

Parables of the Kingdom: God's Judgement

Nelson Cathedral

October 12, 2025

OT Genesis 32:22-31

NT 2 Tim3:14-:5

Gospel Luke 18:1-8

Introduction.

Several years ago, I was selected for jury service. Wearing my dog-collar in the hope of not being picked, my name was called out of the ballot, and I had to go into the courtroom as one of the possible jurors. My name was then called out again, and I had to make my way to the jury seats, until at the last minute the defence lawyer quickly objected. I'm guessing he saw "Rev" on the paper and I was free to go.

We are used to the idea of courtrooms with lawyers arguing for prosecution or defence and judges or juries making the decisions. But in Jesus's day it was different, both the complainant and the defendant had to appear before the judge and make their own case. If someone stole from you, you had to bring the charges against them yourself, not the police or lawyers. If someone murdered your relative, the same was true. Every legal case in Jesus' day was a matter of a judge deciding to vindicate one party or the other. Vindication, another word for justification, means to uphold one side of the story, for the judge to find in one's favour.

As we continue to look at parables or conversations about the kingdom of God, today Jesus uses a courtroom scene to once again show us what God is like, and what this means as we live out our faith, both individually and as a community as we wait for Jesus' return.

Image of God.

In this parable Jesus makes a puzzling comparison with a very ungodly judge representing God in the story. This judge is rotten to the core, with no respect for God and not caring if he even makes a correct decision for the people before him. But in this situation we can have some sympathy with the judge as the widow persistently “bothers” him. Any parent will know those feelings, “can I have that, can I watch that...”

But with such a contrast, Jesus is making the point: if this rotten judge can be persuaded to make the right decision because the widow continually “bothers him”, because her actions were “causing him trouble”, her requests were wearing him down, then God who is the definition of Justice and Compassion, who cares passionately about his people, will make the correct decision to see justice done, vindicating them as correct. Correctly translated, “God will definitely vindicate his people!”

The Case.

But what is the legal case that the complaint of the widow represents? The widow represents God’s people, living in a world that does not care about God and facing trouble and persecution for their faith. The widow – who could have been in her 30’s - was vulnerable in her society, especially financially, just as God’s people are vulnerable in an indifferent world. This widow was waiting to be vindicated, waiting to be proved right just as the people who now gather around Jesus wait to be proved right when Jesus returns and God judges the world.

We have already seen such vindication with God the Father vindicating Jesus by raising him from the dead, and Jesus’ prophecy that the temple will be destroyed coming to pass in 70AD. The point here being that Jesus is who he said he was, the Son of God.

So, it is for God's people, our hope in the return of Jesus is motivation to live as God calls us. And it is also a hope that gets us through all the lesser moments with which Christian living is filled.

Moments that test our faith.

So how do we respond in our times of need, how do we keep going when we face difficulty - just like the widow we pray, or using the words of Jesus' parable we bother God. Not that God needs to be bothered, God knows our needs before we do, he knows our words before we speak them. And so, in our persistent prayer, we place our faith and hope in God's listening, God's compassion, and ultimately in God's action.

This is what we mean by the phrase "justification by faith" - We are made right with God by faith in Jesus. And in God's final judgement, God's people will be vindicated will be proved right, will be justified after their life of rejection, suffering, holiness and service.

Just as Paul reminded Timothy, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: and here I will paraphrase – carry out the work that God has called you to, be persistent in the good times and the bad".

Our Faith

The picture that Jesus paints is for us about our faith, is to persistently pray without losing heart as we humbly walk with God and serve him. We could even go as far to say, in prayer it is OK to wrestle with God. Just as we see in the story of Jacob wrestling with God for a blessing, for God's assurance .

So, what are the feelings, the situations, the worries that you are wrestling with God about?

Jesus' parable tell us to keep wrestling in prayer and don't give up, because we trust in a loving and compassionate God. But to pray in a way that leaves

judgement to the Lord and serves him with diligence until he comes. Is not that the essence of the Lord's prayer, "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name".

This leads us to Jesus' final remark, "And yet when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Yes we live in a now and not-yet world where the kingdom of God is here with us now through Jesus and his Spirit. But, we have to wait until Jesus returns for the kingdom of God to be fully present on earth as it is in heaven, when there will be no more tears, death, sorrow, crying or pain. Where everything will be made anew, including ourselves. The time when God will vindicate his people and put everything right.

In the meantime, every moment until the Lord returns is an opportunity to live as children of God, and to look for opportunities to change the eternal destiny of someone who does not yet know Jesus. The moments that remain should motivate us as the

church to be the vessel through which others come to enjoy God's grace also.

Conclusion

The parables of Jesus about the kingdom of God exhort us to keep watch. They call us to faithfulness, and to trust in God's timing that the end will come when God will judge us all. God has not dated that event for us, other than to tell us it will come.

But as Jesus shows us, the longer we have to wait, the more we have to rely on persistent prayer and patience.

The road to God's blessing and God's presence goes through Jesus. To walk with Jesus, to follow him is to be different to the world around us. And in doing so we rely on the faithfulness of God who is just and compassionate, the God who does hear the prayers of his people, and the God who will declare our faith right. Amen.