

10/19/25
19th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from October 12th – October 18th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O Lord God, tireless guardian of your people, you are always ready to hear our cries. Teach us to rely day and night on your care. Inspire us to seek your enduring justice for all this suffering world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 17:11-19) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 18:1-8

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. According to Luke 18, how are we to pray? Whose prayer is answered? How will God answer prayer?
2. How is the judge's character portrayed, both in his own words and Jesus' description?
3. What contrast does Jesus draw between the unjust judge and God?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Describe a time where you had to plead your case with someone, where you had to try to convince someone you were right. What was that like?
2. What has caused you to go to God continually in prayer recently?
3. Who in your life models persistence?

Memorize this verse: "I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) When have you been granted justice?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 121. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

So, what is this parable about? I realize this isn't the first time we've asked this question recently, but I find this to be yet another rather vexing little story. In part, that's because the parable seems to end one way, promising that God will indeed grant justice quickly to those who call out for it, while Luke introduces the story with another interpretive slant altogether, encouraging Jesus' followers to pray always and not lose heart. Then again, perhaps the interpretive key falls right in the middle, as we are encouraged to beseech God day and night for justice and for all those things we most need, just as this widow does.

I am struck by another facet of this parable based on one simple observation: when something is repeated in a parable, it usually means it's important. Interestingly, two things are repeated in this story. The first is the characterization of the unjust judge as one who "neither feared God nor had respect for people." Jesus uses this characterization to describe the judge at the outset of the parable itself, and then the judge himself acknowledges the same when "thinking aloud" about how he will deal with this pesky widow. And because this phrase is repeated twice, I think it offers a shorthand, and perhaps even minimalist, definition of Luke's sense of just behavior. Acting justly, according to Luke, is simply fearing God and respecting others. Or, as such affirmations are usually linked, for Luke the root of all justice is to demonstrate your fear/awe of God by respecting those around you. I find this not only interesting but also really helpful, because many of us have different definitions of what constitutes just action in any given set of circumstances. I think that's both understandable and fair, even when we don't necessarily agree with the definitions others may have. We may all agree that it's incumbent on us to care for the poor, but we may disagree on the best way to do that. And we may agree that we should care for the earth, but have very different approaches on how to pursue that goal. In these cases, not only may we have a different sense of how to pursue these worthy ends, but when we declare that our way is the truly "just" way, we imply that those who differ are unjust. Which is why I find this minimalist definition of just behavior rather helpful. The beginning of justice, according to Jesus, is when we show our awe for God by respecting those around us, by granting them a measure of dignity, by being willing to view them as fellow children of God who are worthy of our respect and fair treatment.

Which brings me to the second phrase, this one about the widow. It is not an exact repetition, as with the judge, but it is noted, again first by Jesus and then by the judge, that this widow keeps coming to demand justice. Which reminds us that we have a duty not only to treat others with respect but to petition others to do the same. Jesus, in this parable, invites us to imagine two things. First, that even someone like this widow – one of the most vulnerable persons in the biblical world – can make a difference by petitioning for just behavior. And second, that when we do so God is listening and, indeed, will answer our persistent cries quickly. All of which comes as a helpful reminder, an important word of instruction, and a deeply important promise about the character of the God we know in Jesus.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen