

The Parable of the Unrighteous Judge and the Persistent Widow (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Exodus 17:8-13—The Hands of Moses

1. Amalekites: sworn enemies of Israelites during the Exodus (cf. Exod 17:8-16)
2. Moses' Hands: “held up” (Israel prevailed) “lowered” (Amalek prevailed)

Psalm 121—My Help is from the LORD

1. Help: “my help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (v. 2)
2. Protector: “the LORD is your keeper/guardian, the LORD is your shade” (v. 5)

2 Timothy 3:14-4:2—All Scripture is Inspired by God

1. Inspiration: all “scripture” is “God-breathed” (Greek *theopneustos*) (3:15)

Luke 18:1-8—The Persistent Widow

1. Persistent Prayer: reason for Jesus' parable on prayer:
 - a. Constant: “they ought *always* to pray”
 - b. Weary: “and *not lose heart*” (Greek *engkakeō*, from *en* + *kakos*)
2. Unrighteous Judge: “neither feared God nor regarded man” (18:2)
3. Persecuted Widow: “vindicate me against my adversary” (18:3; cf. Exod 22:21-22)

“Though I do not fear God or respect any man, yet because this widow gives me trouble, I will vindicate her, lest in the end she come and *give me a black eye*” (Greek *hypopiazō*) (Luke 18:4-5; cf. 1 Cor 9:27; NAB, “strike me”).

4. Nimshal:

- a. Question: “Will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him night and day”?
 - b. Rabbinic Argument: from-less-to-greater (Heb *qal-va-homer*; Latin *a fortiori*)
5. Final Judgment: “When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (cf. Matt 24:12))

Living Tradition

Cyril of Alexandria: It is, I affirm, the duty of those who set apart their lives for his service, not to be sluggish in their prayers, nor again to consider it as a hard and laborious duty: but rather to rejoice, because of the freedom of access granted them by God; for he would have us converse with him as sons with a father.... But that God will bend his ear to those who offer him their prayers, not carelessly nor negligently but with earnestness and constancy, the present parable assures us. The constant coming of the oppressed widow conquered the unjust judge that did not fear God or have any shame. Even against his will, he granted her request. How shall not he who loves mercy and hates iniquity, and who ever gives his helping hand to those that love him, accept those who draw near to him day and night and avenge them as being his elect?” ... Excellent therefore it is to make request by constant prayer... (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke* 119; trans. R. Payne Smith).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. What is the significance of Moses' keeping his hands lifted during the battle?

2. Why do you think it is so difficult to “pray always” and not to “lose heart” (Luke 18:1)?

3. In the original Greek, the judge was worried that the widow would give him “a black eye.” What does this tell you about the kind of persistence Jesus expects of his disciples in prayer?

For Further Study

1. Arthur A. Just, Jr. *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003. Pp. 275-78
3. Pablo Gadenz. *The Gospel of Luke*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp. 301-303.