

[00:00:01.210] - Speaker 1

A reading from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18, one through eight. Then Jesus told his disciples, a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, in a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, grant me justice against my adversary. For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she eventually come and attack me. And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly. However, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth? To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable, two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

[00:01:10.800] - Speaker 1

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a 10th of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God have mercy on me, a sinner. I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. A certain ruler asked him, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? The word of the Lord?

[00:02:29.410] - Speaker 2

Hey, just want to know before we dismiss you kids to kids alive, parents today and kids alive, they're going to be taught about the prayer for purity, which is that prayer that we begin at the service. So I'd encourage you to take that prayer home with you. Talk with them. They're going to be looking at Isaiah, chapter six, and how that relates to Isaiah's. Cry that I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips. But God takes an angel, takes a tongue of coal and touches the coal to his lips and says, see, your sin has been atoned for. So they're going to be studying the prayer for purity today. It would be great for you to talk with them about that afterwards. Father, we ask your blessing upon the children as they go to kids alive, that they may desire to have pure hearts and pure spirits and to know how pure and good you are. In Jesus name, amen. All right. God bless you, kids. As you go to kids alive, make sure you don't step on any amp piles. All right? I'm really glad today to have Wright Wall with us.

[00:03:38.960] - Speaker 2

Right. This is your third time with us now. Yeah, right. He's like the leader of navigators in this area. It's a ministry in the city of Raleigh. He is an Anglican pastor. And we're really glad to have you here. Right. He was also playing tennis yesterday, and he's getting to be an old man. So you're going to notice that as you get older, you start breaking things. And anyway, he busted up his ankle, so here we are. Thank you. Right?

[00:04:12.010] - Speaker 3

No, I'm good.

[00:04:12.930] - Speaker 2

All right.

[00:04:13.650] - Speaker 3

It's actually not the ankle, but I'll spare you the details. I think the lesson learned is it's often best just to say, that was a good shot, and not try to go for it. That's my lesson, my takeaway. It's really great to be here with you. I'm so thankful for the invitation, Patrick. And it's a sweet spot. There's a sweet spirit in this place, and it's such a lovely view. So with that, Lord, may the words my mouth and the

meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. All of Luke 18 is awesome. I don't want to underperform here, but we're just going to be talking about the first eight verses today. So it's really this parable about well, you'll see what it's about. We're about one month from Thanksgiving and two months out from Christmas, and many of you will soon be piling into cars with suitcases and gifts, maybe some green bean casseroles. And you'll be hitting the road on your way to see family and friends. Little ones will rightly be excited, excited to be seeing grandparents and cousins. And along with that anticipation on the road, there may be some uncomfortable seats, some spilled Honey Nut Cheerios, some loud sounds, and maybe some interesting smells.

[00:05:43.550] - Speaker 3

There will be bathroom breaks and stops for gas or food. And eventually the question will come, are we there yet? You can understand the question. Nobody likes to wait. I certainly don't. I don't like to wait in traffic. I don't like to wait at the dentist, and I definitely don't like to wait at the DMV. Our passage today in Luke 18 one through eight, contains a parable that addresses waiting. More specifically, it addresses the manner in which Jesus wants his followers to wait. The manner in which Jesus wants his followers to wait. In fact, it's an unusual passage and that the writer Luke tells us exactly how Jesus wanted his followers to apply the parable. In verse one, Luke writes, and he Jesus, told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. It's really nice of Luke really tells us what he's going for here. You can't get much clearer than that. Jesus told this parable to his disciples, expecting his listeners to pray continually and not lose heart. And hence the title of this sermon don't stop believing. But what I found even more interesting in this passage is the context in which the parable comes.

[00:07:06.160] - Speaker 3

In fact, I feel like in order to really understand the passage, we really need to take a step back and look at the second half of chapter 17. So if you have your Bibles, turn with me to Luke, chapter 17, verse 20. Here we see that the Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God will come. Effectively, are we there yet? I find this to be a pretty reasonable question. The Pharisees, like all Jews, were in a time of waiting for the fulfillment of ancient prophecies that God would provide a Savior. A Savior that they believed would overthrow their Roman occupiers and restore the nation state of Israel. Jesus also talked a lot about the kingdom. In fact, you can make the argument that the kingdom of God is what Jesus talked about most. Consider that when John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus in Matthew three, he came preaching, Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus began his earthly ministry in Matthew four, saying the exact same thing repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. So to me, it makes sense that the Pharisees would ask about the kingdom to see if what Jesus thought about the kingdom aligned with what they thought.

