

PM Luke 17:20-18:8 The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2022

Preacher: Dr Neil Macdonald

[0 : 01] Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke, Luke's Gospel, Chapter 17. Luke Chapter 17 and we begin to read at verse 20.

Luke 17, verse 20. Being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus answered them, The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, Look, here it is, or there, for behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

And he said to his disciples, The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And he will say to you, Look there, or look here.

Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

[1 : 27] They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

On that day let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house not come down to take them away. And likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.

Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

I tell you in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together.

[2 : 33] One will be taken and the other left. And they said to him, Where, Lord? He said to them, Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

And he 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 the city, who kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary. For a while he refused.

But afterwards 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?

[3 : 51] 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?

Amen. And be God blessed to us that reading from his word, and to his name be the praise. Shall we come before the Lord again in prayer? Let us pray.

O Lord our God, we pray that you would encourage us, as we are met together. Help us to remember that, in a very real sense, we are at our most human, when we are relating to you, our God.

Because you made us for yourself. And it was your purpose, that we should enjoy you, and give you glory.

Help us to remember that, in all the busyness of life, that we have, our highest purpose, in knowing you, and in giving you glory.

[5 : 26] We pray that you would speak to us, through your word, and that you would enable us, to respond to it, in faith, and in obedience.

Lord help us, to hear what you have to say to us, and to live it out in practice, day by day. We pray for this fellowship of your people.

We ask Lord, that you would encourage them, that you would strengthen them spiritually, and add to their number. Lord provide for all their needs.

We pray for the Christmas carol service, on Saturday. We ask Lord, that people may come along, and may hear the gospel.

the gospel, the gospel relating, not just to the baby, who was born at Bethlehem, but relating also, to the Savior, who died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

[6 : 42] We thank you, that you did not leave us, to our own devices, but that you made it possible, for sinners like us, to be restored, to your fellowship, and to live, in relationship with you.

We pray also, for all the other activities, during this week, for drop in, and first steps. Lord, we pray, that you would bless, all that is done, and use it, for your glory.

We pray for those, who have, gone overseas, with the gospel, those known to us. We pray, that you would, comfort, and encourage them, in the work they do.

If any of them, are discouraged, we ask, Lord, that they might be reminded, that the work they do, in the Lord, is not in vain.

Use all, that they do, to extend, your kingdom. And as we pray, this morning, we ask, that you would bless, the church, in our own land.

[8 : 07] We ask, that you would, have mercy upon us, that you would, revive your work, in the midst, of the years.

Lord, revive your church, and use, the word, that is proclaimed, in pulpits, up and down our land.

The gospel, that is shared, in, conversations, by individual Christians, use these things, to reach, men and women, who as yet, are strangers, to your grace.

and now, we ask, Lord, that, as we turn, to, what is in some respects, a difficult passage, of your word, you would help us, by your spirit, we ask, for your encouragement, and your blessing, in Jesus name, Amen.

We shall sing again, this time, in Psalm 143, in the traditional, please turn back, with me, to the passage, we read together, I'd like to look, with you this evening, at the parable, of the persistent widow, in chapter 18, verses 1 to 8, perhaps we could, re-read the parable, and he 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 afterwards, 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,

[10 : 38] I tell you, he will give justice, to them speedily, nevertheless, when the son of man, comes, will he find, faith, on earth, I was chatting, some time ago, to an old, university friend, he's an elder, in a church, in Yorkshire, and he told me, that he had recently, preached a sermon, on unanswered prayer, now I would recommend, it takes a brave man, to preach a sermon, on unanswered prayer, one of the reasons, my friend gave, as to why God, doesn't answer prayer, was that we don't pray, with persistence, he referred to this parable, the parable, of the persistent widow, my friend, had a point, prayer is a serious business, and superficial, intermittent prayer, is not what God, is looking for, but the lesson, which this parable, is intended to teach, is not so much, that we should keep on, praying, in order that God, may hear us, but rather, that we should, keep on praying, because we can be, confident, he will hear us, this parable, is set, in a specific context, a context, which gives, a particular thrust, to what Jesus, is teaching here, let me explain,

