



Sunday October 16, 2022  
Luke 18:1-8 (19th Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastoral Intern Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is not much of a secret that I spent many years ignoring God's call for me to become a pastor. What you may not know is that before entering seminary, I tried to get into the plumbing program at WCTC. I passed the math portion of the entrance test easily.

But then came the reading questions about ancient Greek history and the questions about the Roman empire. Phew. I was never able to answer those questions successfully. We never studied those things in school in El Salvador! I will never understand why I needed this knowledge to become a plumber. But after five times of taking the reading test, I gave up. I began to think God was putting this obstacle in my path to get me into seminary and so I accepted that was my new path.

In my first week at the seminary, Pastor Tony took me in his car. One day my school day ended earlier than his. He had instructed me to wait for him to go to dinner and then return to the hotel together. But I was completely discouraged, and frustrated. I felt humiliated by my inability to keep up with my classmates. I wanted to go back to Waukesha and present myself to the bishop and tell him that I would no longer continue with this process. I wanted to quit. During the three-mile walk to the hotel, I cried and I questioned God. By the time I made it back to the hotel, God and I had worked things out and I didn't quit that day.

There have been many times over the past three years that I have again felt the temptation to quit. God knows that we alone cannot face the obstacles that are presented to us in our lives. Just this week I spoke and prayed with a Latina woman who was angry and frustrated with God because she felt that God was not listening to her prayers. Surely many of you have had similar experiences in which we feel that God has abandoned us because we think God is not listening to our prayers, but in reality, God is always with us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In today's gospel, we hear how the Lord through a parable seeks to encourage the disciples about the need to always pray and not be discouraged in the face of trials. He knows that his disciples will have a life that will lead them to disappointments, losses, injustices, and persecutions, which could lead to discouragement and to lose hope in the ministry.

In the story, Jesus makes mention of an unjust judge and a persistent widow that he seeks justice for. Jesus does not want his disciples to focus on the behavior of the Judge, but rather on the attitude of the widow who demonstrated a good example of the persistence that all believers must have through prayer.

The character of the widow is used by Jesus to symbolize all the poor and defenseless of his time. It was obvious that she, without resources of any kind, had no hope of ever getting justice from the judge. But she did have a weapon: the weapon of never giving up. That perseverance was what allowed the widow to receive from the judge the justice that she had been longing for.

Jesus then tells the disciples; "If, in the end, an unjust judge can tire and finally give justice to a widowed woman, how much more will God, who is a loving Father, give his children what they need?" A loving father who gives his children what they NEED. We must always remember we should not expect to always get exactly whatever we pray for.

For example, a parent often has to refuse a child's request, because he knows that what the child asks for would hurt rather than help. God is like that. We don't know what will happen in the next hour, let alone the next



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week, month, or year. That is only in the knowledge of God and he alone knows what is good for us in the long term. That is why Jesus calls his disciples and calls us this day to never to never give up, to never quit in plumbing test and to maintain constant communication with Him through prayer.

Jesus knows that we alone cannot face the obstacles that are presented to us in our lives. Jesus himself experienced difficult times in his life. He cried just like us, his spirit was troubled just as our spirit is troubled, but he always went to prayer to wipe away his tears and to strengthen his spirit. In Matthew 26, we find that Jesus tells his disciples in Gethsemane, "Sit here while I go over there and pray. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." And he prayed: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you WANT. "If Jesus prayed, we are also invited to stand firm in our ministry through prayer and not let any pandemic, apathy, conflict, or an overscheduled life separate us from the path of God's justice and love.

In Luke 17 verse 1, Jesus tells his disciple, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come." In Spanish, it says, "Los tropiezos son inevitables." But people of God never give up.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.