

“Our help comes from the Lord
who made heaven and earth.” AMEN!

There’s a great illustration to use when
thinking about Bible Study, and
that illustration word is “chew.”

“Chewing on the Word of God” is a perfect picture,
I think, of what it should look like
when a person enters into studying
sacred scriptures.

“Chew on them.” (Pause)

When I was a child, I would trim off all
the fat on a steak and put it in a pile on
the side of my plate.

The reason was that it took too long to chew!

If I missed a section, or if I get a piece of chicken
with that had cartilage in it, that
couldn’t be chewed,
I’d have to spit it out.

Kids listen up, here.

If you need to spit out food while at

the dinner table use your napkin and
do it in a way where no one might notice.
(Pause)

Now that we have our table manners lesson complete,
we can move to what the nutrition experts say.

They tell us that chewing is the first step to digestion.

Chewing physically breaks food
into smaller particles, and during the chewing
our saliva begins to chemically breakdown
the food.

Most of us have experienced what happens
if one goes through the chewing process
too quickly.

The worst would be to choke, but
there's also indigestion and bloating that can
result when food isn't chewed properly.

You get the point, right. :-)

It's good advice to chew on the word of God,
slowly so we don't choke on it nor
allow it to cause indigestion. :-) (Pause)

The parable that Jesus told in our Gospel lesson

takes a bit of “chewing.” :-)

Mostly because we focus on the unjust judge too much, but Jesus begins the parable in a unique way.

As if he knew we’d need a little help in digesting what he said, so He began it by telling them (and us) its purpose:

their need to pray and not to lose heart.

These are not the prayers we make for wealth or a life of ease,

but the kind of prayer we come to when at our wits end.

In essence, Jesus said, pray when it feels like you’re in situations where you don’t have a prayer in surviving. (Pause)

Chew on that for a while. :-)

Pray when it appears there’s no prayer in surviving. (Pause)

The woman who went to the unjust judge had few resources.

Her survival hung on a thin string.

Her hope was that he'd rule in her favor,
but it was a man's world.

She had therefore two adversaries
after the judge rejected her.

The person that wronged her and
the judge that ignored her.

It looked like she didn't have a prayer
to receive justice, but she had a quality
that Jesus calls us to emulate.

That quality is persistence. (Pause)

When I think of a woman's persistence
I think of Harriet Tubman.

Born into slavery in 1822, Harriet faced
tremendous hardship and suffering.

Despite that, her determination for freedom
led her to escape slavery in 1849.

Finally at age 27, she was free.

Yet, her persistence did not end.

She returned to the South an astounding 19 times,
risking her life on each journey
to lead others to freedom.

She led over seventy enslaved people to freedom
via the Underground Railroad.

Persistence that never waned even after
she gained her own freedom.

Her ceaseless efforts uplifted those around her
and Harriet Tubman is revered as one of
history's bravest and most compassionate
figures. (Pause)

You know, wrestling is also a great illustration,
when it feels like we are close to losing heart.

We read about Jacob's wrestling match
with God in the Genesis text.

It's a great story about persistence, too.

In a story about a person (Jacob) that did some
awful things to his brother, Esau,
we read the way Jacob sought forgiveness.

Jacob didn't think it was possible to be forgiven
and he wrestled with God about it. (Pause)

Sometimes faith is like wrestling.

We can choose to let go, but at what cost?

Like Jacob, and the persistent widow,
we can learn to not let go and
to not stay silent.

There's more than a title belt or
a gold medal on the line.

There's blessing and favorable judgments ahead
even though we're in the midst of real struggles
in the darkest of nights.

There's blessing and favorable judgments ahead
even though we may come away
from the struggle with a limp.

And know this, when our persistence is lacking,
God's persistence to embrace us
never does.

Like Jacob, we hold on to God and
like the widow, we cry out for justice,

we will come away with a blessing
and glimpse the very face of God.

AMEN!