

Sermon For Sunday October 19 2025

Overruling The Unjust Judge – A Sermon On Luke 18:1-8

One parish they had a mid-week healing service. There was an elderly woman who came every week. Someone always came with her. This other person would help the woman find a place to sit and then help her to the altar rail for anointing and healing prayers. Every week she knelt down and would say, “For my eyes and for my mind.” She was nearly blind and suffered dementia. Week after week it was the same, “For my eyes and for my mind.” Week after week we prayed and anointed her with oil. Every week her friend would help her back to the pew. She was as blind and confused as when she came.

Everyday immigrants, both legal and illegal, come to this country seeking a new life, a better life. Often they are greeted by words or actions that say, “You don’t belong here. I don’t want to see or hear from you.” Nearly one month ago Tyler Clementi jumped off a bridge and killed himself after being outed on the internet as being a gay man. He was eighteen years old. Throughout the world the poor struggle to survive another day of inadequate food, clothing, shelter, water, medicine, or work. There are gentleman who everyday fights his need to drink. There are women who lives in fear of her husband’s anger and violence. There is a group of parents that meet monthly to talk about and share the overwhelming grief they suffer following the death of a child.

These are just a few of the widows in Jesus' parable. The list could go on and on. They pray for and demand a new life. They hope things will change. They seek something different for their life, something other than what they have right now. Day after day it is the same, nothing changes. It is not right. They know it, we know it, and God knows it. They live and some have died standing before the unjust judge.

The unjust judge wears many disguises: prejudice, hatred, fear, the disease that won't be healed, economic systems, death, grief, addiction. Regardless of the disguise the unjust judge neither fears God nor respects people.

Standing before the unjust judge life seems big, powerful, and overwhelming. You feel small, powerless, and alone. There is no one to defend or represent you. You stand by yourself unsure what to believe about life or yourself. No matter what you do or say nothing changes, nothing works. You don't know what else to do so, like the widow in Jesus' parable, day after day you cry out. That is the widow's story in today's parable, in today's world, sometimes even in our own life. Have you ever felt like that?

Have you ever stood before the unjust judge?

So what do we do when we stand before the unjust judge? What do we do when we see another human being standing before the unjust judge? Some will get angry and fight back becoming as hardened and unjust as the judge himself. Some will give up and believe what the unjust judge says, believing that is the final reality of life and it will never get better. Others will blame and

accuse God of being the unjust judge. There are a few, however, who will discover and trust the widow's faith.

"Pray always and do not lose heart," Jesus says. That is the widow's faith. Day after day she shows up. Day after day she speaks of the injustice done to her. Day after day she holds her pain before the judge, the world, and God.

To pray always does not mean giving God a to do list and then sitting back expecting God to magically fix everything. To pray always means that we offer our cry to God and then we do whatever we can to bring about the change we seek trusting that God also is already doing what God needs to do. Maybe that means we seek counseling or a support group. We feed the hungry. We offer compassion to the grieving. We speak and teach against hatred and prejudice, respecting the dignity of every human being. We strive for justice and peace. We make our case not just before God but with God. We join God in answering our prayer.

Some believe that prayer is about convincing, cajoling, persuading, or wearing down God so God will do what we ask. It is the idea that God is out there somewhere and not here, that God is either unaware or uncaring about us and this world. So we have to persuade God to show up and act. That only happens if we are good enough, believe the right things, and say the right words enough times. That is not what it means to pray always. If that is what we have been taught or come to believe this parable says otherwise. Jesus rejects that understanding of the relationship between God and his people. God is nothing like the unjust judge. God sees our suffering. God hears our cries. God quickly grants justice. But when?

The widow's faith always involves waiting. How long? When will it change? I don't know. But I do know that waiting does not mean God is absent. Waiting does not mean God is uncaring. Waiting does not mean God is not already active. You see, the widow does not wait on God. She waits with God. To pray always is what keeps her from losing heart. It keeps her showing up day after day trusting that God sees, hears, and acts.

To pray always is what keeps us, in thought, word, and deed, present to and in relationship with God so that when God does act we will be there. Imagine the tragedy if one day the widow gave up. She just could not stand another day of crying out, pointing to the injustice of her life, holding her pain for the world to see, so she didn't and that was the day the judge ruled, that was the day life changed. I wonder how much of God's life, love, compassion, forgiveness, healing we have missed because we did not show up. To pray always is what insures we are present so that when the Son of Man comes he will find faith on earth. He will find us, the widows of the world who refused to let the unjust judge have the final say.

To live the widow's faith may be some of the most difficult and necessary work we do. Pray always and do not lose heart. Jesus does not ask us to do what we cannot do. He does not ask to go where he has not already been. He has lived the widow's faith. He is the archetypal widow. The widow's life and faith, his life and faith, have been given to us. It is already deep within each of us. You already have all that you need to face the unjust judge of this world.

So go live like the widows God knows you to be.