

101622 Sermon "Always Pray" Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told this parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that we should always pray and not lose heart. In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. Even though he was a judge, the Bible says he was unjust. He was probably a man who gave special treatment to those who had wealth and power, and simply ignored the poor and powerless. In that city a powerless and helpless widow came to him and asked for help, but he refused. Still, the widow kept coming and asking for help. The judge, who did not fear God and was unjust, nevertheless ends up hearing what the widow has to say so that he doesn't have to hear any more of her complaining.

We often hear how we draw conclusions from this story, that if we strongly demand from God and pray persistently, God will hear us. Does this parable really mean that? Because the unjust judge did not want to be bothered and listened to the widow's petition, does God hear our prayers because he does not want to be bothered? No! That's a completely wrong point. In order to interpret today's parable rightly, we need to start by thinking again about why Jesus gave this parable.

Let's read verse 1. "Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart." That's the purpose of this parable! He's going to tell us why we should always pray and not lose heart. To lose heart is the Greek word for [ekkakeo], which means 'to get tired, to be discouraged, to lose energy'. Folks, we get tired too easily on many occasions. We lose energy too easily in our worldly affairs as well as in spiritual matters. When things go well according to my plan, we sing of the good God, but when we encounter difficult news and difficult situations like these days, our hearts get tired easily. And then we stop praying. If you have such an experience, listen carefully to today's sermon!

In verse 3, the reason this widow went to the judge was 'Grant me justice against my opponent'. At first glance, it sounds like 'to take revenge', but if you look up the original Bible, the Greek word [ekdikeo] means 'to defend, to protect, to deal justly'. In other words, this widow is not asking for revenge, but only to treat her situation fairly. What kind of injustice did this widow face? First, looking at the Old Testament law, God commanded

the Israelites not to harm widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22). Psalm 68:5 describes God as "Father of orphans and Judge of widows." He told the Israeli peasants to leave a small amount of grain for the Levites, widows, orphans and strangers to glean in the fields. You can see it in the book of Ruth.

Going back to New Testament times, Jesus said that He would not leave His disciples "as orphans" (John 14:18). What was the reason Jesus said this? If you look at the reality in which they lived, there were many instances in which innocent people were sacrificed to the injustice and heartless. Most notably, the Jewish widow was entitled to financial support from her husband's heirs. However, the social situation at that time, seen through the words of Jesus, was that there were many scribes who swallowed widows' houses. So Jesus rebuked them. Mark 12:40 says, "They are those who devour widows' houses and make long prayers with hypocrisy, and the judgment they receive will be more severe."

We do not know the exact reason, but the widow in Luke 18 might have been in a similar situation. Even if she asked for help, the judge would not listen, so she often went to him and kept asking for help. As we can read the expression "often" in verse 3, it is also said that prayer with fervent and strong cry is the essence of this parable. To some extent, this is true, but you have to be careful here. As my parents told me, I used to throw a tantrum a lot when I couldn't get something I wanted to have. Of course, this was when I was young and I try not to do it now. So, is it like when a child throws a tantrum, parents are forced to buy junk food, buy expensive toys, and if a child is stubborn, is it right to give unconditionally regardless of whether the child is spoiled or not? Would you do that? Do you think God would do that?

We were often taught to pray passionately, risking our lives, but if you look closely, in reality, such a prayer is not a prayer to know Heavenly Father's will, but a prayer to only reveal our will to God, and there are many times when our prayers are forcing our requests on God. In this respect, today's parable is not the perseverance of a widow who goes to the judge and asks for it, nor is it a prayer technique that requires you to throw a tantrum, nor is it a very passionate prayer to fulfill your heart's desires. The theme of Jesus' parable today is the righteous Heavenly

Father! In today's parable, we need to focus not on the passionate widow, but on our Heavenly Father, who is not like the unjust judge, and we arrive at the right interpretation!

Because our God is not like the unjust judge, God does not listen only when we annoy and torment God. Matthew 6:30 says, "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" Jesus admonishes us not to worry about what we will eat or what we will wear. So, what is important to us today, if not to be stubborn and pray to God? As recorded in verse 8, it is trusting our Heavenly Father who wants to hear your grudges and prayers. Believe God is faithful! Prayer is not answered because you ask passionately, but when you pray and believe in God as a faithful heavenly Father, God answers your prayer. God who is completely different from the unjust judge is the basis for answering your prayers, and the reason you should always pray is because you believe in God's disposition. God is righteous. God is merciful. God is faithful.

The reason you should always pray is not to get everything you want, but always to stand on your faith in God as your good heavenly Father! When we look at the world, the situation, and the people, we often misunderstand God. So pray today to believe that Heavenly Father is good and righteous. The purpose is not to pray for a long time, but because we often miss God, we always pray in order not to miss God. We often misunderstand God as a bad god looking at our situation and circumstances, so we need to pray always! Furthermore, in order to realize that understanding, seeking, and obeying Heavenly Father's will is the most blessed way, we must pray always without becoming discouraged!

How many people still pray and their lives do not change, and they still only get more greedy while praying! They seem to be praying for a long time, but they seem to be praying hard, but we have to be careful about life in which there is no change in life, they become more arrogant, they only know themselves, and there is only more greed. This was clearly the way of life of the Pharisees 2,000 years ago. The meaning of this parable is that the unjust judge reluctantly grants the widow's repeated requests, but God, the righteous judge, faithfully answers the prayers of his chosen children. The reason God hears our prayers is not because we pray

persistently and we pray for a long time. Because God answers the prayers of his children, we must continue to pray, trusting in God as our Heavenly Father and not becoming discouraged.

Evangelist Gypsy Smith, was asked what the secret of revival is. He said, "Go home. Take a piece of chalk. Draw a circle around yourself. Then pray, 'O Lord, revive everything inside this circle.'"

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, believe in God as a righteous and faithful Father! As a child of God who inherited the kingdom of God, please do not lose heart and pray always to stand on that faith. Then our Lord will be with you until the end of the world, and will be the eternal guide that leads you to the eternal kingdom of God. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.