[00:08:28.210] - Speaker 3

I imagine the Pharisees thinking to themselves that if Jesus really were the long awaited Savior, that they might see some signs, like the raising of an army to overthrow the Romans, or the recruiting of some sort of transitional team of existing Jewish political and religious leaders who would be prepared to govern once Jesus became the ruler. As it turns out, Jesus expectations of the kingdom of God were very different from the Pharisees expectations. As Jesus says, the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed. For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst. Jesus is establishing a different kind of kingdom. It's a kingdom that is coming in ways that can't be observed. It's a kingdom that exists in the hearts of his believers. Jesus kingdom expands every time a person hears the good news of the Gospel and puts their faith in him. It expands when, as Paul writes in Romans Ten nine, a person confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in their heart that God raised him from the dead. Jesus continues and concedes in verse 22. 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.

[00:09:57.740] - Speaker 3

This requires just a little bit of explanation. When Jesus says the Son of man, he is referring to himself. The term comes from Daniel seven, and he talks to the days of the Son of man. He is referring to the days of his second coming. And Jesus understands that while his followers wait, it's only natural that they will ask, are we there yet? Jesus makes it clear that there will come a time when Jesus's kingdom will be visible. But some other things need to happen first. See verse 25. Jesus says

that first he, he being the Son of man or Jesus, must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. In other words, the visible kingdom will come. But this will come on Jesus second coming. When Jesus comes to judge the living and the dead, as well as say altogether in a minute in the Apostles Creed, Jesus says when that day comes, you'll know it. It'll be unmistakable. See 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. It is important to understand that the days of the Son of man, the days of the visible kingdom that begin with the day of the Lord, will be a great day for those who have put their faith in God.

[00:11:24.560] - Speaker 3

For the faithful, it will be a day of deliverance, a day of vindication, a day of joy. But for those who have interested in God, the days of the Son of man will be a day of horrible judgment. See verse 26. Jesus says that the days of the Son of man will be like the days of Noah, when people 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. If the day of the Lord is like the days of Noah, it's a really bad day for those who didn't have faith in God. Again, beginning in verse 28, Jesus says the days of the Son of man will be like the days of Lot. People 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 it will be on the day of the Son when the Son of man is revealed, the days of the Lord will be a day of judgment. This is the context of our parable this morning.

[00:12:31.850] - Speaker 3

So with that, let's turn back to chapter 18 again. Luke tells us that Jesus is telling his followers this parable so that in the end they will always pray and not lose heart. I can think of three reasons why this message is important. First, as we've already discussed, we don't like to wait. Secondly, God delights and is glorified in the prayers of his people. And third, there can be a lot of waiting for those who put their trust in God. Consider that Abraham and Sarah waited decades for God to fulfill his promise of his Son to be born from Sarah. Or consider the centuries of waiting for the Hebrews to be delivered from Egypt. Or consider the two millennia that the Church has been waiting for Jesus second coming. So how do you keep praying when there's so much waiting? How do we stay encouraged? How do we keep believing? I'm going to give you three ways. Here's the first. We can keep praying and stay encouraged when we remember who God is. We can keep praying and stay encouraged when we remember who God is. Consider the bad judge. In this parable, it's almost kind of comical.

[00:13:53.620] - Speaker 3

Jesus tells us in verse two that this is a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. Even the judge knows that he's a bad judge. We get his inner monologue in verse four. I can't imagine him saying this, but here it is though I neither fear God nor respect man, he's objectively a bad judge. He's a judge in it for himself. He doesn't fear God or God's laws. He doesn't respect or care about people. And yet he ultimately gives justice to the persistent widow. Why? The text tells us that he gives the widow justice. That so that she will leave him alone. Jesus contrasts this horrible, unrighteous and uncaring judge with our righteous and caring God. See verse seven. And will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Jesus is using an argument from the lesser to the greater. He's saying that even an unrighteous judge will give justice. How much more will a good, holy and righteous God give justice to his elect or those who have put their faith in him?

