**Justified by Faith**

Based on [Luke 18:1-8](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk18.1-8)

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In the Gospel lesson, Jesus tells a parable to the effect that we are always to pray and not lose heart. He teaches (1) We are always to pray because God promises to hear us and answer. (2) J**ustice does not come easily in an unjust world and yet we should persistently plead for it**. Finally (3) the greatest cause for prayer is not for God to be faithful; that’s a given. **What we should pray for is that when God proves faithful, and comes again to judge our cause, that he will find faith on earth.**  This is because faith is the only thing that justifies you before the judge of heaven and earth.

First, we are commanded always to pray. In a world of unrighteousness, you will suffer injustice for your faith, but God promises to hear our prayer. Prayer is a spiritual exercise that commends all things to God and to leaves them in His capable hands. That’s why prayer is traditionally done on the knees with hands folded or lifted up in submission. Prayer without submission is not prayer, but empty babbling or worse…negotiating with God. True prayer is a practice in submission to the will of God,

But prayer is more than just exercise and training. The central reason you should pray is because God promises to hear. God promises to hear prayer, to answer prayer, and to grant anything you ask for according to His will (John 14:13-14, 1 John 5:14). **You want justice? God wants justice. Ask him for it and he will give it. You want peace? God wants peace. Ask and he will give it. You want to be a millionaire? You don’t know what God wants so he might not grant it; but you can still pray for it and He will answer…(only be sure to check your motives)**.

And today, Jesus promises that God does hear the prayers of the faithful and answer without delay. He teaches this in a parable about a widow who persistently cries out for “justice”--that is a righting of wrongs done to her. She *prays* for justice to a corrupt Judge who--after dragging his feet for a long time--finally gives it to her…presumably by ruling a case in her favor. And here’s the teaching…**If a poor helpless widow can cry out to an *unrighteous judge* and *have faith* that she will be heard; so much more should you cry out to a *righteous Judge*, the loving heavenly Father, and have *full assurance of faith* that you will be heard.**

You cry out for justice in this corrupt world all the time and expect to get it. If your employer fails to pay you, you take him to court and have faith that the courts will rule in your favor. **If you hire a contractor to build your house and he cuts corners and right when you move in it begins to fall apart; you will take him to court to *right* his wrongs. And the very fact that you take him to court shows that *you have some degree of faith* to think you’ll get justice.** You live in a corrupt and sinful world, where justice is not guaranteed, and yet you still appeal for justice expecting to get it. You have every reason and more then to appeal to God for justice. Because with God, Justice is guaranteed.

(2) J**ustice does not come easily in an unjust world and yet we should persistently plead for it**. God loves Justice and so do his elect. God sets authorities in place on earth to provide justice. He loves righteousness. But in a world of unrighteousness like ours there will be unrighteous judges. There will be adjudicators and other authorities who neither fear God nor respect men. **There will be judges who don’t care about justice—about actually “righting wrongs.” There are judges who** neglect their duty and allows the leaven of injustice destroy society from the inside-out. And it is the poor, the weak, the widows who are robbed of justice; while the strong, powerful, the wealthy break laws with impunity.

The widow really has two adversaries in the parable. The one is unknown to us, maybe someone taking advantage of her, a family member not taking care of her, we don’t know. **But the other adversary apparently unknown to her—is the unrighteous judge.** He doesn’t just turn her away. If he did his neglect of duty would be manifest. Instead he lets her come, pretends to listen, she leaves and he does nothing, hoping she’ll just drop it. But she doesn’t drop it, because she loves Justice.

When you are wronged, both God and man *want* you to seek justice; that’s why they put judges in place..because justice is a virtue, and virtuous men seek it. And so does the widow. She does not give up the cause of justice. She is poor in spirit, a widow, humble. But hers is not a false humility. She doesn’t say, “**Oh, I’m just a poor widow and I don’t deserve Justice. I won’t ask you to make a fuss over little old me.**” When the judge delays she does not give up, and neither should you because Justice is an attribute of the very God you worship. And to simply give way to evil and wrongdoing in the name of peace is an abomination to God (Luke 16:15).

(3) Today’s teaching ends with a reminder. In the end God will bring justice but when He brings it will anyone be found having faith? Will there be anyone who persists in seeking justice and crying out to God?

