

7-21-19 PARABLES OF JESUS #5

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW & UNJUST JUDGE LUKE 18:1-8

Have you ever become discouraged?

Have you ever wondered what might happen if 'good people' get tired of being good?

The Christians of the 1st century world, particularly the followers of Jesus in Rome, were nearly overcome by discouragement, persecution of all kinds and suffering beyond our imagination. The oppression & persecution of the Roman Emperors --- Domitian, Nero, and Caligula was more than any of us today can imagine.

In the midst of these circumstances they were needing to come to an UNDERSTANDING & BASIC TEACHING regarding their **expectations & hopes for the manifestation of the kingdom of GOD ...**

- when the justice and rightness GOD that they expected was not realized –
- when the imposing oppression of the Roman Empire was not overcome by God's Kingdom THEY NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT and UNDERSTANDING AS TO **WHY GOD WAS NOT ALLEVIATING THEIR PAIN & SUFFERING AND WHY THE KINGDOM OF GOD SEEMED BEYOND THEIR REALITY OR POSSIBILITY.**
- WHEN WERE THINGS GOING TO GET BETTER? and HOW SHOULD THEY ... HOW COULD THEY "COPE"?

CAN YOU RELATE?

When we are desperate and life is threatening us --- when justice and rightness seems so far off --- when the rightness, justice and wholeness of the kingdom of God seems impossible --- WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

The parable of the PERSISTENT WIDOW instructs its 1st century audience and us today, to do two things

- 1) PRAY and
- 2) DO NOT GIVE UP THE FAITH

Today's parable is unique --- it is only recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke. The parable of "The PERSISTENT WIDOW" encourages its hearers to PERSIST ... to **NOT GIVE UP HOPE and to PRAY.** I believe that Dr. Luke included this parable in his gospel to encourage the lives of the Roman Christians, to whom Paul & he ministered and lived...and loved.

LUKE 18:1-8 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?"**

Jesus came to explain and to demonstrate that the Kingdom of God --- the Kingdom of Heaven is not like an ordinary kingdom ... for God's ways are different that our ways and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)

Luke 4:43 also helps us to see that the presence of Jesus --- the teaching of Jesus was centered upon the kingdom of God "But Jesus said, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to all people because THAT IS WHY I WAS SENT.' "

As people began to hear and to learn about **God's ways and God's kingdom ... several things began to become clear**

1st The ultimate coming of the Kingdom of God was going to be sometime away. It was not coming soon and it was not going to overcome all the worlds' governments, including the Roman Empire ... anytime soon

2nd **SO,** Jesus' followers had to **BEGIN TO ACCEPT** and **TO LIVE** in an '**IN BETWEEN**' time ... the time between the SPIRITUAL NEW BIRTH & BEGINNING OF NEW FAITH & TRUST IN JESUS WAS REAL IN THEIR HEARTS & LIVES ... YET, THE ACTUAL TIME WHEN GOD'S RULE WILL DESCEND UPON ALL THE EARTH SUCH THAT ALL EVIL WILL BE OVERCOME AND ALL THINGS WRONG WILL BE MADE RIGHT (Revelations 19-22) was NOT YET A REALITY

- We are actually living in this time right now --- so this parable becomes as relevant to us today as it was in the first century.
- Then as now, it is easy to become discouraged and it is hard to 'keep the faith' when so much evil seems to prevail ...
- NOTE: the evil emperors of Rome were persecuting Christ's followers ... At some point, after Christ's Ascension, 30% or more of the Christians in Rome were being martyred ... Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome ... etc.
- It is understandable that any Christian believer would become discouraged and WONDER WHETHER GOD WAS HEARING THEIR PRAYERS ...their cries for justice ... AND this is true today as it was then ... CAN YOU RELATE?

The Main points of the parable are:

1. If an unjust and corrupt judge eventually delivers justice ... certainly a loving God WILL BE faithful and can be relied upon to bring ultimate blessing and relief to all of his beloved children of the kingdom of God.
2. Jesus' encouragement and direction to Christian believers that are living in this 'in between time' is to **PRAY & NOT**

1st --- just a brief comment --- WHY WOULD OUR LOVING FATHER, GOD ALMIGHTY, WAIT AT ALL? WHY WOULD GOD NOT GRANT JUSTICE TO HIS BELOVED RIGHT THEN? OR RIGHT NOW?

I DO NOT KNOW ... but I DO KNOW that in God's wisdom & foreknowledge ... there is a timeline of creation that has to unfold --- for reasons beyond my capacity to think or to know ... but I think that what happens here on planet earth in regards to these matters of faith & trust in God MAY have significance beyond us ... beyond the things of this world ... and YOU ARE An IMPORTANT PART of that unfolding!!!!

I WONDER? May there be other worlds that are somehow connected or affected by what happens here on planet earth? If so --- there may be reasons beyond what we know that may require a passage of time and the patience, vigilance and determination to persevere. Is 55:8-9

NOTE: Hauerwas & Willimon assert that the church is like a 'RESIDENT ALIEN' "*The church exists today as resident aliens, an adventurous colony in a society of unbelief.*"

REMEMBER: JESUS' INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS AUDIENCE (and to us) (18:1):

1. **PRAY**

2. **DON'T GIVE UP – DON'T GIVE UP THE FAITH!!!!**

SO:

WHY IS PRAYER IMPORTANT?

WHAT DOES PRAYER ACCOMPLISH?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PERSEVERE—to BE VIGILANT?

HOW CAN WE STAY THE COURSE ... and NOT GIVE UP?

WILL JESUS FIND ANY WHO HAVE REMAINED FAITHFUL?

WILL JESUS FIND YOU FAITHFUL WITH YOUR BAGS PACKED AND READY TO GO WHEN HE COMES AGAIN?

BOTTOM-LINE:

GOD WILL RESPOND AND ALL THINGS WILL BE MADE RIGHT...SO...

- + **DO NOT LOSE HOPE**
- + **DO NOT GIVE UP**
- + **DO NOT BACK-OFF**

Note the Prayer in Acts 4:29-30 -- "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

ARE YOU PACKING YOUR BAGS IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR TIME IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD? WHAT ARE YOU PACKING?

ARE YOU MOTIVATED TO BE:

- THE AROMA OF CHRIST (2 Corinthians 2:14-15)
- COMPELLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE (2 Corinthians 5:14)
- A NEW CREATION (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- RECONCILER TO JESUS (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
- AN AMBASSADOR OF JESUS (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

Dear God, grant me the ability to know that which is important to know...to love that which is worth loving ... to praise that which pleases you the most ... to esteem that which you consider most precious ... help me to persevere ... to PRAY and to NOT GIVE UP. IN Jesus' Name, AMEN