I'd like to look, with you, at the context, in which the parable, is set, the situation, it addresses, the encouragement, it gives, and the challenge, it presents, the context, in which the parable, is set, the situation, it addresses, the encouragement, it gives, and the challenge, it presents, first of all then, the context, in which, the parable, is set, in verse 20, of chapter 17, the Pharisees, ask Jesus, a

question, they ask him, when the kingdom, of God, will come, they're familiar, with the old testament, prophecies, which speak, about a glorious, future, under, God's rule, they believe, God's kingdom, will come, and they don't, want to miss out, on it, when it does, Jesus, replies, the kingdom, of God, is not coming, with signs, to be observed, nor will they say, look here it is, or there, for behold, the kingdom, of God, is in the midst, of you, the Pharisees, expect, cosmic signs, to herald, the coming, of the kingdom, but Jesus, tells them, that's not, how it will be, in fact, the kingdom, is already present, the kingdom, is in the midst, of you, you see, the kingdom, had already come, in the person, of Jesus, he was, God's king, with his, coming to earth, God's kingdom, had been, inaugurated, the reign of God, had begun, to be manifested, in the hearts, and lives, of men, and women, who acknowledged, Jesus, and were seeking, to follow him, sadly, for all their interest, in the concept, of God's kingdom, the Pharisees, largely, were unwilling, to recognize, the king, and so, they could not, enter the kingdom, but the kingdom, has, a future, as well, as a present, aspect, when Jesus, spoke, it was present, in that it, had been, inaugurated, but it, had not yet, been revealed, in all its fullness, there was, a tension, between the now, and the not yet, and so, in the rest, of chapter 17, Jesus, teaches, his disciples, about the kingdom, in doing so, he calls himself, the son of man, that's the title, that is used, in the prophetic passages, of the book of Daniel, to refer to the heavenly being, who will exercise, universal dominion, in an everlasting kingdom, Jesus, clearly identifies himself, with Daniel's, son of man, Jesus also says, that the kingdom, will not, be fully, and finally established, until two things, have happened, the first is mentioned, in verse 25, he must suffer, many things, and be rejected, by this generation, the son of man, must suffer many things, and be rejected, by this generation, this is a reference, to Jesus death, his suffering, and sacrificial death, are key, to, his kingly rule, it's by, paying the penalty, for sin, and breaking, its power, that Jesus, defeated Satan, and won, for himself, a people, who would be, his forever, his death, has now taken place, it's in the past, he has died, once for all, but the second thing, that Jesus says, must happen, has yet, to take place,

[17:01] Jesus, must, return, to earth, a day is coming, when in the words, of verse 30, the son of man, is revealed, that revelation, will be, unmistakable, verse 24, for as the lightning, flashes, and lights up, the sky, from one side, to the other, so will the son of man, be, in his day, if Jesus, second coming, will be dramatic, it will also, be unexpected, people, will be going, about their business, unaware of, and largely, unconcerned, about, the momentous event, that's about, to take place, Jesus, compares the situation, to, what it was like, when the flood, was unleashed, on the world, verse 26, just as it was, in the days of Noah, so, it will be, in the days, of the son of man, they were eating, and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, and being given in marriage, until the day, when Noah, entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all, just as people, were caught out, when the flood came, so they will be taken, by surprise, when Jesus returns, it was the same, when Sodom, was destroyed, they were eating, and drinking, buying, and selling, planting, and building, but on the day,

Lot left Sodom, fire, and sulfur, rained down, from heaven, and destroyed, them all, life, in Sodom, was so, normal, that judgment, was visited, on the city, with startling, suddenness, let's pause, for a moment, for these words, of Jesus, are solemn words, Jesus is saying, that many, will be caught, unawares, when he returns, to earth, they will be getting, on with their lives, and not giving the Lord, a second thought, the things, of this world, will so fill, their minds, that they will have, no awareness, of eternal issues, they won't be waiting, for the consummation, of God's kingdom, their focus, will be on the things, of this life, and so they won't be ready, for Jesus return, they will be unprepared, for judgment, and it will then, be too late, to do anything, about it, summary judgment, will fall, on all, who have lived, independently, of God, and refused, obedience, to his king, only, those, who have put, their trust, in the Lord Jesus, and who have lived, under his authority, will stand, in the judgment, and enter,

