

October 17th, Proper 29

Opening Collect

Holy One,
we lift our eyes to you in prayer.
Grant that we may reject all apathy of spirit,
all impatience and anxiety,
that, with faithful persistence and complete trust in you,
we may lift our voice to you again and again
confident in your care for us.
We ask this through the One
who teaches us to pray always
and never lose hope,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit is one God,
now and for ever.

Jeremiah 31:31-34: *God promised to make a “new covenant” not written on stone tablets but on the people’s hearts. This covenant will enable the people to be faithful, and following the Law will be a matter of individual conscience and will power. The people of God were promised an intimate relationship with God (we will “know” the Lord). Forgiveness of sins is a hallmark of this “new” covenant. As Christians, we see the fulfilment of this prophecy in Jesus.*

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5: *Paul continued his encouragement of young Timothy, in the face of either some conflict, or his questioning his ministry. The way through such events is to, well, keep walking right through them! Relying on the Word equips us with all that we need. So even as Timothy faced some suffering, Paul encouraged him to be persistent in his ministry and carry it out fully.*

Continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;
And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Luke 18:1-8: *The Pharisees have asked Jesus when God's Kingdom will come. Jesus response was that it has already come (in him). He then told a parable about a widow (voiceless and powerless) who never gave up seeking justice from an unjust Judge. Finally, if only to get rid of this woman, the Judge relented and granted her request. How much more will God, who is pure love and who has chosen us, hear us and listen to us! The last sentence is a call to have faith, to trust that God does the best for us all.*

Jesus spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Jesus was probably using a familiar image to his disciple, both of the widow seeking justice and of the disreputable judge. This was probably commonplace in Jesus' day. Widows had no one to speak on their behalf. Women had only marginal legal standing in the court without a man to argue on their behalf. And judges were notoriously crooked, as the prophets to Israel could well attest. Bribery and corruption were the ordinary way of life, and the neglect of widows was well known. In fact, the early church made its mark in society by being a community that cared for its widows, especially those who had no family at all and had to fend for themselves. Widows are numbered along with the orphaned and the poor precisely because they had no one to speak for them and were at the mercy of society.

The widow in the parable was at a double disadvantage. Not only was she a widow who had no advocate to speak on her behalf, she also was going before a crooked judge who couldn't care less about justice. She had no money to bribe him; she had no influence in the community; she couldn't afford a decent attorney. All she could do was show up day after day in his courtroom with the same set of papers in her hand seeking justice.

Even the judge admits to himself that he couldn't care less about this widow much less her case. He says, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual harping." And this is supposed to be an image of faithful prayer? This is how we ought always to pray and not lose heart?

But here is where the parable takes a strange turn. The crooked judge winds up giving the pesky widow what she wants, not on the basis of the law, but simply to get her out of the courtroom. What appears to be a mockery of justice winds up doing justice. And if that's how it is in the crooked courtrooms of men, will not God, who is just, give justice to His elect, who cry to Him night and day? You bet He will!

Take note. This is not about asking God for whatever you want. This is about the very thing God delights to do – justify the sinner by grace through faith for Jesus'

sake. This is why the Father sent the Son to die, so that the sinner might be justified in the elect Son.

Will the Son of Man find faith on the earth? That's what Jesus cares about. Faith. From faith, everything else proceeds, including works of mercy, love, and compassion. But before God and His bar of justice, the only thing that matters, the only thing that counts as righteousness is faith in what Jesus has done for us.

Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Concluding Prayers:

O God, ever promising deliverance to your people, hold out your hands to us, and hear our common supplications. Give us courage to pray, calling out day and night for all that you have promised.

We thank you for diligence in reading your word, and for the whole church as we ponder the inspiration you granted to those who have instructed us, that we may understand your message to us.

We thank you for boldness to speak your word humbly to others, for constancy and courage, and for all to whom we speak.

We thank you for your love in us, that you may use our hands and our hearts to carry your love to others.

We thank you for your warmth and strength and power for all in any need. We pray for Charles, our king and all in authority, that the weak and lowly be heard by those in authority.

We thank you for our unfailing remembrance of our blessed dead, and for those whose names and faces fill our days and nights, that we may always give thanks for their lives, and that we live in fervent expectation of joy together with them in your house forever, God of faithful bounty we trust in you alone.

Lord, tireless guardian of your people,
ever prepared to hear the prayers
 of your chosen ones,
teach us to rely, day and night, on your care.
Support our prayer, lest we grow weary.
Drive us to seek you and your ever-present help.
Grant this through your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ,
Who lives and reigns with you
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever.

For our Parish.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful: Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence. Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel. Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour; and those who are walking in the way of life, keep steadfast unto the end.

Give patience to the sick and afflicted, and renew them in body and soul.
Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous.
Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace, and make us all to be fruitful in good works; O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you
always. *Amen*