

Proper 24

You can picture the parables of Jesus in the wonderful gift of your imagination.
Turn the words from the page or in your ear into a scene in your mind.

Put the characters of a stage.

Today, it is a woman and a man.

The woman is no-nonsense, ambitious, frank in her desire to get what she wants.
Some found her annoying and didn't like her style.

Maybe favored pantsuits.

The man is powerful, likely wealthy, entirely used to getting his way.

Some people likely found him arrogant and thought him unjust.

Perhaps you have seen these characters before!

Maybe on the stage of last week's debate, and on the national stage for these last troubling months.

So it is good news that Jesus told this story about the tenacious widow and the unjust judge,

to teach the disciples about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

Some seasons of life are long and hard;

prayer and putting one foot in front of the other will get us through them.

November 9 will also most surely come

and we will be freed from the anxiety and despondency of this election season.

24 days, friends.

Pray for our country every one of them,

do what you can do every day to strengthen the bonds of our common life.

Pray always and do not lose heart.

Putting aside my election metaphor, it is the widow in the parable who patterns discipleship for us.

She sought justice, the healing of her loss, and she frankly expressed her need day by day.

She was an inspiration to the Christians who suffered under Nero and Domitian,

to the poor in every age who wonder if anyone cares,

to Christians in every age who have honestly pleaded to God

for their case to be heard and judged.

Without the power of wealth or office to make her case,

she had only persistence, prayer, and holy confidence in her cause.

That's about all we have as well.

The modern world has pushed the church into a very private realm.

We try to get out of it, to take control of the public square and have power on worldly terms.

Billy Graham and the presidents, social media Sunday, and ministers running for local office are all ways we try to reclaim the power we once had; the days in which we were more like the judge than the widow. But really, without the cultural power and riches we once enjoyed, we are joyfully reduced to our original condition, a people who offer witness, who plead and cajole, who pray always and do not lose heart, a people who belong to the Crucified, not the coercive.

So we are called to a prayerful persistence, to reminding the world of the ways of the Kingdom, of the gift of grace, of the wonder of forgiveness. That these are offered in Jesus is the message we offer, persistently, not losing heart. And God, Jesus, explains at the end of the lesson, is **not** like the unjust judge. God is quick to hear and ready to respond. Our prayerful persistence is required to remind the world of the Gospel, not to remind the God who sent Jesus into the world of our needs

Perhaps the widow is even more an image of God than an image of faithful humanity, for ours is a god of relentless love. Tapping at the windows of our lives, speaking in the silence of the night, in the calling of the morning birds, in the unexpected compassion of those who reach out to us in desperate times.

The living and loving God, like this woman, will not take the “no” of our sin as the final answer and wears us down with relentless love.

We, like, the unjust judge, need to save ourselves the trouble and give in.