

19th Sunday after Pentecost - October 19, 2025

Call to Worship

God promises us justice,
and teaches us persistence.

God promises us compassion,
and teaches us not to lose heart.

God promises to be with us
and teaches us to tend to each other.

So let us worship our God of comfort and challenge,
We will offer prayers and praise to our God of hope and healing.

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,
you breathe life into all things and nourish your whole creation.
You are a rock and refuge for your people, for you are trustworthy in all things.
Your desire for peace with justice can never be defeated.
You alone can bring life out of death, and restore wholeness to broken lives,
so we praise you and rejoice in the hope you offer.
For your love is the power at work in every situation,
seeking goodness and revealing truth, a love that will never let us go.
In our time of worship, we offer you our love and loyalty
through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

**God of our hopes and our hearts,
You provide the gift of faith but we lose heart quickly.
Troubles weaken our trust and
disappointments eat away at our commitment.
Forgive us and create in us clean hearts and in
your love, give us peace and perseverance. Amen.**

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Assurance of Forgiveness

Remember, the promise of the Apostle Paul declares:
What will separate us from the love of Christ?
Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through the God who loves us.
Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us,
no matter what we have done,
God's deep love will never let us go.

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Prayer for Understanding

Inspiring God, by your Spirit, open our minds and hearts to receive your Word for today, whether it challenges or comforts us, so that we may live more faithfully as we follow Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

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Scripture Readings

❖ Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?

² **My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.**

³ The Lord will not let your foot be moved;
the Lord who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ **The One who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.**

⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ **The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil,
will keep your life.

⁸ **The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.**

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❖ Luke 18:1-8

The Story of the Persistent Widow

¹⁻³ Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, "There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: 'My rights are being violated. Protect me!'

⁴⁻⁵ "He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, 'I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow

won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.”

⁶⁻⁸ Then the Master said, “Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won't step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won't he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?”

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Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Persistence

A persistent widow comes in front of a judge over and over again, one who could care a less about her predicament, people in general, or whether or not there some God out there who gives a dam. I have heard people break this down to where God is understood to be the judge, but I would say that is not the case in this parable. A parable is a story told in order to teach. In this story the judge is simply the harshest character that one could use as an example and is placed in juxtaposition to a just, loving, present, and compassionate God.

This parable story of Jesus was told as Jesus was being “grilled by the Pharisees on when the kingdom of God would come.”¹ (Luke 17:20) And the answers Jesus gave probably felt like nailing Jello to the wall as he says, “The kingdom of God doesn't come by counting the days on the calendar. Nor when someone says, ‘Look here!’ or, ‘There it is!’ And why? Because God's kingdom is already among you.” (Luke 17:21)

This line of rebuttal goes on for a while, about the fact that we cannot know exactly what the timeline is for when the kingdom will come, still we are called to have faith that, even if it doesn't seem like it, God's is already here with us. God's kingdom is already here among us, just as we pray your kingdom come, your will be done, know that the kingdom has already come, it is just not yet revealed in its fullness. We are living in an in between time. The in between where Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension have set in motion a new way of being in relationship with each other and with God, and when the fullness of that relationship will be known fully. (1 Cor. 13:12)

We are told from the get go in the scripture reading today, which flows directly out of this conversation about when the kingdom of God would come, that “Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit.” And the story was of this widow and the judge. But notice that the central character is the widow. Now in the time of ancient Israel provision had been made for widows. The Old Testament has numerous passages on the care for widows in particular. One such passage is

¹ All scripture passages taken from [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Exodus 22:22-24, “Don’t mistreat widows or orphans. If you do and they cry out to me, you can be sure I’ll take them most seriously; I’ll show my anger and come raging among you with the sword, and your wives will end up widows and your children orphans.” Widows were among the most vulnerable of people in society at the time. Someone should have been advocating for her, instead she finds herself having to come and plead her own case. We have no idea how the widow’s rights have been violated, but so far, she is being ignored and she is pleading for protection.

As the story goes, [The judge] never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on, he said to himself, “I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won’t quite badgering me, I’d better do something and see that she gets justice – otherwise I’m going to end up beaten black and blue by her pounding.” (18:4-5).

I knew a woman who had this kind of persistent faith. It was back in the early 1970’s when women still had to have their husband’s signature in order to get a bank loan for a business. This woman wanted to open a bakery. It was her business, and she was a determined woman who wouldn’t take no for an answer and though not a widow, she was fighting for her right to be taken seriously as a business woman and have full ownership of what she was about to pour her heart and soul into. That woman was my mother, and her persistence paid off, she got the loan to open her bakery and my dad did not sign the paperwork for that loan.

But all we need do is think of other people, women in particular who made a difference with their persistence. Rosa Parks comes to mind, the American Civil Rights activist who refused to give up her seat at the front of a bus in order for a white person to sit there. Or Viola Desmond, a Black rights activist, who was jailed for defiantly sitting in the “whites only” section of a Nova Scotia film house. Their persistence changed laws and lives. These women were all working toward a just society.

