

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Keep Serving, Keep Trusting

Lesson: Luke 18:1-8

18 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ 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? ⁸ 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?"

Today is *Laity Sunday*. Who are the laity? That's right — everyone in the church who is *not* a pastor. In other words, all of you are the laity.

Some people think that only pastors are called by God. But that's not true. Each one of you has also been called by God. That is why you are here today, worshiping and serving together in this place.

On Laity Sunday, you are the main characters. We know and appreciate all the ways you serve this community throughout the year, but sometimes, in the busyness of ministry, we forget to express our gratitude. So if we don't take the time *today* — on the one Sunday of the year that honors the laity — to say thank you, then when would we ever say it?

(Slide 1) So I'd like to invite you to turn to someone nearby and say, "Thank you for serving," or "I appreciate your dedication."

One thing I learned about Laity Sunday is that, because this day is all about the laity, pastors are actually supposed to take a step back. Out of respect, the pastor should not be the main preacher or speaker, but rather a listener — listening to the message proclaimed and led by the people.

If a pastor does not do that, it might even be considered rude.

But... if you would allow me today, may I be a *slightly rude* pastor for a moment?

(pause) With your permission, I would like to share a message with you this morning.

Lately, the weather has cooled, and the trees have begun to change color — it's such a beautiful season. When I drive with my family, we often admire the colors outside the window. Esther and I want our son Evan to appreciate that same beauty and give thanks for it, but to him, car rides can feel boring.

So, before long, he turns to me and says, “Dad, can I have your phone?”

I ask, “Why?”

And he replies, “I want to watch *Blippi!*”

I tell him, “Not now. Look outside the window — isn't the world beautiful?”

He pouts a little.

Then, about a minute later, he says again, “Dad, can I watch *Blippi* now?”

I say, “I told you, not yet. You can watch it in twenty minutes.”

He nods and says, “Okay.”

Then five seconds later he asks, “How much longer now?”

So I tell him, “Only five seconds have passed — now six, seven... just a bit more.”

After another ten seconds, he asks again, “How much longer now?”

Finally, I point to the clock and say, “See? It's 4:15. When that number 15 changes to 35, you can watch *Blippi*. Okay?”

He keeps his eyes glued to the clock. When it changes to 4:16, he says,

“Dad, it changed from 1 and 5 to 1 and 6! When will it be 35?”

And I say, “Just wait a little longer.”

That conversation continues — over and over — until I finally give him the phone.

Sometimes I hold firm because I think it's important for him to learn how to wait.

But, you know, after hearing the same request again and again, I sometimes give in because I get tired.

Evan is a very persistent child. And sometimes, his persistence reminds me of what prayer should be like — earnest, patient, and never giving up.

(Slide 2) In today's story, Jesus tells us about a judge and a widow who continually came to him, asking for justice.

In those days, a judge was a person of great wealth, honor, and power. With a single word, he could send someone to prison or declare them innocent. People

feared him. Over time, that kind of authority hardened his heart. He no longer feared even God. Justice didn't matter to him, nor did people's opinions.

And then, a widow came to him — a woman who had been wronged and was pleading for help.

In that society, a widow wasn't just a woman without a husband. She was someone without protection, without financial means, and often without a voice. Women rarely had ways to earn a living, and without a husband — the legal protector — a widow could easily be exploited or stripped of her property. She was one of the weakest people in society, and there was no social system to protect her.

So she made a decision: *she would not give up*. She would keep coming to the judge until he listened. She probably knew his character — that he was unjust and self-centered. She knew she might be ignored or turned away. Yet she persisted.

She went to his office, perhaps even to his home. If he refused to see her, she waited for him in public court. Whenever she had the chance, she cried out for justice.

At first, the judge probably thought, *She'll get tired soon and stop bothering me*. But she didn't. She kept coming, again and again. Finally, he said to himself, *Even though I don't fear God or care about people, I will grant her request so she'll stop bothering me*.

And that is what he did.

Through this parable, Jesus teaches us to pray like that widow — to never give up.

But there's something important we need to think about here:

What is prayer, really?

We often think prayer means asking God for what we want —

“God, please fix this problem.”

“God, I need this.”

Even the Apostle Paul, a man of extraordinary faith, prayed that way. The Bible tells us he suffered from a physical illness — we don't know exactly what it was, but it caused him great pain. Three times he prayed that God would take it away.

(Slide 3) And God's answer was:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

If it were us, we might have said, “God, that’s not what I asked for! Please just take away my pain!”

We might have felt frustrated or even distant from God.

But Paul didn’t. He accepted God’s word as an answer to his prayer. He chose to trust. And instead of complaining, he began to *boast* in his weakness — because through it, God’s strength was revealed.

This shows us that prayer is not a magic spell or something that grants our wishes. Prayer is about a living relationship with a living God.

Sometimes life brings pain and disappointment — especially in our relationships with others. We feel hurt when others don’t respond the way we hoped, or when things don’t go the way we planned. And often, we carry that same attitude into our relationship with God. We pray, “God, please do this, please make that happen,” and when it doesn’t happen our way, we feel discouraged or angry.

But prayer is more than making requests. It’s also asking,
“Lord, how do You want me to respond in this situation?”

“What do You want me to learn from this?”

“What would Jesus do?”

It’s asking for the courage and strength to accept things we cannot change — to wait, to trust, and to keep faith — just like the persistent widow.

The widow in Jesus’ story had no name, no power, no status.

Sometimes our prayers may feel like her cries — unheard, unnoticed.

But God does not forget the prayers of those who trust in Him.

Today, on Laity Sunday, we remember that God works through the prayers of all God’s people — through the faith and patience of the laity. Just as the faith of one nameless woman brought about justice, God is still working in the world today through *your* faith and *your* service.

So, friends, do not give up. Do not lose heart.

Keep praying. Keep trusting. Keep walking with God.

Through your faith, God is renewing the world.

May each of you live as a person of faith and prayer.

In the name of the Lord, Amen.