God's consummated kingdom, so, where does that, leave us, this evening, are we living, in the light, of Jesus coming, are we living, for the king, or is our focus, on the things, of this world, this is what, the apostle Peter, wrote, to the Christians, in the first century, he was addressing, he wrote, in keeping, with the Lord's promise, we are looking, forward, to a new heaven, and a new earth, the home of righteousness, so then, dear friends, since you are, looking forward, to this, make every effort, to be found, spotless, blameless, and at peace, with him, grow, in the grace, and knowledge, of our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Peter, wants, his readers, to recognize, that if they are, looking forward, to the coming kingdom, they need to prepare, here, and now, they need to grow, in the grace, and knowledge, of their Lord, and Savior, they need to make, every effort, to be found, spotless, blameless, and at peace, with him, that's the context, in which Jesus, relates this parable, of the persistent widow, so let's look, secondly, at the situation, which the parable, addresses, the situation, which the parable, addresses, the parable, is simple, enough, it concerns, a vulnerable widow, in the society, of Jesus day, a woman, who had lost, her husband, would be, extremely vulnerable, she, would probably, lack, material support, among, other things, this widow, was suffering, injustice, at the hands, of someone, who had it in for her, she brings her case, before a judge, she asks him, to intervene, on her behalf, and secure justice, for her, after all, isn't that, what judges do, but the judge, does, nothing, he's indifferent, to the widow's plight, he is no, moral compass, he's not moved, either by the fear, of God, or by sympathy, for a suffering, fellow human being, but the widow, refuses to give up, she keeps, badgering the judge, to do something, about her situation, at last, he becomes, so fed up, with her, repeated requests, that he decides, to act, and sort the situation out, justice, is done, eventually, not because, the judge, regrets, his earlier indifference, and now wants, to do what is right, but simply, because he wants, to get the widow, off his back, he wants, to be free, of what he sees, as her constant, harassment, in effect, the judge, finds against, the widow's adversary, in the interests, of a quiet, life, he does the right, thing in the end, but for purely, selfish, motives,

Jesus, comments, comments, on the parable, in verses, six to eight, the Lord said, hear, what the unrighteous, judge says, Jesus, and will not God, give justice, to his elect, to 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, Jesus words, highlight, the fact, that the situation, the parable addresses, is the period, between Jesus death, and his second coming, the implication, is that in this period, God's people, will have a hard time, they will suffer wrong, they will be treated unfairly, they will face hardship, and oppression, fueled by injustice, and sometimes, these situations, may go on, and on, and on, this is in line, with what Jesus, says elsewhere, in Matthew chapter 24, he says to his disciples, you will be handed over, to be persecuted, and put to death, and you will be hated, by all nations, because of me, think too, of the upper room discourse, in John's gospel, where Jesus says, to his disciples, if the world hates you, keep in mind, that it hated me first, if you belong, to the world, it would love you, as its own, as it is, you do not belong, to the world, but I have chosen you, out of the world, that is why, the world hates you, remember the words,

[26 : 20] I spoke to you, no servant, is greater, than his master, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also, he goes on, they will put you, out of the synagogue, in fact, a time is coming, when anyone, who kills you, will think, he is offering, a service, to God, suffering, treachery, persecution, injustice, that will be, the experience, of the citizens, of God's kingdom, until Jesus returns, if we survey, the history, of the past, 2000 years, we can see, how true, that has been, some have, some Christians, have experienced, the most extreme, forms of injustice, they have been, imprisoned, for their faith, they have even, lost their lives, for the sake, of the kingdom, any injustice, that Christians, here in the west, for many years now, have suffered, has tended, to be at the lower, end of the scale, perhaps misunderstanding, misrepresentation, or mocking, but it still hurts, and I suspect, that, as society, pursues, an agenda, of political correctness, and allows, no dissent, from its secular, secular values,

