

# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME**

**19th October 2025**

**Luke 18:1** Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. **2** He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. **3** In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ **4** For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’” **6** And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? **8** I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

## KIND OF WRITING

This is a parable, which means that the details cannot be pressed too hard. Usually a parable has a main point to make. In this passage, Luke gives the parable a heading which points us clearly to the message: Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. The “surprise” in the parable is in the strength of character shown by the widow. She is not defenceless, meek and passive—anything but! There is even a possibility (see below) that the judge feels physically threatened by her.

Vv. 6- 7 may come from an early Christian prophet, commenting on the parable. God, inappropriately, becomes the unjust judge. V. 8a may represent a stage when the end of time was expected. V. 8b is a more generalised comment by Luke himself, framing the parable.

## COMMENTARY

**Verse 5** Her persistence bears fruits and he’s afraid of being worn down and exhausted. The word for “wear out” has potentially a shocking force. The basic meaning is to blacken the eye, by striking in the face. It could also have a more simply metaphorical meaning of to bring into submission in constant annoyance. Either way, the woman shows considerable spirit.

**Verse 6** The comment by the Lord in 6- 7b is really an argument, along the lines, “all the more so will God...”. The shock of comparing God’s role to that of judge who requires badgering is defused by this comment. If bad people eventually give in, how much more will God give to his beloved.

A comment of St Augustine may help:

*Why should he ask us to pray, when he knows what we need before we ask him, may perplex us if we do not realise that our Lord and God does not want to know what we want (for he cannot fail to know it), but wants us rather to exercise our desire through our prayers, so that we may be able to receive what he is preparing to give us. His gift is very great indeed, but our capacity is too small and limited to receive it. That is why we are told: Enlarge your desires!*

Letter of St Augustine to Proba

**Verse 8** Now is the time to have your faith grow and flourish. It is, of course, a verse that resonates with us today.

**KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA - [tarsus.ie](http://tarsus.ie)**

In this gospel we return to the themes of faith and prayer. The widow is put before us as an example of perseverance - she simply will not be put off and finally the unjust judge gives in. Clearly Jesus is not saying God is like the unjust judge, a point he makes in the conclusion, but he is asking how many people would be willing to persevere as the woman did.

**SEAN GOAN - *Let the Reader Understand* - YEAR C**

The parable of the widow and the unscrupulous judge, an open story like many others, can elicit different reactions from listeners. Luke says it is a call to pray without losing heart. But it is also an invitation to trust God who will do justice those who cry out to him day and night.

In biblical tradition the widow is the supreme example of a person who is alone and helpless. What she asks for is nothing fanciful. All she demands is justice. It is a cry in keeping with what Jesus says to his followers: *seek the kingdom of God and his justice.*

Why does our discourse with God not prompt us to heed at last the cry of those who suffer injustice and appeal to us in a thousand ways: *Give us justice.* If, when we pray, we are truly in God's presence, why are we not able to hear more clearly the insistent demands for justice that reach the heart of the Father?

The parable challenged all believers. Will we continue to nurture our private devotions while forgetting those who suffer? Will we go on praying to God to put him at the service of our interests without bothering about the injustices in the world? What if to pray meant precisely to forget ourselves and to seek, with God, a more just world for all?

**JOSÉ A PAGOLA - *Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C***

#### **POINTERS FOR PRAYER.**

1. The purpose of prayer is not to change God's mind, but to change ourselves and we can be slow to move. When have you found that persistence in prayer strengthened your faith in the presence of God with you in that struggle?
2. The context of the story may be a concern about the delay in the final coming of the Lord. Have there been times when your persistence in prayer, or action, was eventually rewarded after a period when you had doubts about the outcome? What were the fruits of your persistent prayer?
3. Behind the story lies the final question of Jesus: Who does have faith? Who have been models of faith and trust in God for you? How has that trust been shown in their lives? How is it shown in yours?

**JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom***

Today, vulnerable people continue to cry out for justice, and their cries often fall on deaf ears. As a society, are we like the unjust judge, ignoring them and hoping they will go away or that someone else will deal with them? Do we offer a half-hearted response, just to soothe our conscience? Or is our response rooted in a real sense of compassion and justice?

On the surface, the parable seems to be about the need to persevere in prayer, but it has layers of meaning. The real question is not whether our prayer can move God, but rather, as Jesus suggests, if our prayer can move us. Does our faith spur us into action? We cannot sit back and expect our prayers to be answered without effort on our part. Our prayer life goes hand in hand with our willingness to fight for what is right.

**TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT – *Go Deeper***

At a first reading this is a teaching on prayer, "the need to pray continually and never lose heart". In the Bible, however, "prayer" is always used in a wide sense to refer to our entire relationship with God, and indeed our spiritual life in general.

The widow is in fact a wonderful person, one of the great characters of the gospels, indeed of the whole Bible. Like last week's grateful Samaritan, and like the humble servant of the week before, she will become real for us if we allow her to remind us of people we have known. We can then celebrate her and let her speak a message of repentance to us, both as individuals and as a church at every level: the universal Church; our particular Church, our diocese or the Church of our nation; our local church, parish or small basic community within the parish.

The gospel invites us to capture her spirit, making the journey from Luke's "blessed are the poor" to Matthew's "blessed are the poor in spirit." We do this most effectively by entering into solidarity with the "widows" of our society, joining one of their organizations or taking up their cause publicly.

The widow has two important lessons to teach us.

- First, she had no recourse to force because as a poor person force was not available to her. We must choose to be like her by renouncing violence in any form in our "seeking for justice".
- So too we are often lacking in passion in our search for justice. This is because injustice does not crowd us as it does poor people. We can survive without any dramatic change in our circumstances so we can afford to say, "This is how life is," and leave things like that. The poor are like the widow, they do not have that luxury; they seek justice with passion because for them it is a matter of life or death. By entering into solidarity with them we too learn to seek justice with passion.

#### **Prayer Reflection**

Lord, we have created a civilization in which self-interest is the highest value, and competition the main incentive to progress. The ideal is to have neither fear of you nor respect for man. Forgive us that as a Church we have given up hope that things could be different, and even say that you want them to be as they are. We pray that your Church may be like the widow, always coming back in search of new solutions, with the confidence that if we do not meet with success, it is merely that you are delaying to help us, for the poor are your chosen ones and your will is to see justice done to them and done speedily.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - *Looking at Life through the Lens of the Gospel, Year C***