

Blessed be God who animates our lives and calls us to a life of ceaseless prayer and holy tenacity. AMEN

Today's Gospel story is difficult! I feel like I have been saying that a lot lately, and probably should know to expect this from Luke..but the story of the persistent widow and the unjust judge which is bookended by Jesus' plea for ceaseless prayer and hope to find the faithful in the second coming, raises theological issues on many levels. Prayer, faith, justice, persistence, Where is God in this? Where are we? In order to interpret this parable and to preach something meaningful we have some frackin' to do! not to mention some discernment! AND, I often find myself assisted by what this **cannot** mean as much as what it might.

my first impulse is to be repelled by the language of injustice and "bothering". not to mention the arrogance of the judge who has no time for God and up until now the woman. I picture a fox terrier nipping and yapping at the heels of this judge, at the heels of justice. I feel chaos and frenzy.

Can this possibly be a parable which says if we bother God enough, He will give in?

Many of us know this persistence in the whines of children! And we know at some level that before giving in we have been taught to pause and perform some kind of evaluation: is this battle worth fighting? would it hurt to give in? is it a battle of wills?

It is at this last question that I think we might find a way into this parable or at least a shift in its superficial first glance meaning. There is no parable which teaches us to battle with God's will. There is no parable which teaches us to be persistent with selfish desire. Rather the way into this parable, I believe, is to focus on the word prayer and

to consider that prayer is the practice which melts tension and struggle in favor of holy assessment and judgement.

Our prayer, taught to us by Jesus is always "thy will be done" our prayers may have different content and less or more words, our prayers may be for ourselves, our loved ones, the world, for peace, for salvation. No matter the content we seek in prayer an alignment with our God.

which is different from seeking earthly material goods or solutions.

We are to be guided I believe by the opening of this parable: to pray without ceasing. It is prayer which transforms this story of common injustice and personality to one of holy tenacity and justice.

Our God is persistent...always desiring us always pouring grace on us always giving us what we need even if we don't know it.

We, made in the image of God, are authorized in our similar tenaciousness to plead, lament, praise and pray for the justice which we know, just as the letter to Timothy reminds us, which we know from Scripture is to come, and is glimpsed. The tenacity which is expressed in furtherance of the Kingdom is holy tenacity.

The persistence in prayer, the persistence in reaching for God, is unfathomable when it meets and melds with God's persistence. It is an age old mathematical principle that when energy meets energy it may not only be doubled it may be exponential growth, it may be combusive.

This merging of our tenacity with God's is something which is at the heart of social justice movement theory. In our lifetimes we have seen this combusive alignment of wills in furtherance of justice in the Civil Rights Movement.

Just imagine if you will the persistent widow is Rosa Parks. Just imagine the bus driver (and I really know nothing about him) was the unjust judge. Just imagine the resolute unswerving determination which walked her to the seat not in the back of the bus but in the front! While it was not granted to her by law it was a triumph of justice which resulted from prayer, community, an insurgence of the emotions of the oppressed and of God. There was an insurgence which said we cannot take this anymore! We shall overcome! no matter what! she was not alone!

And so, I wonder in the end whether this is about the daily often brutal situations of injustice in our lives which are worked out, albeit in God's time, between prayer and fully formed faith.

What is clear today is that the parable is about prayer and its power. What is also clear is that Jesus believes, as should we, that prayer and faith are intimately linked.

What happens between prayer and faith in the second coming is the working out of salvation history. I am reminded that Jesus did not come to start a religion; he came to start a movement, a movement of social justice reform.

Today we are invited to join this movement also or to reaffirm our place there; by praying without ceasing for the bringing about of God's kingdom, for the inbreaking of justice and compassion.

It is the responsibility of the faithful prayers to care for the widows, the orphans, the oppressed, the marginalized....with holy tenacity!

When we accept this responsibility, response-ability, then we are blessedly assured that when Christ comes again he will indeed find faithful disciples...he will find YOU!

The Holy Tenacity of Prayer
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when we align our will with God's will, we receive in return God's gift of
life, full of love and grace. This is life in full flame