

Proper 24 C  
St. Luke 18:1-8  
October 16, 2016  
St. George's Bolton  
Fr. Chris

## Keep Praying!

*"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.'"*

Keep pestering God! You will get what you want!

Reminds me of the child in the grocery store, (*I was one of them once*) that continues to bug their parents to buy them a toy from the toy section strategically placed in the store. *"Please, Please, I need it."* After so many tantrums and pleadings, often my mother would give in. However, there were those times when the answer was a clear *no!* It didn't take too long for me to read her responses and know the difference.

This isn't a passage about pestering your mother in the grocery store. This is a passage that is out to teach us a spiritual admonition. Consider the opening line of the Gospel, prefacing the story of the persistent widow: *"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should **always pray and not give up.**"* There are two strong suggestions here: that we should always pray and that we should not give up.

Praying always is a way of life for people of faith. It is a way of communicating your heart to God. It is a way of bringing out your worries and holding them up to God and asking for help.

Constant prayer is not just about what we want. It is more importantly a way to be thankful and say thank you for the many blessings we enjoy. Many times in the New Testament we are exhorted to pray always. It should become like breathing to us. However, just as often as we notice our breathing, we ought to remember to pray. Yet that is no excuse to be distracted.

Praying always is like breathing. It is an automatic function in our brains that reminds us to be thankful for the many blessings we enjoy. Yesterday as I sat on a beach in Rhode Island, enjoying the beauty of the late afternoon sun and the clear skies, an older woman walked by us. She turned and said to us, "*What a beautiful day. What a blessing. We have so much to be thankful for.*" I immediately resonated with what she spoke to us. It spoke to my heart, for as I sat there, I was thankful for how fortunate I was to have those moments of sheer joy and "wow" about the beauty of the natural world. My anxieties had drifted away and were forgotten for the moment in noticing the great and seemingly simple gift that God was holding out to me: and it didn't cost a thing to enjoy it, except my attention! *Thank you God! Wow!*

Being Persistent in prayer is not about throwing a tantrum until you get what you want, or bugging the unjust judge. Such behavior is beneath the relationship we ought to have with God: one of trust in God's grace and compassion. Jesus draws the comparison here between the unjust judge, who cares nothing for the people he serves, to show how much more caring and loving God is than such an earthly and flawed judge, who, through the widow's persistence, can see his way to granting justice. God loves and desires justice as much as we do, and more so. God is just, and God will ultimately right the wrongs which we perceive, if they are truly injustices. It may

take a while, but justice will prevail in the end. It may even take a lifetime of prayer, but the day will come. At that moment, we should be awestruck, and utter a big “wow!” for living to see the justice come and realizing we are not forgotten, nor are our concerns. God remembers better than we do.

Problem is, our vision of justice is often colored by our limited perspective. We fail to see our own responsibility for the injustice or wrong that occurred. And how God brings forth justice may not suit the fantasies of revenge which we harbor in our heart of hearts. But revenge taking is not God’s way of justice. This is how *we* think about justice, as an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and so on. The justice of God includes healing, forgiveness, and restoration. God seeks the good of all God’s children, including those whom we perceive to be our enemies. Is it wrong for God to show mercy and compassion on another sinner, especially when we have received the same measure or much more for our own errors and sins?

To be persistent in prayer is to live, to breathe, to be the creature whom God created you to be. And prayer begins in silence, pushing out all the distractions of this world and focusing on our relationship with God. God is always there, closer than we think or can imagine. Though we walk in the valley of the shadow of death, God is there, God’s rod and staff give us comfort, a little nudge to guide us and show us the way through the “low travels” of life. Prayer is God’s GPS. Why would you have a GPS unit and not pay attention to what it is telling you about where you should go and what direction you should take?

The other exhortation this morning is about *not giving up*. We should not be so quick to throw in the towel and quit our prayers, simply because we did not get an instant answer or result. God answers our prayers-*a/ways*-but in God's time, with God's perspective on the world and our needs, which may be very different from what we perceive.

Keep faith! Do not lose heart! God is answering your prayers. God will answer your prayers. Just keep faith! Don't be a quitter, for what does a quitter get? Why bother to try if all you will end up doing is quitting when the going gets tough? Why not be patient with God, as God is patient with us?

It is true in life that the squeaky wheel gets oiled. But does that mean we should be squeaky? *Persistent, yes*. We should be persistent in our prayers, and in our persistence we will grow day by day. Our prayer will teach us new things, and reveal much to us about God, the world and ourselves. Persist in prayer and find your answer, but be patient. God will answer your prayer and is answering it, but not on your timetable, but rather, on God's.

We ought to hold up our concerns honestly to God. But what I have found in my own prayer life, is that this relationship with God demands that I must be *honest* with myself, and careful about what I am seeking. It is wise to try to see your life from God's point of view. If we love someone, being dishonest with them is a harbinger of failure in a relationship. And the problem with God is that God knows the truth before we do, and God knows our hearts. God knows whether we are being truthful or not. And yes, there are times when we are not able to face a hard truth, so we may hide behind a self-deceit. However, prayer will lead us to see and except the truth, and when we meet the truth and embrace it, it is always a freeing

experience that empowers us. Persistent honesty is what is demanded in our life of prayer.

I know I have reminded you before about the words of the collect from the Book of Common Prayer, but here they are again to reinforce the idea of praying always: *[from prayer # 54, BCP, p For Those We Love]* “Almighty God, we entrust all who are dear to us to thy never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come, knowing that thou art doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is doing this always. Pray always, without ceasing, as St. Paul teaches. Take heart, do not give up, but be persistent, “knowing that God is doing for us better things than we can desire or pray for...” AMEN