

## Proper 24

*Sunday between 16 and 22 October inclusive ·  
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

### Principal Service readings

Genesis 32.22-31	Jacob wrestles with the angel
Psalms 121	God watches over his people
2 Timothy 3.14–4.5	Be persistent in proclaiming the message
Luke 18.1-8	Parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’

Luke 18.1-8 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

This parable on perseverance in prayer illustrates Ecclesiasticus 35.14-15. Another example of Luke's formation of parables from the Old Testament can be seen in 13.6.

The judge is concerned neither with God nor with the customary codes of conduct and shame. The woman pleads her own case, which would have immediately startled the audience. Not only was the judge not respecting God, he was not respecting people, for widows were entitled to care, because God demanded it (see Exodus 22.22; Deuteronomy 10.18; 14.29; 16.11, 14; 24.19-21; 26.12-13; Isaiah 1.17; Acts 6.1; James 1.27; 1 Timothy 5.3). In particular, there is the injunction: 'you shall not prevent the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow' (Deuteronomy 27.19). In contrast to those who fail in this obligation, God will come to the aid of the widow (LXX Psalm 67.5; 145.9).

The judge would have been given respect because of his position, although he didn't deserve it, judging by his attitude. The judge eventually answers the woman's pleading because he finds her troublesome, in other words, out of personal convenience. Ironically, although he dismisses the idea of God's involvement, he gives in to a weak woman's persistence.

The main thrust of the parable is the persistence of the woman. In the parable the judge can't really be equated with God. The woman, although she already has a righteous cause, wears the judge down in her pursuit of justice.

## Quotations

1

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James 1.27

2

Be generous to the poor orphans and those in need. The man to whom our Lord has been liberal ought not to be stingy. We shall one day find

2

in Heaven as much rest and joy as we ourselves have dispensed in this life.

Ignatius of Loyola, 1491–1556

3

Both persistence and prayer are needed in situations where death and evil in the form of human weakness and insecurity have the upper hand.

*Word and worship workbook, Year C / Mary Birmingham.1997*

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Prayer; justice; grace; faith; images of God; kingdom of God

## Closing Prayer

Lord, tireless guardian of your people,  
always ready to hear the cries of your chosen ones,  
teach us to rely, day and night, on your care.

Support our prayer lest we grow weary.  
Impel us to seek your enduring justice  
and your ever-present help.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Ordinary Time 29, Year C<sup>2</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year C Proper 24.odt • 2022-09-02

2 *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*