

## The Truth of the Matter

10.16.16

Luke 18:1-8 (NLT) - Parable of the Persistent Widow

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. **2** “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. **3** A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ **4** The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, **5** but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’”

**6** Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. **7** Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? **8** I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?”

The Word of God for the people of God

**THANKS BE TO GOD!**

Opening story -  
God is Good!

Bruce Larson tells of a time he was in NYC riding the subway. He recalls noticing something on the wall that surprised him. It was from the New York Bible Society. He read these words (from Psalm 37:25): “*I have been young and now I am old, yet have not seen the righteous forsaken nor seen their children begging for bread.*” Larson thought it was a bizarre message in that city of abysmal slums and desperate poverty. But he thought to himself: “*This is the other side of the coin of Christian sacrifice.*”

He remembered Jesus’ words: “*Whoever saves their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life will find it.*”

As Followers of Jesus, we are called to surrender everything and follow Jesus. We are challenged to *Give up our possessions, our wealth, our family, our security, our familiarity, our home. Leave our comfort zones and follow Jesus.* But we don’t always realize what is waiting on the other side. There is a Cost to Discipleship... but there are many blessings God is waiting to pour out on us.

In this chapter in Luke’s gospel, we discover some of the qualities needed to be recipients of God’s abundant blessings.

This morning we will look at one of those qualities. Persistence. Constancy. Perseverance.

Determination. “*Don’t give up. Don’t Quit! Hang in there.*”

Jesus tells this story to convey this point.

A widow is involved in a lawsuit and wants the judge to help resolve it, and rule in her favor. Since judges usually sat in public places where cases were heard. the widow’s repeated requests were heard in front of many people.

After some time, the judge decides to grant her request - not because it’s the right thing to do, but because she was bothering him and wearing him down. Besides, publicly ignoring her would not do him any favors. (Common English Bible Study Bible; © 2013 Common English Bible; Joel Green, Gen. Editor; Luke 18 pp. 148 NT]

After telling the story, Jesus adds:

*If an unjust, ungodly judge will grant a request, how much more will a loving, gracious, just God hear our cries for help?* (Communicator’s Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 35 “An Offer You Can’t Refuse” pp. 253 -255)

What’s the point of this story?

Persistence in prayer brings results. (Interpreter's Bible, © 1952 Pierce and Smith; Abingdon Press; NY, Nashville' Vol. viii, Luke/John; pp. 306- 308)

*“Don't give up. Don't Quit! Hang in there.”*

Persistence. Constancy. Perseverance. Determination. The widow was persistent because she believed all things were possible!

Lloyd Ogilvie, Presbyterian Pastor from Hollywood CA, once told the story of one of the elders in his church. This man had extravagant faith, and believed that God can do all things. Anytime a new idea was brought up, he listened, asked questions, then invariably would say: ***“WHY NOT?! If this is for God and the Kingdom- Why NOT?”***

The other elders once decided to test him, and so they conspired with all sorts of outrageous ideas for expanding the Kingdom in some way. Each time, he listened and gave an expected answer. ***“WHY NOT?!”***

You see, deep in his heart, he truly believed that God would lead the church into triumph. (II Cor 2.14)

*In What Ways do we respond when we hear some outrageous ideas for expanding God's kingdom?*

(Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 35 “An Offer You Can't Refuse” pp. 253 -255)

Robert Schuller, Crystal Cathedral, Possibility Thinking - once said that there is something wrong with every good idea. It doesn't take any faith to point out the flaws. He suggests, that instead of saying: *“We can't afford that”* or *“That would never work”* try saying *“Why NOT?! Let's see if we can't find a way to do it!”* (Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 35 “An Offer You Can't Refuse” pp. 253 -255)

The great psychologist William James said:

*“Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living and your belief will create that fact.”* (Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 35 “An Offer You Can't Refuse” pp. 253 -255)

Larson: Like the woman in the parable, believe that all things are possible. Persist. Persevere. Don't give up! (Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 35 “An Offer You Can't Refuse” pp. 253 -255)

Two faithful servants (John Ri and Sarah Dickey) embody something of the confident praying for justice. One prayer expresses confidence that justice will be done offering strength in the midst of difficult circumstances. The other's life work was its own confident and persistent prayer for justice.

The story of Christianity coming into Korea is a long, painful one. Many gave their lives before there was a significant group (9000 living converts), while as many as 10,000 may have been killed for their faith.

John Ri was evangelized by a French missionary, and was, with more than 100 others, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for this faith in 1839. One reason we know his name is the prayer he left behind, recently made into a song, by Michael Glenn Bell.

The sins of my entire life by which I have offended you  
weigh me down like a mountain of my own creation.

I cannot bear this alone.

But your strength will keep me from falling.

The prayers of others will uphold me, in my time of need.

(From *Martyrs Prayers*, Liner Notes, page 4).

John Ri's prayer is powerful teaching itself. And it reflects the powerful teaching of the lay missionary who taught him, and others with him, under the cover of darkness for months on end. (Dawn Chesser, UMC Discipleship Ministries)

"The prayers of others will uphold me, in my time of need."

Indeed. Such prayers by others with whom he was imprisoned, and the presence in his life of such a dedicated teacher, upheld John Ri until his death for the sake of the gospel of Christ.

Sarah Ann Dickey dedicated her life working to create educational opportunities for African Americans after the Civil War. Like confident and persistent prayer, she made sure that many who had been blocked from knowledge and participation, could not only know the Lord, but would also spread the knowledge and love of God throughout American culture. Even in the face of a shot fired at her by the Ku Klux Klan in Clinton, Mississippi, she was not deterred in her mission. She responded, "I have come here to do God's work, and only death itself will deter me." The Klan never bothered her after that. (*The New England Quarterly Journal*, Vol 40, No 2 (June 1967), page 287). (Dawn Chesser, UMC Discipleship Ministries)

*Don't give up. Don't Quit! Hang in there."*

Persistence. Constancy. Perseverance. Determination.

As God's Beloved Children, we are dearly loved and accepted just as we are. God desires the very best for each of us. Let us with confidence and persistence, boldly seek God with all our hearts.