

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost [Proper 24c]

Trinity Lutheran Church, Alamogordo

October 19, 2025

Luke 18:1–8

And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’ “And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on Earth?”

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

What kind of Judge is God?

For a picture of God as our Judge, Jesus gives us the example of an unrighteous earthly judge, a terrible judge, a ridiculous judge, a judge who has no respect for the Law, neither the Law of God nor the Law of man! Yet, he goes on issuing judgments! He won't step down from the bench.

What is Jesus showing us about God his Father?

What is Jesus saying about prayer, our prayer, each of us?

Pray, He says.

Pray and do not lose heart.

If you don't pray, you will lose heart, you will be discouraged, because there is nothing more discouraging than to have your voice not heard. But to have your voice heard, *Pray*. Pray unceasingly, at all times. Pray so that God the Father, the Judge of all, has no choice but to hear your prayer, because you wear him down.

Intercede to God the Father as an emptied-out widow intercedes to a corrupt judge, because ... that is the way Jesus tells us to pray.

This doesn't sound very pious.

We are more used to thinking of God in predictable, nice-sounding terms, like *"Merciful and Gracious Father,"* like *"Omnipotent and loving creator,"* like *"Righteous and Fair judge."*

But when Jesus tells a parable to teach us how to pray to his Father always without losing heart, his point of comparison to his Father is not a King who loves and supports those who keep the Law, nor a judge who likes giving verdicts that uphold those who are respectable, but his point of comparison is ... an unrighteous judge. A judge with no respect for the Law, no regard for persons.

This is a ridiculous judge, a terrible judge. A judge must have either respect for the Law, for what is right, or a respect for people, for what they will think, so that if he doesn't uphold the Law, at least he comes across looking like he's kind and caring.

This judge that Jesus describes is out there on his own; he's out in legal La La land. He doesn't care about the Law, he doesn't care about people, he issues his own rulings, even contrary to the Law. He's not even in Judge Judy territory. Maybe we can think of this judge as being in Judge Roy Bean territory.

We remember our history. Before he was a judge, Roy Bean had joined up with the army that was on the losing side of the Battle of Glorieta Pass. As that army retreated from New Mexico, Roy Bean went with them back down to Texas and then got himself run out of the dairy business when he was caught watering down the milk. Later he was a butcher, butchering cattle that he had taken from other ranchers. Then he bought a saloon. Then, when he got himself appointed as a judge, his first act was to shoot up the saloon that belonged to his competitor, so that he could have all the saloon business to himself. There are more stories about Judge Roy Bean, but all of them serve to reveal a man of no respect for the Law, and no regard for others, as long as he could continue doing whatever he wanted. Yet, he was a judge. He sat on the bench, made rulings, issued verdicts, and went down in our history as an unrighteous judge.

What do you do if you are before the bench of Judge Roy Bean?

You can't appeal to the Law, he has no regard for that. You can't appeal to him to treat you honorably as a person, he has no regard for that. All you can do is threaten him, if you're strong enough, or pay him off, if rich enough.

Jesus speaks of a widow before the unrighteous judge. A widow is emptied out, she has no protector, no resources. She is weakest of all. She can't threaten the unrighteous judge—with what would she do that? She can't bribe him, she's already being chased down by creditors:

And there was a widow in that city,

said Jesus,

who kept coming to [the unrighteous judge] and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'

[Luke 18]

From *that* we are to learn how to pray always, constantly, and without losing heart?

"Yes,"

says the Lord Jesus,

"Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on Earth?"

Pray constantly, without losing heart. Pray without any appeal to the Law, for the Law is just and upright, searching out sin, exposing guilt, increasing shame, and by the Law, no sinner will find relief in the Judge's court.

Pray without any appeal to persons, for while we may build ourselves up on Earth, providing for ourselves the fittings for a fine reputation, the Judge before whom we appear is no respecter of persons, and has no regard for our reputations.

Pray as a widow. As one who has no legal standing, nothing with which to influence the judge, no leverage at all—pray as an emptied-out, disrespected widow who can't but pray, for that's all she has. Pray without losing heart.

Will God the Judge not hear that prayer? He *wants* to hear that prayer. He wants our voices to pray that prayer. He sent his own Son to teach us to pray that prayer.

And for that prayer, His Son died.

When the Pharisees and Scribes and Teachers of the Law heard Jesus teaching people to pray as an emptied-out widow before an unrighteous judge, they could not bear that teaching, they had to see Jesus to the cross.

For the teaching of the Law is to teach people to be upright, to be righteous, to be better Christians than others, to come before God with something to give him, to live by the Law.

No,
says Jesus,

No one lives by the Law, not before the eternal Judge. The Law accuses and crushes, and anyone coming before the judge arguing the Law, he will be condemned!

Come before the judge as a sinner, like an emptied-out widow.

Come before the judge expecting the most ridiculous judgment of all, that the one who has nothing, who deserves nothing, who can gain nothing—that one will be declared to be the richest of all in the eyes of God the judge.

Pray, intercede, at all times, without doubt, for this prayer, for this intercession from the lips of those who are nothing but emptied-out, Jesus, the only righteous one, died.

With his own blood, he purchased you.

We who have no wealth, no standing in the court, who can only laugh at our pathetic attempts to give ourselves standing, we belong now to him. His righteousness is now our righteousness, his Father, the judge of all people, hears our prayer.

And today, God the Father, the eternal Judge, sends forth to us his verdict, by His Son, who says to us, *Pray, Pray constantly, without doubt. Without doubt, Take and eat, Take and drink, this is my Body, my Blood, your sins are forgiven.*

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.