

Luke 18:1-8

Grace, peace, and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Think with me the various ways we serve Christ and one another in the Church. Teaching Sunday School. Reading the lessons on Sunday morning. Ushers for Holy Communion. Helping in the kitchen for fellowship hour and our monthly potlucks, and well as the up coming election day soup and pie supper for the community. And we have altar guild who keep the appointments of the altar up to snuff as befitting for the House of God. Some of us can engage in visitation to our shut-ins and nursing homes. Work at the food pantry. Deliver congregant meals. Use your voice for singing and offering special music. Have I forgotten one. Oh yes, I have. What about prayer?

There is no greater way to service you can do than prayer. In James chapter it says, "The prayer of the faithful powerful and effective."

A few weeks ago, sometime back in August, I challenged you all to begin to pray for one another. What a great service that could be for one another. Pray that we do not lose heart. Praying that our brother and sister does not lose heart is just another way of praying that they do not lose faith. We all have doubts, fears, struggles, troubles, trials, temptations, losses, and the grief that comes with losses especially when a loved one dies. Each one of us need all the help we can get. And in praying for a brother or sister who sitting near you this morning you are bring them to Jesus for help. If we have not seen them in quite some time, definitely pray for them that they do not lose faith. Prayer that do not lose heart and give up.

Scripture also directs us to pray for our country's leaders, and I might add pray for them no matter their party affiliation. There are so many cultural wars going on that threaten so many, and with so much confusion, different teachings that satisfy itching ears, teachings that are different from what we know are true. Pray that our leaders may be given godly wisdom in the midst of all this. Pray for our enemies that these advisories may be converted and repent from the wrongs and atrocities being carried out by their orders. Yes, that we pray for Putin.

Next pray for me. I need your prayers. I covet them. Pray for my preaching. For my safety in travel. For my teaching. For wisdom in counseling. For my faith and that I do not lose heart and give up. Yes, prayer for my family, which have patience, understanding, and the support they and love of the body of Christ. And they too not lose heart.

Now that we have primed the pump concerning the pray of the faithful, what does this prayer look like? Jesus gives us such a picture in our gospel for the day. Jesus told a parable to the effect about their, "need to pray always and not lose heart." It is about a widow who kept coming to a judge demanding justice against an adversary. This judge only cared about himself and not anyone else. He had no mind to care about this helpless widow because he would gain nothing for it. But in the end, he did help the widow because of her continuous pleading. She would not leave him alone until her demand was satisfied. Still, he did satisfy her only for his

one selfish reason. He got tired of her constant badgering. Now at least he could have a little peace and quiet.

Jesus tells his disciples and us too, that our situation is so much better than that. As children of God, we have a Father in heaven to go to. And our Father is not bothered by our prayers. He desires to hear us in prayer even more than we desire to pray. He wants to give us all that we need and does. In the end Jesus asks, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" Will He find the faithful praying like the widow pleading in the face of the unjust judge?

Praying is easy...praying is hard. Sometimes it is like wrestle with God, just like we heard our first lesson. Sometimes it seems like God is against you, nothing happens. You pray and things get worse. You pray and wonder if God really hears. In our first lesson in this wrestling match, it seemed like God was against Jacob, but was not. It is only after of wrestling all night and Jacob almost overcoming God in this match that God say let me go. And Jacob says, "I will not let go unless you bless me." God had to be smiling. For God had wanted to bless Jacob and bless he did. Jacob got a new name. Israel. Oh, yes, he got a permanent injury to, a dislocated hip.

But what a great picture we get of Jesus who told this parable about not giving up and losing heart in our praying. Just as Jacob almost overcame God in his wrestling only to be blessed, Jesus, God's begotten Son came from heaven to be overcome on a cross so we could be blessed, with forgiveness when we have lost heart, fallen away. He was overcome by the cross to bless of with new and salvation. Just as Jacob received a new name, we too are blessed with a new name as a child of God that comes to us through the waters of Holy Baptism. God adopts us into His family, the church. In those waters we are join by Jesus in our death, so we have the sure and certain hope of a resurrection like His. In our lives of faith, we are connected in relationship of faith with Jesus who was over come so that we might overcome all the struggles with Jesu on our side.

So, we live in this life together as God's people. You do have the ear of God the Father. Pray for one another and yourselves. Pray for not what you think you deserve, pray for what God has promised Through Jesus Christ, forgiveness, life, and salvation. Entrust all your days and burdens to God's almighty hands. That with Jesus we too may not lose heart and faith. Pray for our ministries and how might be using you today to take part in the Kingdom of God.

May this bring to us all the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.