The greatest cause for prayer is not for God to be faithful; that’s a given. **God always proves faithful and just; and He will come again to judge our cause. What is less evident is our own faithfulness. Rather there is so much evidence of faith-less-ness. Therefore what we should pray for is, when He comes, that He will find faith on earth.**  This is because faith is the only thing that justifies you before the righteous judge of heaven and earth.

One thing is evident…when the Son of Man comes he will most certainly find faith-less-ness. In the midst of injustice, corruption, and cause for donning sackcloth and ashes, people will nevertheless be found eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage (Luke 17:27). **In other words people will be so used to the injustice that goes on all around them that they will have become desensitized to it.** They will not fight it or cry out against it, and eventually even come to embrace it. They will forget about God because in their failure to cry out to Him, they think he has forgotten about them. And then--like a thief in the night--The Son of Man will come--the bridegroom himself--and they will have no oil in their lamps to go and meet him and greet him, and he will shut the door saying “I do not know you.”

The faithless, they allow their faith to waste away because they fail to exercise it. They gave up on prayer because it wasn’t getting results and so spent their time on worldly matters that they can see gains. **They worked overtime hours to buy more quads and bigger houses; they spent their weekends in personal leisure away from the church.** They enrolled their children in hockey and soccer and dance and football eight days a week. Unlike prayer, these activities ‘get results’ and they garner the accolades of the world and avoid ***its*** scorn and shame.

Injustice is everywhere, and so the faithless spends his time cutting out a little corner of this life insulating himself as much as he can from injustice. **Countless unborn babies murdered in the womb; elderly people talked into suicide by their family; corrupt politicians getting away with lying and murdering, unfaithful church officials and pastors playing it safe rather than doing what they are called to do.** The faithless doesn’t lose sleep over these things. Instead he uses spends his time to eating, drinking, and being merry with family and friends. He learns not to stick his neck out against injustice because it won’t change anything. “God will come when he’s ready; until then I can’t change anything, and I won’t bother him with my prayers—he already knows.”

The faithless, he didn’t make a decision to turn from his faith. He had it but slowly found ways to be comforted in this life without it, until finally he woke up one day and his faith was gone…and he didn’t even notice. **The oil in his lamp ran out, and he didn’t even notice because he hadn’t lit the thing in years.** It doesn’t happen overnight; but it happened because he embraced injustice as “just the way things are”; rather than persistently crying out to God and man for vindication. Repent.

That is what is meant by faith, persistently crying out to God for justice and waiting patiently for Him to grant it. **And you know he will because he is your heavenly merciful Father, and he has promised.** Children who ask their parents ask again and again and again. They don’t give up because they want it so bad, their mind keeps returning to it over and over again. That is how much faith desires God to come and bring Justice.

But someone might say, “*I don’t want God to bring Justice, because I am a sinner. If God treats me with ‘Justice’ he will throw me in hell’s prison for eternity. The Gospel is that God* ***doesn’t*** *‘give me what I deserve’. I should pray he show the same ‘****mercy****’ to my adversary. The Good News is that God* ***puts Justice aside*** *for those with faith…*”. To say that ‘God puts aside justice to save’ is blasphemy and an insult to His righteousness. It empties the cross of its power.

God does not put aside justice to save you; He saves you by justifying you…by making you favorable in the eyes of justice. When the Son of Man brings justice, He will bring it. And those who are found with faith are justified by it. **The just thing for a Judge to do when he finds faith is acquit, forgive faults, and declare the faithful to be righteous.** Yes you are a sinner, yes your sin is always before you, but your sin is not who you are, because it has been atoned for by the blood of Christ. There is a new man in you and sin has no claim on him. Because of your faith in Christ you are declared ‘not guilty’ of your sins. You are “justified”. It’s not that those who have faith will be shown mercy, but those without will get justice. ***Those who have faith will get justice too***. And that is not a fearful thing; because justice is merciful to faith when it finds it.

When the Son of Man comes will he find faith? Will he find anyone justified? The answer is yes. He will find those who by faith have not surrendered to the way of the world but who are persistent in prayer, in crying out for justice, in loving righteousness, and praying for the righting of wrongs. Pray for justice constantly; God will answer. **It does not come easily in this world of sin, but God is faithful to hear your prayers and answer speedily.**  And He will find faith; because at his death, Jesus Christ paid for your sin, and gave his Holy Spirit to the church to create repentance and faith in those who hear His word. You have heard it; believe it. Justice is not a lost cause; injustice is. And the Lord your God who is merciful *and just,* He will come and save you who *are* justified by faith.