

*Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost*

October 20, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 18:1-8

*Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 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? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. (NIV)*

Have you ever given in and done something for someone because, well, they completely wore you out? “Honey, are you going to fix the sink? Honey, don’t forget about this sink. It sure would be nice if I could use the sink. My sink still isn’t working. This sink isn’t going to fix itself you know.” So when you finally have some free time you can’t help but use it fixing the sink. Or, “Mommy, can we stop for ice cream?” Mom, it’s hot and ice cream would be nice right now. Doesn’t ice cream sound good mom? Mom you’re the best, and there is a Dairy Queen around the corner.” I’m sure this conversation has ended with many a child enjoying some ice cream. Or, “Dad can you take me to a park? Dad, can we play ball? Dad, want to play a game?” Or in my house, “Dad can we go golfing?” Dad...dad....dad...play...play...play!” After so much of this you decide to put the work aside and take some time to play.

Persistence, so many times, pays off. And it doesn’t even have come from someone we love or who is close to us. It could be a co-worker that you don’t see eye to eye with that keeps harping on something they want you to do. While you would rather spend your time on other things you do it just to get them off of your back. We will often do things or get things done for us in life because of persistence. Jesus tells a story today about this kind of persistence. He teaches this story to give us a lesson about prayer. God’s Word before us today is training us to: **Always pray and not give up!**

Unlike some other parables, we don’t have to carefully examine this parable to find the meaning. Right up front Jesus tells us the lesson He wants His disciple to learn: “**Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.**” So Jesus tells a parable about a judge and a widow. This judge is not a good one. He doesn’t care about God. He doesn’t care about men. Then there is a widow. In many places in the Scriptures we hear about how much God cares for widows and how He wants us to do the same. Yet, often widows both in Biblical times and today are taken advantage of by deceivers. This appears to be the case here as this poor widow comes to this judge and pleads her case. And this unkind, unloving, uncaring, and unjust judge refuses to help this poor widow. He doesn’t really care if she gets justice or not.

So what does this widow do? She keeps pleading. She keeps begging for help. She keeps asking for justice. She will not let it go. She continues to cry out. And guess

what? In the end she got it. Why? Not because this judge suddenly feared God or started to care about this widow or other people. Instead, Jesus tells us to listen to what this unjust judge says: ***“Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!”*** The Greek literally says that the judge will give her what she wants so he doesn’t get a black eye from her constant punching. Like a boxer this woman kept jabbing with her request. This woman kept asking and asking and asking. She would not give up. She was persistent. She knew she had a case and she was not going to give in until she got justice.

Dear friends: pray like this woman. Go to God as often as you are able. Jesus says he is telling this parable to train us to always pray. The apostle Paul writes that we are to ***“Pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5)***. Like Jacob don’t let go – pray all night if necessary. God wants us to be persistent in our prayers. He wants us to keep asking and asking and asking. God wants us to honor Him by calling upon Him in the day of trouble. The Lord wants us to ask, and seek, and knock on a regular basis. God doesn’t want us to be anxious about anything, but instead to come to Him with prayers and petitions in everything.

I want you to think about something this morning. What are we telling God when we don’t speak to Him in prayer? I guess the only reason we wouldn’t pray is if we don’t need Him for anything. Or we have nothing to ask. Or we don’t have anything to confess. Or we don’t have anything for which we want to give thanks. Or we don’t have anyone we know and love who has troubles or problems which need to be taken before His throne. Or we don’t have an all-powerful God who cares for us. You see what I’m getting at here! We have more reasons than we could ever count to pray. In fact, Jesus teaches this parable after telling His disciples there will be suffering and difficult days ahead.

That is why Jesus says to always pray, and then He adds ***“and not give up.”*** Have you ever felt like giving up? You pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and nothing seems to change. Jesus says “Don’t give up!” This widow sure didn’t and she was speaking to an unjust judge. She kept pleading her case before a man who didn’t really care about her or want to listen to her. How much more can we keep praying to our Just Judge! How much more shouldn’t you keep pleading your case before your God who truly cares for you! Why would we ever stop talking to our God who wants to listen to us?

Jesus says, ***“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? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.”*** What does this mean? When it appears that our prayers are going unanswered, God is never putting us off. God hears us. He is listening. He is answering. As we read in our epistle today, ***“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us –whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5)***. Did you notice a key point there? If we ask according to His will, not our will, we will have whatever we ask. In other words, God will always answer with what is best for us.

Is there any better example of this than Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane? Remember what Jesus kept asking God the Father throughout that dark

night – three times in fact. He asked God if there was another way to pay for sins rather than Him drinking the full cup of God’s wrath. Remember how Jesus persisted in this prayer until drops of bloody sweat dripped from His head. He kept asking if there was another way other than the cross that God find it. All the time Jesus added **“yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22)**. Of course, we all know how God answered this prayer. He did so with what was best for you and me! He answered with the biggest and most loving “NO” God has ever given. For Jesus needed to go to the cross and suffer for all the times we have sinfully neglected this great privilege of prayer. Jesus needed to suffer and die to make sufficient payment before the world’s just Judge. Jesus needed to die and rise again to pay our entrance into heaven. So in love for us too great to ever measure that’s what Jesus did!

Jesus also paid for our full access now to our heavenly Father in prayer. If we as children knew how to get things from our earthly dads remember Jesus words, **“If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7)** So always pray and do not give up. Pray continually. Pray persistently. When you begin to feel there is no answer pray even more. You have a just Judge who is listening and who loves you. Just try to wear Him out! He is betting you can’t do it! **“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer” (1 Peter 3)**. Amen.