**🙡NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST🙣**

October 20, 2019, Year C

Revised Common Lectionary

**Jeremiah 31:27-34** The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say:

 "The parents have eaten sour grapes,

 and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

**Psalm 119:97-104**

Oh, how I love your law!

 It is my meditation all day long.

Your commandment makes me wiser

 than my enemies,

 for it is always with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers,

 for your decrees are my meditation.

I understand more than the aged,

 for I keep your precepts.

I hold back my feet from every evil way,

 in order to keep your word.

I do not turn away from your ordinances,

 for you have taught me.

How sweet are your words to my taste,

 sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Through your precepts I get understanding;

 therefore I hate every false way.

**2 Timothy 3:14-4:5** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

 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: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.



**Luke 18:1-8** Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

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**Reflection & Questions**

While all of this week’s texts call for persistence in faith and prayer, Luke’s parable of the widow who continually came to the judge seeking justice feels particularly important in our present day when we can become discouraged when answers do not seem to come quickly. Perhaps this parable has more to teach about how continuing to bring our prayers before God shapes our faith and relationship with God and neighbor than with worry over when and how those prayers will be answered. We are to pray and to be persistent in the life of faith on behalf of the justice God intends.

Jesus begins his prayer by reminding them to pray always and lot lose heart. Hs then offers parable as a story to illustration and reinforce his instruction. The primary characters in his parable have no names. This is **“a certain judge” who did not fear God nor have respect for people**. Luke’s hearers would immediately recognize that he does not practice the basic Jewish law of loving God and love his neighbors. Next he introduced a **widow**, someone who had no power in this culture, no way of working, and was totally dependent upon the generosity of others. Throughout their history, the Jew’s were instructed to take special care of these vulnerable members of the community, another provision of the law the judge neglects. This woman will not give up on demanding that the judge give her a hearing and provide her justice. After once again reinforcing that he has no fear of God and no respect for anyone, he nevertheless, is willing to grant her justice, not because it is the right thing to do, but to lesson his annoyance from the woman’s insistence.

Jesus then challenges the disciples to understand what he is trying to teach with his questions in vv. 6-8. The judge gives in to persistence. God is so much greater! Won’t God grant justice to those who persist in faith? Persist, have hope! God’s got this!

***Where do you see a delay in justice?***

***What causes you to lose hope in your own prayer life?***

***How can a persistent prayer life be a sign of faith even if we cannot see how our prayers are being answered?***

***What might the Spirit be urging you to pray and work for on behalf of someone else? How might the Spirit guide our church to pray for justice?***

Reflecting on this passage, Kimberly Bracken Long writes: “We are reminded once again, that the life of faith is not only about telling God what is on our wish list but constantly lifting up every joy and concern, every fear and doubt, every lament and plea to the One who hears and answers.  The answers may not come when we think they should… By praying continually, and not giving up hope, we live in the surety that God has not abandoned this world.  Living in hope, we work, in whatever ways we can, for the justice and peace that is coming.”

 Kimberly Bracken Long, “Pastoral Perspective” in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C, Volume 4)*, edited by David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, Louisville, KY:  Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), pages 188-192.

Presbyterian pastor and contemporary hymnwriter, Carolyn Winfrey Gillette offers a hymn written just the past week, that may serve as a prayer for us today in in the coming week as we continue to reflect on this text and how we are called to persist.

**God, You Hear Our Weary Praying**

God, you hear our weary praying,

and you know that we lose heart.
All around we see the suffering

of a world that’s torn apart.
We see leaders of the nations

filled with arrogance and greed.
We see friends and family hurting,

facing overwhelming need.

God, we cannot help but wonder:

Do our prayers do any good?
Do they change the nations’ leaders?

Do they change our neighborhood?
Why do loved ones keep on suffering

when they’re in our constant prayer?
Do you hear the cries we’re offering?

Are you listening? Are you there?

Then you teach us of this woman:

She was widowed; she was poor.
Grant me justice!” she kept calling

at an unjust judge’s door.
Though that judge respected no one,

he was no match for her cries.
He responded to her pleading,

granting justice, changing lives,

How much more is your compassion!

God, you’re just and good and fair.
May we lift to you our sorrows

and the burdens that we bear.
May we pray, for you reign o’er us!

May we ask— for you are kind!
May we trust that you will help us

in your goodness, in your time.

Hymn text based on Luke 18:1-8 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

 2019, BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D

("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending")