

Sunday, October 16, 2016

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Luke 18:1-8

Persevering Faith for Justice

Don't you hate it when someone nags you to do something you don't want to do? Whether it is doing a household chore, cleaning your room or something that is good for you to do—there is something about being pestered that turns you away. How do you respond? There are many responses—One could give in and do what was asked with different levels of enthusiasm. You could do the task with full enthusiasm, or even with a 'good enough' attitude or even half heartedly. Another response is to give up listening to the nagging and simply walk away leaving the person without a response or action. And still another is to do nothing in the moment but to respond in action later, on your timetable.

In the parable of the persistent widow, a poor powerless woman is persistent in nagging a powerful person to do justice for her. She is pleading her case about the losses she has incurred and how these losses will only make worse her status in life and in the community. But this powerful person is a judge who is known to be corrupt seeking what will benefit him the most.

Yet when we think of a person in a position of power and leadership they should be acting justly and fairly for this is the role to which they were placed. Their obligation should be to do their work justly. But Jesus in sharing this parable does not focus on the judge, but on the woman who does not give up.

This woman has most of the odds against her—she is a woman of little means, a widow- her husband has died and so has her means of support. She is known by the people in the courthouse as she has been there many times. She is known by the people of her community because she has asked for help from them and she is known by the judge.

The judge has refused justice for her several times. And finally this corrupt man he gives to her so that she will get justice, not because she deserves it, but because she is wearing him out with her court appearances.

This is an interesting story because Jesus identifies those who are hearing this story as the woman and what we should do when talking with God. Jesus doesn't mean that God is corrupt by any means but the point is that we need to be persistent and consistent in praying to God who will hear us and respond.

As Christians we are also to persevere in faith against all odds. Just think about this world which is filled with corruption. What if we united in prayer to bring about change and justice for a better world. Our country's leaders and leaders around the world need to have people who want changes which will support, encourage and help people in all situations. Those in leadership like the judge is to do justice. But we who are seeking this—cannot give up.

Have you ever found yourself questioning your faith in specific situations? What was occurring? Often faith questions come when there is traumatic loss, or specific change in relationships- loss of jobs, death of loved ones, or loss and destruction of property. You might ask, why did God allow this to happen? Or even the self-serving question, why me?

But there is hope even when we question our faith in God. God knows us so well that he will reveal to us what happens when we do question our faith and we can move on stronger than before. Even in times of what we might consider injustice—there is justice. As Christians our job is to work toward hope at all times. We cannot right every wrong in the world but we must never give up hope, never stop working for the greater good in the midst of the imperfection of the world.

In the parable the judge finally gives up and brings justice to the woman. Why? Not because he wants to but because he personally cannot have her badgering him in his court. His reputation as a judge is on the line. His reputation as a man who did not fear God nor care about people was being tested each time this woman was in his courtroom. He needed to deal with her and he did. He listened and responded.

We are not told what the problem was but Jesus tells us that this is not the point. The point is that God will bring about justice for those who cry to him day and night. He will not put them off. He will see their faith in action

This is World Food Day which was created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945 in order to 'free humanity from hunger and

malnutrition and to effectively manage the global food system.” It is to raise awareness of food facts:

- One in nine people are still hungry in the world. @ 8 million
- @70% of hungry people are farmers; women make up 43% of the labour force in agriculture in developing countries
- 10-20% more could face increased hunger due to climate change
- Canada’s support for agricultural development has dropped by 30% in the last 5 years
- \$31 billion worth of food is wasted in Canada each year. This is approximately 40% of food produced yearly in Canada
- The accumulative cost of associated wastes (i.e. energy, water, land, labour, capital investment, infrastructure, machinery, transport) has been estimated to be 2.5 times greater than the “face value” of wasted food, making the overall cost of food waste in Canada exceed \$100 billion
- Land filled organic matter creates methane gas which is 25x more damaging to the environment than carbon dioxide
- Approximately 47% of food wasted in Canada occurs at home. The other 53% of wasted food is generated along the value chain when food is produced, processed, transported, sold, and prepared and served in commercial and institutional settings
- Households in Canada on average waste \$28 worth of food each week (\$1456 annually)

But there is hope for those who Hunger for Justice- that because we live in a country of abundant food- that we can share our abundance with others through justice. This is our hope which we find in God. Only God who can bring about justice in a corrupt world and so we must pray and not give up in our work. God can bring miraculous justice in a corrupt world, just as God can bring miraculous healing in a sick world.

In the parable of the persistent widow, God does not intervene. It is the widow’s persistence alone that leads the judge to act justly. But Jesus states that God is the unseen actor. God will God grant justice for his chosen ones who cry to him day and night- but we must not give up.

What about you? How persistent are you when it comes to advocating for yourself, a specific cause or what is right and just? Do you work a little bit or do you give up? What about something that is happening to you? Do you maintain your faith, build upon your hope in Christ and continue to pursue answers or responses for yourself in your situation? What do you do first- look at your situation and say poor me? Or do you take whatever it is occurring to you- and pray to God to help you through it, do it or even grow from this experience?

God is calling upon us to pray and not give up. Be like that widow who was owed justice and eventually received it. As we read in 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18—we are to be joyful always; to pray continually, to give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. We are to pray for all situations as we seek God's wisdom and understanding for ourselves. So let us never give up praying for to give up is to deny our faith in a God who answers prayer.

Holy God, hear our prayers we offer to you; enable us to be persistent in seeking your response to your questions, our concerns and our needs. Show us how to bring about justice in this unjust world, love where it seems no one cares, and joy where hope has faded. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.