

We bow our hearts in prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Just before our text, Jesus was telling His disciples about the coming of His kingdom.

First, about the coming of His Kingdom of Grace, through His Word and Sacraments.

This kingdom is already here, among us, by God's grace to give us God's grace, namely, the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation earned for us by Jesus.

But then, Jesus moved on to speak about the coming of His Kingdom of Glory.

This Kingdom we will see one day, but it will be a sudden occurrence.

But before that day, we will have to endure all sorts of catastrophic and terrible things, reminders of its coming, and the result of sin in this world.

So after this forewarning, Jesus goes on to give us our text for meditation today...

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 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. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"^(ESV)

These are Your Words, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

Unlike other parables, you don't need to think of what the point of this parable is.

St. Luke introduces the parable with it: **that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.**

Remember: What was it that Jesus had just gotten done telling them about?

The hard days ahead until He comes on Judgment Day.

In that lesson, He brought up 2 OT examples of what the end would be like:

the destruction of the world by the Flood and of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and sulfur.

In both cases, the societies were overwhelmingly evil with only a few righteous people, only a few believers in the coming Messiah to take away their sin.

We can only imagine what Noah heard for the 120 years he and his family prepared the ark.

That would be a long time to be constantly harassed about the lunacy of such a structure, for such a reason.

And we hear a little bit of Sodom's thoughts regarding Lot's presence among them in Gen.

They ridiculed him as a foreigner who, on account of his "higher moral standards," would presume to be a judge over them.

And while we have a comment in Scripture about the how the world was filled with violence before the flood and we have a whole story about the immorality of Sodom, it is hard to imagine how much more evil their times were than our time.

We should not imagine that these were easy times for the Noah and Lot...
that they simply waited for God's judgment to come with perfect patience in His timing.

No doubt, these saints cried out to God for help in their situations.

How often do you suppose they prayed for patience and perseverance?

How often do you suppose they prayed for deliverance from and even judgment on the evil?

How often do you suppose they would have thought the Psalmists nail it when they pray,

How long, O Lord? Ps. 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 74:9-10; 79:1, 5; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; 119:84

Do you ever suppose that they started to wonder about, even doubt, the Lord's promises.

In Psalms 80 and 82, Asaph sets out his complaint even more accusatorily before the Lord,

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? ^{Ps.80:4} &

"How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" ^{Ps.82:2}

Is it surprising to read and hear such bold complaints in Scripture?

And not only that, but even in the Psalms, the written prayers and hymns of the Church?

These sound like expressions of unbelief, but think of what they are

and to whom they're addressed. They are prayers, addressed to God.

These, of course, are complaints from our human perspective.

God's seeming non-response is not a result of anger over His people's prayers,
or that He is judging unjustly in favor of the wicked.

But this is what it can look like when God doesn't seem to be answering your prayers,
not immediately, nor even after years of fervent prayers.

That's especially true when we hear Jesus say things like: **Will He delay long over them?**

I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily.

And yet, it looks like He delays. And we are tempted to think hard thoughts about the Lord.

Our impatience can quickly turn to anger and bitterness, as we doubt God's love,

or impose on Him our sinful reasons for delaying help, like lack of love or disinterest.

Our patience and forbearance can eventually turn to indifference and lethargy,

as we grow tired of repeating the same prayers and wonder if God tires of hearing them.

But hearing such complaints from other Christians in other times & situations can be comforting,

because you begin to see that it is not just you that have gone through enduring trials:

periods of temptation, of contending with wickedness, of facing persecution,

of failing to see God's wisdom of letting evil continue, seemingly unchecked, and so on.

Of course, the comfort isn't in recognizing that others also suffered long.

It is in seeing that the Lord did eventually deliver them from the evil, one way or another.

It is in hearing God's response of complete and decisive victory,

even though it seemed to have lingered longer than we would like.

As we consider our times and the evil around us and distresses of our earthly life,

let us consider the point of Jesus' parable before us today:

We ought always to pray & not lose heart.

The wicked judge cared nothing for the poor and defenseless widow or his own office.

His only concern was for himself and his pleasure, even though he knew what was just.

Jesus sets up this parable as a stark contrast to God, the just and caring Judge.

In fact, St. Luke seems to highlight our God's loving nature by referring to Jesus here, not by His human name, but by His title, "**And the Lord said...**"

He is the Lord, *who ascended into heaven and... will come to judge the living and the dead.*

But if that seems scary, then consider that He is also the Lord who voluntarily came to us, *was made Man, suffered, died, and was buried... for us men and for our salvation.*

He is the One who came to declare you just before His Father,

Who thought more of you, than for Himself, giving Himself up for you.

Who prayed constantly. Who prayed constantly for you, and who still prays for you.

He is the One who came 1,000s of years after He was first promised,

but came He did, and only **when the fullness of time had come**, ^{Galatians4:4}

when God's time was right.

Like our own flesh at times, St. Peter warns us that there will be scoffers who will say,

"Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ^{2Peter3:4,8,9}

At the very end of the text, Jesus asked the question:

when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?

The answer is, Yes, He will, since He Himself has promised that the Church would endure.

But this will not be because of anything we have done, but because of His preservation of the saints in faith and hope.

Consider Lot and His family. St. Peter tells us, that Lot was **greatly distressed**

by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds

that he saw and heard). ^{2Peter2:7-8}

And yet, the angels sent to rescue him had to struggle with him to get him to leave.

While tormented, he had grown lethargic and indifferent in his prayers it would seem.

As we consider our prayers, let us consider why it is that we pray.

First because God commands us to pray and because we are constantly in need of His mercy.

This is really to put to death our sinful flesh, which considers this worthless and stupid.

But secondly, and more importantly, we pray because God promises to hear us

and to answer our prayers according to the great goodness of His mercy and in His time.

"It is true," as one devotional puts it, "God's clocks do not beat at the same time as ours;

but His help comes at the earliest moment when His wisdom deems it profitable for us.

So God's delays are no delays; He is only watching for the most appropriate time

to send us help when it will do us the most good." ^{The Devotional Bible: St. Luke and St. John" p. 225}

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

Soli Deo Gloria