[00:15:25.970] - Speaker 3

You see, God is nothing like this judge. So when life is hard, when we are the victims of injustice, we remember that God is faithful and will set things right. So keep praying. Don't lose heart, even though it may take a long time. Is this easy? It is not. But we have a faith in a God who will set all things right on the day of the Lord, in the days of the Son of man. And when that day comes, God's judgment, our vindication will be swift, like in the days of Noah and Lot. And I need to tell you that it's very possible that our vindication will not come during our mortal lives. Hebrews eleven is often called the Chapter or the hall of Faith. All the great biblical heroes and the faith that they had. Listen to what Paul writes. These heroes, these people, all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen

them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. We don't know when God will set things right, but we have faith that he will, because unlike the unrighteous judge, God has shown Himself to be faithful in the past.

[00:16:52.860] - Speaker 3

Here's the second way we could keep praying and stay encouraged when we see that God wants more people to put their faith in Him. We can keep praying and stay encouraged when we see that God wants more people to put their faith in Him. Consider two Peter three eight through ten. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. God waits to establish his visible kingdom because he wants more people to join his invisible kingdom that lives in the hearts of all those who put their faith in Him. He wants to reach your cousin, who is far away from God. He wants to reach your fellow students and your coworkers.

[00:18:07.570] - Speaker 3

God wants to reach your neighbors. The message in two Peter 3:10 is the same message in Luke 18:8. God is not slow in keeping his promises. Rather God is fulfilling his purposes in his time. But the day of the Lord will come, and it will come unexpectedly, like a thief. And for those without faith, it's going to be an awful day. Here's the third way we can keep praying and staying courageous when we rejoice at the signs we see of the advance of God's invisible kingdom. If we look, we can see signs of the kingdom all around us. On this day, a new Anglican church plant is gathering and garnering to devote themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And in fact, on this day, hundreds of millions of people will do the same in churches all over the world. As I speak to you now, I know a 17 year old high school senior who is caring for children in a church, nursing and reading them Bible stories. Tonight, there will be a 23 year old man who will be meeting with a group of 7th graders to talk about their lives and to apply God's truth to the situations they face.

[00:19:36.360] - Speaker 3

I know a 19 year old who spent several weeks this summer staying in Poland and driving several tons of food into villages in eastern Ukraine. This Tuesday, I'll meet with a group of professionals to read Philip Yankee's book, What's So Amazing About Grace, as we seek to be men of grace at home and at work. And on Thursday morning, I'll meet with Albert at Big Ed's Garner. Albert is about 27. He's a waiter who recently put his faith in Jesus. We'll get together to read and apply God's word to our lives. Last week, we talked about how we might better honor God in his dating life, a subject that's pretty important to a 27 year old. To me, these are all evidence of the advance of God's invisible kingdom. And I imagine that if I gave you the opportunity, many of you would have many more examples to add to this. We live in a world with a lot of issues. Thursday evening, probably like you, I was glued to my TV as police responded to a 15 year old shooter who killed five people in East Raleigh. Today, there will be people without enough to eat.

[00:20:46.040] - Speaker 3

Sadly, there will be many acts of injustice in many different homes and communities. And in the face of all this, we will be tempted to grow weary and to give in to despair. Jesus knows this, and so he gives us this parable may we remember that we do not have an arbitrary or caprice. We have a righteous and compassionate God. May we remember that every day the Lord waits to return. We have the opportunity to tell the story of God's love and shine like stars in a wicked and perverse generation. And may we remember to look for the signs of the advance of God's invisible kingdom. Let's pray. Lord God, we praise you that you are both righteous and loving. Thank you for Your holy word that instructs us through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Thank you for calling us into Your invisible kingdom. Help us to consistently come to the throne of grace, to pray for Your coming kingdom and to not lose heart while we wait for Your return. Help us to faithfully invite others into Your kingdom, and may we be constantly amazed at the advance of Your invisible kingdom. Amen.