This story of the widow is told by Jesus to encourage those listening then and now to pray consistently and never quit. To be persistent in prayer. We all know though just how hard it is to pray that way. We pray with the hope that God will change our situations, and those prayers are important and valid, and yet I could not tell you how many times I have been called to the hospital, stood beside a bedside where family members are praying for healing, hoping that I will pray for a healing miracle, while all the while knowing that in many cases, at a certain point, no prayer will bring healing other than to relieve the suffering through dying. At that point my prayers are not for healing in this life, but that God is with them, because that is prayer that I know is and will be answered.

People look at me with the hope and the question about the power of prayer, and I wish the answer was simple. People want to believe that God will intercede in the moment

and save them however, we know from lived experience that is not the case. If it were, this world would be healed and all harm would end, all suffering would end, because millions of people are praying that prayer every day. We are already being persistent in those prayers.

And yet, Jesus ends the story by saying “So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet.”

This is difficult to believe when we look around and see the mess we are in, the plight of the homeless and addicted, the struggle to fight illness, and for some to keep food on the table so tummies do not rumble with hunger. So what is Jesus saying? I think that the last sentence speaks to it, Jesus asks, “But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?” (Luke 18:8)

So, if this isn’t about miraculous healing and ending world wars, famine, and natural disaster, what is this passage about persistent prayer getting at? Might I suggest it is about relationship with God. God doesn’t ask for persistent prayer because God wants to make you suffer, but rather as a way into relationship and strength. When we are persistent we can be worn down for sure, but we can also be made stronger, more resilient. We find that we trust God to be in whatever struggle we are facing, because against the odds, we persist, we become stronger, able to face challenges in ways we had not understood or been able to previously.

God is present. We know that because when Jesus died, he promised to send the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit would be in the world, in us, reminding us of all that Jesus taught about faith, about relationship with God, and about how we are to be there for the most vulnerable. And maybe that is what we are missing as we read this scripture...the word justice. This prayer is a prayer about justice. The widow was being treated unjustly. It was her cry for justice that was heard.

This is not about praying that you get a good parking spot, or that you give thanks when you make a profit on your portfolio. Though you certainly can give thanks when it happens. This kind of prayer is about bringing the justice of God to bear. The justice of God who is loving and compassionate, who cares about those on the margins, the most vulnerable and having that prayer answered. Though God hears all prayers, and we are called to pray about our needs, it is the needs of those who are suffering from injustice that certainly moves God’s heart to compassion. However, in answering that prayer, God who wants to be in relationship with each of us, is trusting us to also be part of the answer to prayer for others.

God will consistently and persistently be present with us. Through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in us we know that we are not left to our own devices but that God will

work in us to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth. This is the ongoing work of God's people right now. To live and pray in such a way as to be part of the healing, justice bringing, loving, and the compassionate reign of Christ to the world.

Why doesn't God just end all suffering now? I don't have a good answer for you. What I do know is that God chooses to work in, among, and through people in order for change to happen. I know that God chooses to be in relationship with people in ways that enact change, healing, and compassion. God calls on us to respond to the injustice around us and restore people and communities to wholeness. And when that happens, we rejoice together. We give thanks. We come to know God with us because we experience God with us.

May you practice this kind of persistent faith so that no matter when, where, or what, our resilience our compassion, and our hope will be a light to the world. God's kingdom is already among us and in us, this we know and trust because of Christ, with Christ, and through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of life,
You open our eyes on the world you love
and show us your presence and your purpose.
We see the beauty and wonder throughout creation
and feel the love and compassion you offer through friend and stranger.
For all these gifts we give you thanks.
We pray for those who cannot recognize these gifts in their lives.
Open their eyes to your presence and our companionship
so that they may know your steadfast love.

God of justice,
You open our eyes on the world and its anxiety
and show us struggle and conflict.
We see the burdens many carry in these stressful times.
Today we pray for those whose businesses are struggling;
for producers unsure they will receive a fair return;
for workers uncertain about their job prospects;
and for families weighed down by rising costs.
Open their eyes to new possibilities
and open our eyes to ways we can support them.

God of compassion,
You open our eyes on the world in pain and show us suffering and despair.
We pray for communities struggling with chronic hunger,
and for all who face difficult diagnoses or painful illness.
Open their eyes to your mercy

and open our eyes to ways we can offer support.

God of wisdom,

You open our eyes on the world out of balance
and show us its many complexities.

We see old animosities and fresh upheavals that put innocent lives at risk.

We pray for the millions displaced by current conflicts and natural disasters,
and pray that leaders in every country and community
will attend to the suffering of their people with mercy and justice.

Equip all those who prepare for ministry in our Colleges

with the knowledge and commitment needed to serve in complicated times.

Open all our eyes to creative solutions

for situations that break your heart and ours.

And so, we pray that your kingdom will come among us,
in the words Jesus taught us ...

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Invitation to the offering

Like the widow at the judge's bench, God persists in asking for our response to needs we might think are beyond us. Trust that God will bless what we offer and do surprising things with us, for us and through us, through Christ, our Living Lord.

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There are various ways that people give to this congregation for our work as God's people, through signing up for a monthly donation, or sending an etransfer.

Check out the opportunities to support St. Andrew's ministry at our website,

[St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, ON – Part of the PCCWeb network of churches](#)

Benediction

In these complicated days, do not lose heart.

Persevere with purpose and patience,

sure that God honours your faithfulness.

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit,
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Postlude