



Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon - 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 24C)

### Struggling with God and winning!!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 18, 1-8:

- **ESV** 1. And He said a parable to them to show that they must always pray and not grow weary,
- 2. saying, “There was a certain judge in a certain city not fearing God and not respecting man.
- 3. And there was a widow in that city and she continually came to him, saying, ‘Vindicate me against my opponent.’
- 4. “And he was not willing for a long time. But after these things, he said to himself, ‘Even if I do not fear God nor respect men,
- 5. on account of the trouble this widow causes me, I will vindicate her, with the result that she not keep coming until [the] end and give me a black eye.’”
- 6. And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says.
- 7. But will not God make vindication of His elect who are crying to Him day and night and be long-suffering to them?
- 8. I say to you that He will make their vindication quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He even find the faith on the earth?”
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will be encouraged to cry out to God day and night, Thy Kingdom come and not grow weary! Amen.*

### • **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- Jesus ends this passage with a very sobering question, “*when the Son of Man comes, will He even find the faith on the earth?*” The Faith, what does Jesus mean by this? The people who have the Faith are described as God’s elect “*who are crying to Him day and night*” Thy Kingdom come! Forgive us our sins! Deliver us from evil!
- Jesus teaches His disciples, including us, that it is a necessity that we pray regularly and without growing weary. The temptation is huge to grow weary, to stop and think, what does it all help. Why even insist on the truth so much? Who

still cares about the truth? The its- all- about- Me-culture is just everywhere! Even the most popular Archbishop of South Africa wants *his* desires to be fulfilled when it comes to his death. What does the confession “Jesus is Lord” mean if the Lord is not even allowed to control death any-more? It really seems as if evil is ruling the day! Many, many Christians give up and become weary.

- Didn't we hear a very precise description of our times in the Epistle reading for today [2Tim 4,3-4]: *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching (doctrine), but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”* That is breathtakingly spot on for our times!

- We live in these times. Precisely this Word [2Tim 3,16], that the Scriptures are breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and discipline and training in righteousness is pushed to the sidelines in our times, because God's Will did not go with the times. His Will did not evolve. Its still the same. He never commanded to redefine the family. He never said children, students and citizens are allowed to cause a rebellion or revolution against those who have God's authority over them! So-called modern man tries to declare the Law of God null and outdated!

- Who needs Christ of the Holy Scriptures once the Law of God is marginalised? One just demands everything one wants, because it is one's right and make one's own christ, because one feels like it, and go look for the preachers who preach according to one's own idea of a christ!

- As Christians who want to abide in the one and only true Christ and His Holy Scriptures- you cannot drive a wedge between the two- it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the resistance of the world and this terrible don't- care- spirit of our times, even driven forward by churches fighting on the same side as the world!

- This is where the parable of Jesus really helps us, because we often *feel* like that widow! That is what we experience. If we are honest we often feel like nobody is listening to us. And let's be totally honest, sometimes, if we have to go through really bad patches, we even feel like God is against us and doesn't want to listen to us. It feels and seems like God is like the unrighteous judge, who doesn't care about people and us. It seems like He is just sitting there far removed and does

not seem to care about what's going on in our lives and in the world! Many honest Christians have confessed these thoughts to me! And I know this from my own experience! Sometimes one cries out, Lord, why are You not doing something about this or that? How can You allow all of this to continue? How can you allow me or us or that family to suffer so much?

• And now comes the first surprise of the parable Jesus tells us- you see He knows us so well- He reveals what's going on in our hearts! Now comes the surprise: The widow wouldn't give up with the unrighteous judge. She nagged him day and night! What seemed completely impossible happened: He all of a sudden vindicated her! Now, the unrighteous judge just wanted to get her off his back! But, the point is, even the unrighteous judge was conquered by the persistent begging of the widow to make her righteous, because he did care about one thing: his reputation! He didn't want to face the people with a black eye, which he might get from the widow!

• So, the widow had something to work with: his reputation!

• So the first lesson to learn is, as Christians we should never stop begging God to vindicate us, even if He may, at times, seem to be an unrighteous judge for us! Never give up to cry in His ear! Don't believe your experience, your feelings, what is in your heart in such times of affliction. How can I say this?

• Because this is not the end, just the beginning of Jesus' encouragement to never stop praying to God! He comes with another surprise, a huge one, a pleasant one, real good news: God is not unrighteous. He is not like that judge! That is our misconception of God based on what we see and experience and what the world and especially satan proclaim of God! That is not the truth!

• God is not like that! God has elected us. You are His elected child. He baptised you. It was all His doing! He will vindicate you although it may feel to you as if He takes a long time! He is patient and full of mercy! He hears you. He does care. He did something for you! He does something for you and He will finally vindicate you from all sin, suffering and evil enemies! He proclaims to you the fulfilled truth! He reveals to you who He really is. It is because of His mercy and loving-kindness that He has such long-suffering patience with all people still stuck in the world!

• So this parable turns out to be a wonderful one! Things are not like they seem! It

is actually extremely wonderful what Jesus is teaching here: The widow fights the unrighteous judge and wins!

- Jacob in our OT reading fights with God and wins, because both have one thing in common, they persistently draw on the judges' reputation! Vindicate me, bless me!

- God's reputation is that He is merciful and patient. If you persistently cry out to Him in this regard, drawing the mercy card so to speak, He will vindicate you! There you have Him nailed to the cross! He will vindicate you!

- Yes, all those who are fighting with God, there are so many, even outside the church, many atheists are fighting with God! The astonishing message is, you can be Israel, the one who fights with God and wins, if you fight right!

- This takes us back to the beginning of our sermon! This is exactly the same question as, *what is the right Faith?* The one who draws God's mercy, fulfilled, into his struggle with God, namely the true Christ Jesus, as proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures, always wins! It may take a long time, it may feel long to us, but in reality, He quickly and suddenly helps us.

- In Christ, through His Word, God promptly gives us His Spirit! What does this do with us? We realise, He is our Father in Heaven whom we can trust, because He not only hears our begging and pleas, He cares holistically for us. But, not only for us, also for those still in darkness. And so we begin to trust in God and we call on Him day and night not because we must, but because we cannot think of any better thing to do for ourselves, our loved ones and for all those in rebellion against God.

- This, dear congregation is the right Faith. So, we continue to pray, in the right Spirit, *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

- *The Lord keep us always in this true Faith, in Jesus' name. Amen.*