

# Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

## Luke 18:1-8

*"while God's response is always immediate that justice be done, the actual realization of God's response is not necessarily immediate because justice has to be done justly, and with the willing cooperation of all concerned."*

**Year C**

**Season of Pentecost**

**Sunday Between October 16 and October 22 Inclusive**

**Proper 24, Ordinary Time 29**

**October 17, 2010, 21st Sunday After Pentecost**

Read the lesson: [Luke 18:1-8](#), The Message; or [Luke 18:1-8](#), The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Click here, [Luke 18:1-8](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "[Persistence](#)."

This passage echoes themes found at the beginning of Chapter 11: A neighbour asking for bread in the middle of the night; ask, seek, knock; and sinful human fathers who know to give their children what they need when they ask.

The remarks that frame the actual parable of the persistent widow make 2 points and raise 1 question:

- We need to pray at all times and never give up, never lose heart
- It is in God's nature to respond urgently to our prayers for justice
- But if the Son of Man were to suddenly appear would he find us praying and trusting that God is responding urgently to our prayers for justice?

The caricature of the judge as neither fearing God nor caring about what people thought sets a sharp contrast for the later description of God's character: caring and just.

Similarly, the self-centred motivation for the judge finally responding is also in contrast to the motivation for God's response: the term "chosen ones" might also be understood as "beloved ones," the apples of God's eye, the ones in whom God delights. (And as a side bar, I would add the comment that God's chosen ones are everyone, with no one and nothing left out.) That is, God responds not out of self-interest but out of compassionate love and delight for the other.

The passage contains a hidden question that is in fact in many of our hearts, namely:

*Why does God **NOT** answer prayer?*

# Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

This question is hidden in the very reality that Luke is pointing to in Verse 18:1 when he begins by telling us that Jesus tells a parable to show us that we should always pray and never give up, never lose heart. Doesn't the need to always pray and never give up arise precisely because prayer is not answered immediately, the first time, and therefore one must always pray and never give up?

This need to always pray and never give up seems to contradict the later statement in Verse 18:8 that God will grant justice and quickly.

I can't answer for Jesus, but it has been true in my own limited experience of prayer that justice does not come quickly.

It has also been true that I am not very good at always praying and never giving up.

And it is also true that occasionally the process of praying has changed me, changed what I have been praying for as I have seen how my prayers were as self-centred as the unjust judge and could not be granted by God because they were not just.

And so, while **God's response** is always immediate that justice be done, the actual realization of God's response is not necessarily immediate because justice has to be done justly, and with the willing cooperation of all concerned.

In this world, we recognize our human limitations and the need to **IMPOSE** justice with police, judges, trials, armies, and prisons. And we also recognize the need to do so as quickly as possible: "Justice delayed is justice denied."

But God is love, and love is not coercive. And so God never **imposes** justice. Yes, God does desire justice right now. And so God's immediate response is that justice be done - and done right now. But because God works only through the willing cooperation of human hearts and minds, actual justice comes at the speed of changed hearts, minds, and behaviour. And - sadly - we all know how fast that is.

The moral of the story is **NOT** about the judge finally responding. The moral is about the widow's persistence for justice during the long period of the judge not responding and giving no indication that he ever would.

And note that this is **NOT** a parable justifying being persistently pig-headed and stubborn. The widow's persistence is praised because it is persistence for **JUSTICE**. The linking of this parable with our need to pray always and never lose heart guides us in two ways:

Prayer is a relationship with God, and with a community of prayer, which sustains us through the dark times of justice not being granted.

# Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.  
Short, easy to use, faith-provoking insights.

Prayer is a relationship with God, and with a community of prayer, which guides and corrects the content of our prayers to closer alignment with **God's** desire for justice, with love for our neighbours, and with love for our enemies.

And finally, I take it that Jesus tells this parable **NOT** to tell us about how God answers prayer; but rather to show us attitudes, habits and practices that must be ingrained into our every waking moment:

- Praying.
- And seeking justice.
- And never giving up, never losing heart.
- And trusting that the enduring fabric of reality is embedded with the presence of God who responds to our needs in every moment with compassionate love and justice for the whole of creation.

David Ewart,

[www.davidewart.ca](http://www.davidewart.ca)