

Sunday, July 7, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 31 | Luke 18:1-8 | "Waiting & Praying"

Last week, we explored the end times. And we learned that with Jesus' advent, the end times had already begun 2,000 years ago. But while the Kingdom of God was already "in the midst" of us, it was also yet to come. Today, we find ourselves in the inauguration period of Jesus' reign; his consummation is still to come. And when it does come, **it will not be hidden**. Jesus' return will be like lightning in the sky. Furthermore, like the days of Noah and Lot, **the end of days will not be pleasant**. And while we may think God is taking his time, we must know that that fateful day **cannot be delayed**. As such, we must be ready now for the Lord to return at any time. We mustn't wait, thinking we have all the time in the world to make things right. Mark my words: ***there are no second chances at the Second Coming.***

Arguably, one of the most difficult games is the *waiting game*. All who've been stuck in traffic know that waiting is the *worst*. A child waiting for Christmas may become discouraged when they realize the holiday comes once a year. A pregnant mother, though she knows her child will come eventually, finds that her last trimester moves at a snail's pace. An engaged couple may view the engagement period as being unbearably long.

Likewise, waiting for Jesus' return may become disheartening if we're not careful. The Church today is especially susceptible to such discouragement since she's waited for her Groom to return for over 2,000 years. She may even start to feel like the Lord will never come back. Though she knows intellectually that the Second Coming will occur, emotionally, she's at risk of giving way to melancholy.

What should the Church do when she gets tired of waiting? Where should she go when she thinks her Husband has forgotten all about her? As today's passage will show, she ought to pray.

Just as Luke began this passage by giving us the lesson, I will start by giving you the takeaway.

So, what's the takeaway?

Routine prayer keeps **despair** at bay.

READ: Luke 18:1 (ESV)

¹ And he told them a **parable** to the effect that they ought **always to pray** and **not lose heart**.

Given the context, it makes sense why Jesus would encourage the disciples “[always to pray and not lose heart](#).” The Second Coming was coming, but until it came, Christ-followers might be tempted to “[lose heart](#),” which is to say, they might “give up,” “quit,” or “throw in the towel.” As the proverbs say, “[Hope deferred makes the heart sick](#)” (Prov. 13:12a). Waiting for Jesus to return *but never seeing it for yourself* can be a discouraging undertaking, so discouraging, in fact, that one might abandon hope entirely. Especially in light of all the injustices in the world.

Jesus doesn’t want his disciples to surrender to despair. So, he gives them something to do while they wait: **pray**. [Routine prayer keeps despair at bay](#). Those who make it their habit to hope through prayer will not faint; they will not be so discouraged that they quit. Throwing oneself on the “[throne of grace](#)” will find the Lord ready and willing to offer “[help in time of need](#)” (Heb. 4:16). Despair slinks back into the shadows in the face of the Light of the world.

And to illustrate this, he gives a parable about a widow who won’t take no for an answer.

- i. The **widow** was persistent with her request, **not knowing** if she’d receive any justice from an **unjust** judge.

READ: Luke 18:2-6 (ESV)

² He said, “In a certain city there was [a judge](#) who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was [a widow](#) in that city who [kept coming](#) to him and saying, ‘Give me [justice](#) against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow [keeps bothering](#) me, I will give her [justice](#), so that she will not beat me down by her [continual coming](#).’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “[Hear](#) what the [unrighteous](#) judge says.”

The unjust judge was unmoved by appealing to his **piety**; he cared not for God. Furthermore, he would not be persuaded by appealing to **charity**; he cared not for people. He was only convinced to act when his **tranquility** was disrupted; he cared only for himself.

We’re told the widow came to the judge three times: vs. 3 – “kept coming,” vs. 5 – “keeps bothering,” and “continual coming.” [But the verb “kept coming” refers to “repeated appeals for aid.”](#)¹ So, we can assume she came to the judge more than three times.

[The woman’s persistence disrupted the judge’s serenity](#). He knew she would continue nagging him until she got what she wanted. Take away a man's peace, and he will do whatever it takes

¹ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1448.

to get it back. The hassle of taking the widow's case wasn't as bad as the hassle of having to listen to her incessant pleas for help.

- ii. **Christians** persist with their requests, **knowing** they'll receive **swift** justice from a **just** God.

READ: Luke 18:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ And will not God give **justice** to his elect, who **cry** to him **day and night**? Will he **delay** long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give **justice** to them **speedily**. Nevertheless, **when** the Son of Man **comes**, will he find **faith** on earth?"

"Will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?" The answer, of course, is yes (cf. Psa. 10; 82). "Will he delay long over them?" The answer is no. According to Jesus, "he will give justice to [his elect] speedily." But it's been 2,000 years? It doesn't **seem** like God is **swift to give justice**. God may **seem** like he delays exacting justice, but he doesn't. Whenever his justice finally does come, it will be swift.

Again, remember that we're in the **inauguration**, not the **consummation**, of God's Kingdom. In one sense, we've been **vindicated** by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. But in another sense, our **full vindication** is yet to come with Christ's return. **We wouldn't say that a king has delayed taking the throne during the inaugural period.** The time to take the throne simply has yet to happen. But people know that, eventually, the king **will** sit on his throne.

God the Father knows the exact hour of Jesus' return (cf. Matt. 24:36). The date is set and will not be put off. Until then, we must wait and pray, knowing that the day of the Lord is coming, and when it arrives, everything that happens will happen quickly (**i.e., preparing for the wedding day vs. the wedding day**).

Okay. Jesus' return will not be delayed. But still, why has he yet to come back? Again, it's been 2,000 years!

READ: 2 Peter 3:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord **one day** is as a **thousand years**, and a **thousand years** as **one day**. ⁹ The Lord is **not** slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, **not** wishing that any should **perish**, but that all should reach **repentance**. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like **a thief**, and then the heavens will pass away **with a roar**, and the heavenly bodies will be **burned up** and **dissolved**, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be **exposed**.

Though we cannot know why Jesus' return should be delayed, we can at least assume that should he seem like he delays, it is because he does not wish "that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." The day of the Lord has yet to happen because there are still those who have yet to repent. Considering eternity, "what is the span of time between Christ's first and second comings?"²

Even though the widow knew the judge was unjust and that he cared not what man or God thought of him, she kept coming to him over and over again. She had no guarantee that this tactic would work. But her persistence paid off. Though the odds were stacked against her, in the end, she got what she wanted because she never gave up.

If that is true when it comes to a widow and an unjust judge, how much more when it comes to us and God? We are no widow. We are God's "elect" children. And God is not a judge with questionable morals. He is good, right, and perfect; "he will give justice...speedily."

Thus, knowing our status in God's family and knowing that the Father is just, would we not take full advantage of our access to him? Would we not come to him constantly, persistently, and continually, not out of desperation but out of conviction, knowing our requests would be heard and answered?

Yet, while we are motivated to pray to God daily, we still fail to pray. This is why Jesus says somewhat cryptically, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" We want to respond by saying, "Yes! Lord, you'll find faith in my house!" But how often in a week do you go without praying? What if Jesus were to have come back on a day when you hadn't prayed?

So, what's the takeaway?

Routine prayer keeps **despair** at bay.

READ: Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

READ: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal

² Bock, Darrell L., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1455.

weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Video Description:

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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