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Date: 06/22/2008
Title: "The Widow and the Judge"
Text: Luke 18:1-8
Theme: Have faith and pray because you will be heard by our Just Father.

Introduction:

The reason why Jesus told this parable is found in verse 1: "to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." However, the story he tells to make that point proves the point in a unique fashion. This parable of the widow and the judge is a "negative example" that provides insight into our relationship with our Father. The parable teaches in reverse from bottom to top, it shows us black so that white can seem even more brilliant.

Let me illustrate the idea of contrast through

- "Sonnet 130" by Shakespeare
- The poetry of George Herbert
- The music of Caedmon's Call

A diamond can be showcased in 2 ways. The first manner would be to display cubic zirconium or some other kind of clear mineral that resembles a diamond such as quartz in contrast to the former substance despite its similarities. This would be the equivalent of using a simile in the story where two things that resemble one another are used to learn more about both but especially of the latter.

The 2nd way, would be to lay down a piece of rich black, velvet cloth and place a diamond on top of it. This would be using a "negative backdrop" to contrast the brilliance of the diamond. This is the manner that Jesus uses in this parable. The widow and the judge are the black velvet on which our relationship with God is placed to the effect that we take heart and with faith strengthened, we pray.

Here's the story:

- I. "There was a judge in some city(MSG)"
 - A. "He never gave God a thought"
 - B. "He cared nothing for people"
 - C. Background of a circuit court judge
 1. traveled from city to city in a given region and set up a tent and heard cases

- II. "A widow in that city kept after him"
 - A. "Give me justice (ESV)"
 - B. Because of her position in life she couldn't gain a hearing

1. Men only! She needed a husband, father, or son to bring her into the tent and have her case heard
- III. “He never gave her the time of day . . . but after this went on . . . ‘I’d better do something and see that she gets justice’ (MSG)”
- A. He performed justice out of unjust motives
 1. He cared only for himself
 - a. the idea of “wearing me down” is literally translated “give a black eye to” which shows he is afraid of public shame. This is like the story of the friend at midnight in Luke 11:5 who eventually opens his door to avoid public shame.
 2. She wore him down

Here’s the application from Jesus to His disciples:

- I. “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. (ESV)”
 - A. “I’d better . . . see that she gets justice (MSG)”
- II. “Will not God give justice? (ESV)”
 - A. “for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? (MSG)”
 - B. “He will, he will not drag his feet (MSG)”
 1. The ESV translates this phrase “Will he delay long over them?” but a literal translation could also be “will he keep putting them off?” God obviously does not “put his people off” but that does not mean that it doesn’t feel like that sometimes. Sometimes I feel like the Israelites wandering in the desert wondering if God will pull through or not. Though God is certain to work out his will it also certainly feels distant and uncertain at times.
- III. “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (ESV)”
 - A. The answer to the parable is an issue of faith
 - B. There is an apocalyptic nature to the gospel of Luke or an “end of days” theme. Jesus asks if in the last days will there be those still believe their Father hears them and will deliver them into his Kingdom forever or will the apparent lack of a response from heaven foster disbelief in their hearts. Jesus has been warning his disciples of trying times to come. In their Jewish context that have in mind the long years of waiting and hoping for the Messiah that Israel has endured. With these things in mind Jesus “creates” faith within them through this parable.

Conclusion:

The answer to the dilemma is faith: faith that we as God's chosen people, His beloved bride are not at all similar to the widow, who because of her position could not gain a hearing with the judge. Faith, also, that our just heavenly Father hears us gladly and is not at all like the unrighteous judge who "cared nothing for people".

Much of the discussion about prayer is motivated by a fear of not being heard by God or not praying in a manner that God will answer. The pattern Jesus lays out for us through his ministry to his disciples is not how to be heard but that since our Father hears us, we ought to pray and not lose heart. In fact when the disciples approached him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray", he taught them how to pray but didn't give a word to the effect of how to be heard. Prayer is an act of faith and thus in its very nature is pleasing to God. The most important thing about prayer is praying.

We can pray confidently, knowing that our Father hears us at all times because of our representation which is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who lives at the right hand of the throne of the Father making intercession for his loved ones¹. Our task in prayer is pray, not to win a mixed martial arts match against God by wearing him down and winning with our ground game. Prayer is not a tough guy activity where we take pride in our efforts in enjoy the spoils of our victories. Prayer is faith, prayer is a simple assertion that we are God's children who are convinced of our loving audience with a Father who knows how to give perfect gifts according to his will².

Questions for application:

1. Do you feel as though you are being "put off by God"?
2. Do you worry that God is not hearing you because you are not worthy of being heard?
3. Is your main motivation in prayer to gain something from God or to worship God by expressing your faith in who he is?
4. What are the possible implications of "praying without ceasing"? Is it possible for us to maintain a "posture" of prayer consisting of little or no words that expresses the same faith in God?

¹ Hebrews 7:25 "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make **intercession** for them." Also Hebrews 1:1b "After making purification for sins, ^(L) he sat down^(K) at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name^(L) he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

² Luke 11:13 "If you then, who are evil, know how to give **good gifts** to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

If you've given up on praying because you feel unworthy or because you see little or no results from your requests, I beg you to reevaluate your dilemma this morning. Consider who you are in light of having the full representation of Jesus Christ before God. Consider your Heavenly Father who loves you and has blessed you already with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places". Consider your motivations in coming to him and consider praying to express your faith in him and lose your consumerist agenda of gaining from God something material every time you approach him. Our Heavenly Father loves us and looks forward to hearing from us. I am so thankful that I am not the widow and I am so thankful that God is not the unjust judge!