

“Pray Always!”

Psalm 142 and Luke 18:1-14

Let us pray: Heavenly Father may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be pleasing to you. Amen.

A parable is a narrative designed to awaken religious insight.

It's meant to demonstrate religion & illustrate truth.

In our lesson from Luke this morning that Barb just read:

The parable of the widow and the judge sums it up...

“We need to pray always and not lose heart!” (repeat this!)

(Pause) Certainly, a needed reminder for all of us in July 2020!

Because it's a fact, right? We all...Each of us...lose heart, don't we?

We read the newspaper and we get dejected.

We scroll through social media and we get disappointed.

We watch the news...and we get discouraged.

It's hard to even be specific, isn't it?

Frustrating politics, restaurants closed, vacations cancelled,

uncertainty about schools opening, wearing a mask everywhere,

churches closed!

It's life in general right now!.

And we grow discontent...in ourselves...and others.

(Pause) We suffer:

“I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping”

From the 6th Psalm.

We are filled with uncertainty and doubts:

Deuteronomy 28:66 reads:

“Your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, with no assurance of your life.”

“With no assurance of your life”.

Personal guilt...failure...inadequacies run rampant in our heart.

They can dominate our conscious mind!

Why is this? How can we let this happen?

(Pause) Because we lose heart!

Our church... Jesus... scripture..... and prayer are relevant today.

Our church is our community of saints, our family of believers;

Our support group!

Jesus reminds us of oneness. He is our source of hope, love and life.

Scripture provides us strength and understanding.

Scripture is the foundation and structure that our faith rests upon.

And then there's prayer...

“We need to pray always and not lose heart!”

From this morning's Gospel Lesson.

And what's our response?

We say..."well, that's easier said than done!"

Our answer to a lot of things is...no answer!

Is it really that hard?

Do we really have to try that hard?

We've all been told things like:

"don't be discouraged"... "don't worry" or "just try to forget about it"

But how do you do this? How do you make it all stop?

Maybe you go see your Dr. and your Dr. says:

You need a vacation....you need to get away...

You need to go to a quiet restful place.

(Pause) Jesus seems to have taken this advice.

He went into the wilderness for 40 days.

He went to the Garden of Gethsemane.

(pause) I have a co-worker Annette who is Canadian.

And while she lives and works here,

the majority of her family lives outside of Toronto.

And if the COVID 19 pandemic wasn't enough,

Annette had to deal with recently losing her mother,

caring for an elderly father and a sick widowed sister,

who were all in Canada.

In April, Annette's sister lost her courageous battle w cancer.

Because of the strict international laws, Annette had to
Quarantine 2 weeks before going to Canada to see her sister
and her aging father.

Unfortunately, she didn't make it to Canada, before her sisters passing.

She did make it to the funeral which was limited to 10
people of which (2) of those people had to be a Priest & Funeral Dir.
So her entire family couldn't attend.

On top of all that literally:

A gov't surveillance helicopter hovered over the funeral to ensure
There were no more than 10 people at the gathering.

The Priest couldn't be heard, so he blessed the body and they left.

I speak to Annette regularly as you may guess for work,

But this week I checked in with her spiritually.

I asked how she was doing....and she asked me:

“When you stop wanting to see them again?

When do you stop wanting to talk to them again?”

And I told her “You never do, that's the beauty of it...

You can talk to them every day!”

And she said! “I do that! I talk to my sister and my mother

every day, usually on my ½ hour drive to and from work,

(Pause) when I'm alone and it's quiet".

She went on to say... "I'm not really sure what it's called,
but I talk to them at least twice a day!"

(Pause) I said, "Annette, that's prayer!"

(Pause) "We need to always pray"

Often, we can't deactivate our minds, can we?

It's always working...always thinking...always racing along.

Suffering is never an end in itself.

Something has got to come from suffering...something new.

A new strength... A new courage

Maybe its renewed faith, hope & assurance

Or possibly a greater respect for life.

Remember the story of Job?

In all his suffering, he ended with a greater faith and belief

and a better understanding of God & life.

In the Parable that Barb read this morning,

The unrighteous Judge fears neither God nor has any regard for man.

Yet the judge heeds the persistence of the widow's plea!

He vindicates her.

And just think: if an unjust judge heard the continual,
persistent, pleas from the widow...

How much more will the righteous and merciful God-
hear the prayers of his servants and of the church?

Sometimes, we do lose heart...

Sometimes we just give up!

We don't think prayer will help.

We take up the ways of non-Christians.

Remember Jesus tells this parable to remind us :

“to pray always and to not lose heart”

We forget the first part of the formula... “pray always”

The flesh fails us...our wisdom...our courage...is insufficient.

But our soul...our spirit is still there.

The foundation and structure of Christianity is still there.

We have to step out of our troubled world...

And into the world of our spirit!

We have to step into eternity.

We have to step into God's world...God's Kingdom.

We have to seek His eternal knowledge, strength and hope!

In spite of our problems and uncertainties....God goes on!

His Kingdom continues and we are a part of it....

He is with us!

Jesus declares: that God will not delay!

“I tell you he will vindicate speedily.”

He will comeindeed He has.

He will answer our prayers...indeed he has.

And he will do it speedily, even though;
we tend to be a people who give up easily.

(Pause) In all of this, there still lies the question:

“Have we learned to number our days?”

Or do we continue to put off our prayers.

“I’ll do it tomorrow....”

(Pause) Maybe there is no tomorrow.

Can we humble ourselves and honestly seek God –
and see ourselves as being a part of His Kingdom??

Can we step out of our conscious primitive mind with all its craziness,
and encounter God with our heart & soul?

Can we seek Him and His word?

“We need to pray always and not lose heart!”

We don’t have to worry about our judge.

We have a merciful judge.

He knows us...and He hears us!

He will come to us speedily!

We are not to lose heart.

We are to pray always

In our lesson from Psalms 42 this morning:

“When my spirit is faint, thou knowest my way!”

We’ve got to believe!

“And yet, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Luke 18:8

Amen

