people are like and what God the Father is like.

The judge is unjust, uncaring, and oh-so superior -- he didn’t even fear God. And we have a widow who has to stand before a person like him. Look it says it right there: **[SLIDE]**

Luke 18:2-3 “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’”

The judge is the difficulty in this story. He is against the widow, that is plain to see.

[SLIDE] Let me continue Luke 18:4-5 “For some time he (the judge) refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

But God is not against you or me like this unjust judge. He is FOR us. That’s the contrast.

We know that because the Bible is very clear on this. It’s even in this parable itself that Jesus points this out.

[SLIDE] It says right there in Luke 18:7 “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?” It’s not “God caves in and grants justice to those who cry out to him day and night because he is so annoyed” or “God can’t take it anymore and relents because he’s having a breakdown.”

[SLIDE] God is for us. In Romans 8:31 it says “If God is for us, who can stand against us?” It’s a rhetorical question because God is for us!

“God **brings justice** to those who cry out to him day and night.”

It's like a I WILL GO TO THE MAT FOR YOU attitude that God has.

God is just. Please do not forget this. He lifts up the broken hearted. He defends the weak. This is what he does.

There are many more passages on God being just. **[SLIDE]** Psalm 68:5 God is the father of the fatherless, a defender of widows.

So make no mistake. God is just and upholds the cause and cries of those treated unjustly. Jesus did the same thing. At the start of his ministry, when he stood in the temple and read from the prophet Isaiah he said, **[SLIDE]** "He (God) has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free..." Luke 4:18

And then he did a scroll drop because he said, **[SLIDE]** "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:21

Boom. Just like that, He made it very clear who He was and what He's going to do. He's here to set the oppressed free. He's here to bring justice.

Back to our story. The widow keeps coming to the judge asking for justice against her adversary.

"Grant me justice against my adversary."

We often plead to God for something, don't we? Perhaps it's to right a wrong that's been done.

Or maybe we plead on behalf of someone. Maybe they're sick. Or maybe they've yet to open their heart to Jesus.

>>**STORY ABOUT DAD**

I have been praying for my dad for decades now. Not always consistently though. More on that in a bit. But the story begins many years ago, when I was about 10 years old. We were taking a family trip and we were supposed to land in Hawaii. But somehow -- and to this day I don't know how that's even possible -- we ended up in the Philippines. It was a Space Available flight so that probably explains a lot. You know, you get into a C130 cargo plane and strap yourself into a metal frame and hope for the best. Anyways...

So we're in the Philippines and thankfully a Christian family hosted us. We were complete strangers, and they were so gracious to have us and house us, and I remember one late evening, sleeping on the floor of their living room, that my mom and dad were up late talking to this couple. I don't remember much of the conversation and even why I was up, but I managed to eavesdrop under the blanket.

And I do remember these words:

"Nope. Not interested."

You see, that was my dad basically rejecting the good news of the gospel. This Christian couple shared the gospel message with my dad, with my mom sitting right beside him. They shared to him

about God's creation, and how sin the creation from its creator, and how Jesus came to bring us back to God. And I actually even remember seeing through the material of the blanket I was under, my dad unmoving and resolute in his "no" to the offer to receive Christ.

I cried right there, under those blankets. I was weeping very softly. And no one heard. But God saw and he heard my soft cries, "Please God, help my dad to say yes to Jesus."

But I wish I could tell you that I've prayed that way every day of my life since that young age. I have not been consistent. Not even close. A lot of times I just forget to do it. I'm just thinking about other things to pray for, you know? And I'm going to just say it -- I sometimes even wonder if God will answer my prayer.

We forget to pray in the busyness of life. Or we think God isn't going to answer. Yeah, it happens to me too, a pastor.

This is why Jesus reminds us to persist in prayer. Remember the definition of the word persist?

[SLIDE] "The firm continuance in a course of action despite the difficulty."

You see, the difficulty is not found in God -- it's found in us! We are our own difficulty, whether it's **busyness, forgetfulness, even lack of faith.**

But take heart. Because even in the busyness, forgetfulness, or crisis that shakes your faith, God will always be for you.

And His nature is kindness which always brings you back to Him. His mercies are ready to be poured out.

POINT 2: GOD'S MERCY pours out when you pray **[SLIDE POINT]**

God brings justice and mercy to those who cry out to him day and night. Even if you miss a day, or days, or seasons of days. And my hope is that one day God will bring justice and mercy by freeing my dad -- maybe your dad or loved one -- from the oppression of the enemy. Satan hates when he has to let a prisoner go.

Jesus came to free the oppressed. Church family, never give up that He can do that.

Never give up that God's mercy pours out when you pray.

>>**WORSHIP IN PRAYER**

By the way, when we sing together, it's much more than just words. Your worship goes up as a prayer to the Lord. The Psalms are filled with prayers going up in worship and praise, but let me point you to Acts 16, when Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi.

[SLIDE] "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."

Your worship can be prayers. And people are listening.

Even today we sang:

“Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer!”

People need to hear this about Jesus. So sing out when you praise him, and let your worship be your prayer and never give that up.

POINT 3: KEEP ON PRAYING for His return [SLIDE POINT]

Jesus is looking for us to be faithful in prayer. He ends this parable with a question. Did you catch it?

[SLIDE] Let's read it in Luke 18:8 “I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

I don't think it's rhetorical there. Jesus is actually challenging all of us through history to pray unceasingly for His return.

By the way, I feel the need to comment on something that's been popping up in social media feeds and in interviews. This reaction to the often used phrase “praying for” such and such.

Don't let anyone tell you that your prayers are just platitudes with no action.

We'd never stop saying “we're sorry for your loss” or “our condolences”? So why would we stop saying that we're praying for someone or that we're praying for a situation?

If there is something that is loaded with action, it's prayer. We don't have arms that can stretch that far to embrace a family that's hurting in a far away place like the Ukraine. Our money eventually runs out. But what we can do is pray, because Jesus does and he's even now praying for you and me.

In John chapter 17 it says that Jesus never gives up praying that ...

... we would be kept from evil (John 17:15)

... that we would be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit (John 17:17)

... that we would be reunited with him (John 17:24)

And that encourages me to keep praying for my dad. You see, he's still not a believer yet. But I've seen a change in him. Today the mood is much different than that fateful night in the living room of a Christian family on Clark Air Base in Manila. And that's very encouraging!

Unlike my dad those many years ago, now...

My dad prays with us when we eat dinner together.

My dad responds to being prayed for and is thankful for it.

Maybe you've given up on praying for something or someone. Today, I want you to know that Jesus calls you to persist in your prayers; to watch him pour out his mercy as you pray; and to keep praying until He returns.

I'll end with this speech by Winston Churchill, given to his alma mater on Oct 29, 1941. The US didn't officially join the war until December of that year, but he had this to say to his beloved school:

"Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never-in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. All this tradition of ours, our songs, our School history, this part of the history of this country, were gone and finished and liquidated.

"Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across her slate. But instead our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer."

Kailua Christian, never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

Look to Jesus. Never give up that He can accomplish His purpose in you and through you.

[SLIDE] Keep on praying and never give up.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever. -Ephesians 3:20,21

I want to thank you for allowing me to share the message this morning, and God bless you all.
Amen!