

The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

10:00am Holy Communion – 19th October 2025

Luke 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.”

For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.”’

And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’

<Prayer>

On 22nd September this year, we in the UK might have marked the occasion of 70 years for what has been mostly an *annoying distraction*. On that day in 1955, the first television advert was broadcast. It happened to be for a certain brand of toothpaste. The commercial, as it’s more accurately known, has become a video genre all of its own. Most adverts provide 30 seconds of *forgettable irrelevance*, but for a very special few, they have become classics. Let me test you:

- Shake and Vac.

Do the shake and vac and put the freshness back

Do the shake and vac and put the freshness back

When the room smells fresh, so do you

Next time you vacuum you know just what to do

Do the shake and vac and put the freshness back

Do the shake and vac and put the freshness back

- Secret lemonade drinker.
- Everyone's a Fruit and Nut case. (where is it from?:
Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker Suite)

As I'm sure you know, the strategy behind advertising is that it has to be constantly repeated, therefore embedding into your brain. Then when you are shopping for lemonade, you will have pre-loaded into your minds that primary brand to reach for. No doubt there is some science behind it all, so that any product marketing department will know *how many times* they have to present their advert in order to achieve that brand preference. **But there is always the risk that we shall be annoyed and repelled by the constant repetition, and then a-vow never to go near their product.** For this reason, I have never bought Shake and Vac, and I never will!

There is something in our common human psychology that means *repetition* will influence us, perhaps away from something or towards something. We do so in the liturgy of the church – your order of service. (Trinity season, the Lord's Prayer). For example, automatic in our minds is the moment of prayerfully confessing away our sins but drawing back in the comforting reality of forgiveness.

If that important moment was missing, you would notice. In other parts of our worship, we can bring to God those things which trouble us the most but then receive also the comforts of His presence in the Holy Communion – just as it happens every time. The Lord’s Prayer is even greater in its constancy.

Today’s gospel reading from Luke 18, is where Jesus tackles this need to constantly seek the comforts of God but also addresses the concern that **we don’t want God to be annoyed and repelled by our constant repetition.** Luke introduces the moment:

‘Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.’

The imagined setting is a legal one – a certain lady is seeking justice. In a society that didn’t have a standing police force (such as we do now), if you wanted justice you had to find and convince a judge that your case was worth pursuing. I’m sure it is quite an emotive thing to do, because those who have been unjustly treated may not be able to give up on their quest, even if their case is seemingly hopeless.

Jesus said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.”

We don’t exactly know what this lady wanted in law, but we know she was convinced she had a case, wanted to see the truth very badly, and was determined not to go silent and just accept whatever injustice had been dealt to her.

When we ourselves appeal to the powers of authority we expect them to be people and organisations of integrity. **A corrupt or biased parliament, legal system or police force must be one of the worst forms of social illness that it's possible for a society to have.** It's why there is, and should always be, huge outrage when there is anything less than full reliability and integrity in our institutions of justice.

This lady appeals to a judge who is described as *neither fearing God nor having respect for people*. It sounds awful. She shouldn't *have* to choose that particular magistrate, but it may be that he was the only one available to her. With such power and lack of accountability, this immoral official is presented as the very *opposite of God*. Perhaps she and everyone else knew of this judge's poor reputation, but the reality was that she had no alternative. **That left the only place for her to search for hope to be within herself, by her own strength to just not give up.** So, she keeps demanding '[Grant me justice against my opponent.](#)'

Now imagine a world in which you could trust no one to deal fairly with you. Every day I seek the intervention of God in prayer, for those things I am too weak or too human to bear. **My hope is not in myself; it is in the one who is most worthy to ask.** Like our widow of the parable, there is only one judge available to us too, but He *is perfect and reliable* in a way that nothing else can compare. Luke continues:

[For a while \[the judge refused to listen to the widow\]; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming."](#)

We are not told much about the outcome for this widow, but it does sound as if she got her hearing in the end. **It should never have had to be like that.** Yes, she gets attention, and perhaps wins her case, but what is left of the judge - remembered only as the person to whom we shall never want to go again? And how soul-destroying it was to have to keep *asking, asking, asking*, and being led to think that at some point this judge will still refuse to listen altogether?

Our Christian theology of God places us very close to Him, as Our Heavenly Father. The Lord's Prayer, that most repeatable product of Christ's teaching, is embedded in our minds. **Every time we say or intone it, we make a request in which we can go nowhere else: 'Our Father.....Give us today'.** How many times in one rotation of the Earth does God get asked that request (especially on the Sabbath Day)? We should never expect God to become tired of our many petitions or think that might as well just try to answer our own prayers – but some do. Jesus brings a great warning: **'And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says',** because that is what awaits us if we think of God as no better than ourselves.

But we can keep asking in undiminished confidence, and God will receive all of our prayers as if they were the only ones we ever prayed. Luke present Jesus as emphatic to make his very strong point here. This is not just good Christian practice, but is actually is a basis for faith.

And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

One of the worst realities of atheism is that you have no choice. The atheist is left only with what he or she can achieve by their own strength, or by the limited attention of others (who at the same time may well answer in their own interest). **Imagine a world in which you could trust no one to deal fairly with you.**

I must admit, I don't give thanks to God for having 79 different brands of shampoo to choose from, all claiming to be the best. I doubt there is much difference to be had between them really. **God does advertise too of course. He reaches out to us in the greatest advocate of his love – his Son Jesus Christ.....and he keeps repeating it!** We know that our prayers have to be repeated many times, such is the world we live in. But let us not miss this important point of faith or reduce God to human justice. **Our prayers are golden to Him, always acceptable, again and again.**

Amen