

Traditional Home service Sunday 16th October

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith
that, forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your
commandments and win the crown of
everlasting joy; through Jesus Christ your
Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns
with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you, through our
own fault, in thought, and word, and
deed, and in what we have left undone.
We are heartily sorry, and repent of all our
sins. For your Son our Lord Jesus
Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve you in
newness of life to the glory of your name.
Amen.*

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the
name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to
God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms,
hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Be Thou my vision*)

READINGS - Jeremiah 31.27-34
2 Timothy 3.14 - 4.5
Luke 18.1-8

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. I believe in
Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who
was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of
the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was
buried; he descended to the dead. On
the third day he rose again; he ascended
into heaven, he is seated at the right
hand of the Father, and he will come to
judge the living and the dead. I believe in
the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness
of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your
name, your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as in heaven. Give us
today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil. For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours, now and for
ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*What a Friend we have in
Jesus*)

CONCLUSION

Now may the Lord of peace himself
give you peace at all times and in every
way. The Lord be with you all;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the
Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, be
among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that
Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by
night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my
light

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my
true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me,
Lord
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true
son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee
one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty
praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and
always
Thou and Thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure
Thou art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright
heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all
our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to
God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what
needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is
there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take
it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who
will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it
to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised
Thou wilt all our burdens bear
May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to
Thee in earnest prayer.
Soon in glory bright unclouded there
will be no need for prayer
Rapture, praise and endless worship
will be our sweet portion there

Sermon - Holly Horspole

LUKE 18:1-8 PERSIST IN PRAYING FOR JUSTICE

Story about learning to persevere as a child...

Persevering, or persisting, is an important aspect of our lives as Christians – we are (hopefully) continually learning to persist in trusting God, following Jesus, and obeying the Spirit, even as we navigate the ups and downs of human life. The idea of persevering and persisting is at the heart of our Gospel reading for today – as Luke explains at the start of the passage, Jesus told this parable to teach us to persist in prayer – to always pray and never give up. And while I think learning to pray continually without giving up is generally good advice about prayer, here in Luke 18, Jesus is specifically talking about persisting in praying for justice. So, we're not so much thinking about prayers for things we might quite like or want, like good weather or parking spaces – not that it's necessarily wrong to pray for those things – but here Jesus is calling us to pray persistently for matters of justice – to not give up praying for the wrong things in the world or our lives to be put right. We are called to persevere in praying for injustice and suffering to end – things like wars, poverty, inequality, abuse, etc. Jesus tells us to never give up and never lose heart in praying for justice.

In this parable, we hear the story of a widow who keeps going to the town judge to ask for justice against her adversary – her plea is refused but she perseveres in asking, and eventually the judge relents so that the woman will stop bothering him. Jesus describes the judge as unjust and as someone who doesn't fear God, and yet even he eventually gives in and grants justice for the woman. And while God is the ultimate judge – he is nothing like the unjust judge in the parable. Jesus tells us that God hears our prayers and is quick to bring justice for his people. Unlike the unjust judge, we don't persist in prayer to wear God down so that he eventually gives in to our requests, but we persist in prayer because we have a certain hope in that the way things are now are not the way things will always be – just as our Old Testament reading in Jeremiah prophesies about a time when things will be different for God's people, giving them future hope. And we all have certain future hope today, because of Jesus. In love, Jesus persisted to the point of overcoming death

and sin on the cross, and he is coming back one day to end all suffering and bring justice to the whole of creation. We persist in prayer because of this sure and certain hope.

Of course, we don't have to look very far in our world, society, or perhaps even our own communities to find circumstances that are difficult or unjust. We're living with the present realities of war, poverty, racism, inequality, and suffering all around us. And perhaps it can be tempting to look around and feel hopeless – to think why even bother praying? Will our prayers even make a difference? Because as I'm sure many of us here have experienced – one of the mysteries of faith is that some of our prayers get answered, and some just don't seem to be. But here in Luke 18, Jesus is not seeking to address the mystery of unanswered prayer, but is encouraging us to persist in prayer anyway. To persevere in praying no matter what. To never give up on praying that justice would come and God's will would be done. Even if we might not see the answers to our prayers yet, we are called to keep on praying in faith, trust, and hope that God will one day bring justice.

The fact that we are called to *persist* in prayer shows that it is going to be challenging – persistence is not persistence if there's not some element of difficulty involved. Persistence means persevering in the face of setbacks or difficulty – there are going to be challenges. So Jesus's instruction for us to be persistent in prayer for justice is not always going to be an easy task for us to live out. But the good news is that we are not left to try and persevere on our own. God generously gives us so much help as we seek to pursue his will by persisting in prayer for justice – firstly, he gives us the gift of the Spirit and secondly, the gift of his love:

1. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit who helps us to pray. In Romans 8, the apostle Paul writes about how the Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Spirit equips us and gives us the courage to pray. Not only is the Spirit praying *for* us, but the Spirit is also teaching us to pray. Even when we don't know how or what to pray, the Spirit prays for us and with us through wordless groans. The Holy Spirit helps us as we persist in praying for God's justice in the world.

2. We have the gift of God's love. We persist in prayer in light of God's persistent love for us. God loves us persistently. He loves us completely, unconditionally, and more deeply than we could ever imagine. It is from this place of knowing God's persistent love for us that helps us to be faithful and obedient in being persistent in our prayer. Encountering God's persistent love for us helps us to see ourselves as God sees us – fearfully and wonderfully made, created in God's own image. Living in God's persistent love for us also helps us to view the rest of creation through God's eyes too – it equips us to see God's image reflected in those around us, to love our neighbour, and be good stewards of God's creation. And so when we live in God's persistent love for us, this spurs us on in our attempts to persist in prayer. Because if we see ourselves and others through God's eyes, how could we not respond by longing for justice for God's creation? God's persistent love for us and for the whole of creation helps us to persist and not give up in praying for justice.

So God equips us by the gifts of his Holy Spirit and his persistent love to help us as we persist in praying for justice.

The call to persist in praying is one that we all share. All of us as followers of Jesus share the responsibility to respond to the injustice and suffering in the world through prayer. We might not all be able to offer practical support or solutions for the problems of our world. But *all* of us **can** pray.

And as we draw to an end today, that's the challenging encouragement I felt the Lord might have for us today: let us not give up praying for justice to come. Let us not lose heart in praying for an end to injustice. Let us persist in prayer, even when it feels like it is making no difference – because I believe prayer *always* makes a difference. Each time we persist in praying for justice, we are shining the light of God's hope into the world, and we are declaring our faith in the certain hope that God will bring justice. We have a good God who hears our prayers and is quick to bring justice for his people.

PRAY...