



'Worship at home' October 16th 2022



We come to worship, knowing that in God
we live and move and have our being,
and that we are assured of God's presence with us,
and ours with God, always.

You might **light a candle** to remind you of this truth.

Opening

We gather in the holy presence of God,
the One who etches grace on our hearts.

**This is the place where God
will transform us into disciples.**

We give glory to God, who yearns for justice,
not just for a favoured few,
but for the least of our world.

**This is the place where God
will write compassion on our souls.**

We give thanks to God for unceasing grace;
we remember God's persistence in saving us.

**This is the place where God
will breathe the Word into our lives.**

adapted from Thom Shuman <https://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com>

PRAY
continually

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

When have you felt that prayers have gone unanswered?

Sometimes we rail against the heavens... "Where are you, God? Is anyone listening?" When they were feeling despondent, the disciples asked Jesus, "When is the kingdom of God going to come?" In response, Jesus told this parable, reminding them to persevere faithfully.

Luke 18:1-8

*Then Jesus told his disciples
a parable to show them that
they should always pray and
not give up. He said: "In a
certain town there was a*

*judge who neither feared God
nor cared what people
thought. And there was a
widow in that town who kept
coming to him with the plea,*

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

said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 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? 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?"

New International Version

On first reading, this is a difficult passage. Is Jesus saying we need to wear God down before our prayers will be answered? Do we twist God's arm until God reluctantly grants us what we want? Then we remember that parables are not metaphors, and they are not intended to make a direct comparison. Parables are stories that challenge us to see things differently. We hear in this parable that God *will* respond with justice. We also remember that prayer is not about hammering God with our requests, but aligning our will with God's so that we can live grounded in God's ways. God does not grant favours based on how hard we pray, or how great our faith. We are told that a faith as big as a mustard seed is all we need, because faith, and prayer, are not about what we do, but about God working in our lives.

*Devote
yourselves
to prayer,
being watchful
and thankful.
Colossians 4:2*

This is a parable of contrasts. God is NOT like the unjust judge who cares for no-one. And we are NOT like the widow, needing to pray better or harder or live more faithfully in order to gain God's favour. The nature of God is to love and to give lavishly and abundantly. But we CAN be like the widow when we hold fast to our faith, trusting that justice will eventually prevail and that God's will be done in our lives and in our world, when we open ourselves to God's Spirit working in and through us. 2



Widows in Jesus' time were vulnerable, with a tenuous place in society. The word for widow, in Hebrew, means "silent one", or "one unable to speak". We don't know who her opponent was or what justice she wanted done, but she knew the judge could help, and she persisted until he would do something about it. She found her voice, speaking up for what she knew to be right, seeking justice, until she found it.

We live in a world of injustice, uncertainty and pain: we pray for good health, but there is still a spot on the x-ray; we pray for peace, but troops infiltrate, and terrorists bomb; we pray for our daily bread, but millions are hungry each day; we pray for reconciliation, but families fall apart, relationships are broken; we pray for justice, but many are dispossessed, persecuted, oppressed. We ask ourselves, "where is God in all this?"

And as we pray, to align ourselves with God's will, we realise that although Jesus says God will quickly grant justice to those who ask for it, God's timing may not be our timing. God's answer to prayer may not be in the way we were expecting.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

- Matthew 6:33

What God calls us to do is live faithfully, to advocate against injustice, to trust, to pray always, and not lose heart. So that, *when the Son of Man comes*, he will *find faith on the earth* in us, as he finds us living faithfully, persistently, justly, lovingly, and prayerfully.

Prayer

Loving God, you are our God; we are your people.

We do not have to pray harder or have greater faith, for you to hear our prayers and to answer us; who we are is enough for you.

***It is not perfection
that leads us to God;
it is perseverance.***

*-Joan Chittister OSB
The Rule of Benedict*

You love us and want to give us all good things,
and for this we give thanks.

We commit ourselves again to you,
and to living faithfully in your ways.
Give us strength, courage, and grace
that we may share your love,
and seek your kingdom. Amen



Closing

As we pray let us remember that we do not have to twist the arm of a reluctant God to seek good things for this world, nor find ways to persuade a distant God to come near and listen to us. And let us remember that as we pray we kneel alongside Jesus Christ, in the presence of God, with the help of the Spirit.

So let us bring to mind now

those people who are in need of our prayers:
those who are ill, or anxious;
those who are lonely or sad;
those who are despairing or defeated;
those who are hungry or homeless;
those whose relationships are breaking apart;
those who are bullied or abused;
those who cannot find work;
and those who are over-worked.

In silence now, let us make our own specific prayers for
those on our hearts and minds today.

(silence)

In the presence of God,
alongside Jesus Christ,
with help from the Spirit
may we go into this week
to live out our prayers
through our lives.

Amen.

~ Ann Siddall

<http://www.stillpointsa.org.au/prayer/prayers-and-liturgies/>