Christians, will suffer, more, and more, injustice, if you, have suffered, for being a Christian, take heart, that what you, have experienced, is in line, with what Jesus, said, would be the lot, of those, who followed him, didn't he say, in the Sermon on the Mount, blessed are you, when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say, all kinds of evil, against you, because of me, rejoice, and be glad, because great, is your reward, in heaven, having considered, the particular situation, the parable addresses, let's look thirdly, at the encouragement, which the parable gives, the encouragement, which the parable gives, if the parable, implies, that life, for the citizens, of the kingdom, will be difficult,

Jesus, wants them, to keep on, praying, and not give up, for the Christian, suffering, of any kind, potentially, raises the question, where is God, in this, why is this, happening, to me, why doesn't God, do something, does he even care, and when we begin, to doubt, the Lord's care, the Lord's goodness, it's so easy, to give up, on prayer, prayer, we bring, our needs, and concerns, to the

Lord, in the confidence, that it matters, to him, about us, we express, our trust, in him, from one point, of view, prayer, is opening, the door, of my need, to God,

God, but if God, appears, not to hear, my prayers, if he appears, not to respond, why pray, why should I, bring my situation, to him, why should I, trust him, well, says Jesus, listen, to what the, unjust, unjust judge, says, in the parable, the, the, the judge, finally, says 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, is Jesus, directly, comparing God, with the, unjust judge, is he, suggesting, that just as, in the end, the judge, yielded, to the widow's plea, so as to be rid of her,

God will eventually, answer our prayers, simply to stop us, bothering him, I don't think so, that's not, how this particular, parable, works, in that respect, this parable, is different, from some others, think for example, of the parable, of the prodigal son, in that parable, the father, sees his wastrel son, as he returns home, he sees him, while he is still, a long way off, his heart goes out, to him in compassion, he runs, to greet him, he throws his arms, around him, and he kisses him, in the extravagant, actions of the father, we see, a picture, of how much, God the father, loves, repentant sinners, just as the father, forgives his son, and welcomes him, back into the bosom, of his family, so God forgives, and receives, those who acknowledge, their need, and cast themselves, unreservedly, on his mercy, but the parable, of the persistent widow, doesn't operate like that, it doesn't operate, on the basis, of a straight comparison, it's not a case of, just as the judge, does X, so God, does Y, instead Jesus, draws a contrast, between the judge, and God, if the judge, did X, then, how much, more, will God, do Y, the judge, was unjust, he had no, moral sensitivity, he didn't care, for the widow's suffering, he was happy, to tolerate, injustice, just as long, as it didn't, impact on him, but even, he, unjust, though he was, was worn down, by the widow's, persistence, her repeated demands, got to him, she irritated him, and so, for entirely, selfish reasons, he finally, took action, and gave her, what she asked for, if then, the unjust judge, eventually, did the right thing, all be it, for the wrong motives, how much more, will God respond, to the prayers, of his people, remember,

[33 : 53] God is committed, to justice, he's holy, and righteous, he's faithful, he's a faithful God, who does no wrong, and he loves, his people, he set his love, upon them, in eternity past, and he is determined, to bring, each one of them, home to glory, God will respond, he will respond, to his people's prayers, for deliverance, not because, he's forced, to do so, in any sense, not because, he's shut up, to it, but because, he both, loves his people, and hates, injustice, as Jesus says, in verse 7, will not God, give justice, to his elect, who cry, to him, day and night, will he delay, long over them, will he keep, putting them off, no,

I tell you, he will give, justice, to them, speedily, Jesus, wants his disciples, to know, that despite, appearances, God will, vindicate, his people, at times, it may look, as if he has forgotten, all about them, at times, they may feel, abandoned, but vindication, will come, God will, bring about, justice, for his chosen, ones, it may not, always be, in this life, but one day, all wrongs, will be righted, and justice, will be done, from a human perspective, God may seem, to be taking his time, but from God's perspective, given that one day, with the Lord, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day, justice, will be done, quickly,

God doesn't, always operate, according to, our time scales, that's the incentive, to keep, on trusting, the Lord, and to keep, on praying, we have a God, who is righteous, a God, who keeps, his promises, a God, who is utterly, faithful to his people, a God, who will not, abandon those, whom he has chosen, I wonder, if you and I, need to be reminded, of that, this evening, perhaps we're finding, life difficult, perhaps we're struggling, with a situation, that seems to go, on and on, without improvement, we need to remember, the character, of the God, to whom we pray, if we are one, of his people, he loves us, with an everlasting love, he will never, let us go, and never, let us down, he's aware, of our situation, and he's at work, for our good, and one day, he will bring, all suffering, to an end, think of the words, of the psalmist, in Psalm 42,

I say to God, my rock, why have you, forgotten me, why must I go, about mourning, oppressed, by the enemy, my bones, suffer mortal agony, as my foes, taunt me, saying to me, all day long, where is now, your God, and the psalmist, finds it useful, and necessary, to speak to himself, as he says, why are you, downcast, O my soul, why so disturbed, within me, put your hope, in God, for I will yet, praise him, my saviour, and my God, someone speaking, to himself, is often seen, as a sign, of insanity, but for the Christian, it can be very important, to speak, to ourselves, to remind ourselves,

of truths, like these, why are you, downcast,

O my soul, why so disturbed, within me, put your hope, in God, for I will yet, praise him, my saviour, and my God, that's the encouragement, which the parable, gives, if even, the unjust, judge, was prepared, to do something, even for wrong motives, how much more, will God, intervene, on behalf, of his people, after all, he's a God, of perfect justice, and a God, who loves, his people, with a perfect love, encouragement, which the parable, gives, fourthly, and finally, let's look at the challenge, which the parable, presents, Jesus concludes, his comments, in the parable, with the searching question, in verse 8, he says, nevertheless, when the son of man, comes, will he find, faith, on earth, this brings us, right back, to the context, in which the parable, is set, the question, reminds us, that Jesus, is coming back again, and that when he does, he will be looking, for faithful followers, men, and women, who are living, by faith, in active dependence, on him, we cannot live, a life of faith, in our own strength, only by God's grace, only by his power, at work within us, can we do so, but at the same time, there are some things, we need to do, and they require effort, and determination, on our part, we need to work out, our salvation, we need to exercise, our faith, and live, in the good of it, we need to watch, and pray, because faith, is like a muscle, it grows, by being exercised, when Jesus returns, he will be looking, for those, who are waiting, for him expectantly, he wants, he wants his disciples, to be watchful, and prayerful, so much, in a fallen world, militates, against that, hence, the challenge, for all of us, who profess, the name of Christ, are we diligently, using, the means,

[41 : 11] God has given us, for nurturing, our faith, do we pray, regularly, do we read, God's word, do we make a point, of meeting with others, of the Lord's people, to worship him together, and encourage one another, because faith grows, by being exercised, and if you're not a Christian, as things stand, you have no faith, with which to pass muster, with the Lord Jesus, when he returns, but the invitation, of the gospel, this evening, is to repent, and believe, in the crucified, risen, ascended, and coming, Savior, he is able, to save, to the uttermost, all who come, to God, by him, I leave you, with Jesus question, nevertheless, when the son of man, comes, will he find, faith, on earth, shall we pray,

O Lord, we pray, that we may, heed, the challenge, of your word, as well as, draw encouragement, from the parable, people, we pray, that we may, live, in the good, of all, that you have revealed, concerning yourself, and your purposes, that we may, not be so, taken up, with the things, of this life, that we lose, sight, of the things, of eternity, Lord, help us, to be those, who persist, in praying, because, we recognize, that you are a God, of perfect justice, who will respond, who will hear, because, that is, what you are like, we pray this, in Jesus name,
Amen.