

What Does God Want to Hear from Us?

Luke 18:1-8

October 16, 2022 – by Rev. Alex Creager

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

This is the Word of the Lord.

THANKS BE TO GOD.

One of my biggest surprises in ministry is meeting so many people who never want to ask prayers for themselves. Whether it is in churches, in homes, in hospitals, at food banks or prisons, person after person has told me, “I don’t think I should be praying for myself.”

The church member who had to figure out how to pay next month’s rent: “No, I don’t think I should be praying for myself.”

The young woman I met in the hospital who suffered from Crone’s We could always use work with listening, by giving silence and space, and maybe even asking for God to speak into our lives. But we also need

help in our speaking to God. For many of us, we have this idea that prayer needs to be formal and objective and sound like the prayers we hear from others. I always find it helpful to learn new ways of praying from others, to expand my prayer vocabulary, and what I want to bring forward.

But our prayers do not need to sound like others. And they don't need to be distanced from our own lives. God loves us. God loves you. And because God loves you. God wants to hear directly from you what is going on in your life, what is hard, what is a struggle, what you could use help with. That's not wasting God's time. That's what God longs to hear, as the one who made you, and walks with you, and promises to always love you.

Just like for your own child, friend, or partner, you want to hear what is going on in their lives, God wants to hear from us, any hour of any day. It's not just okay to lift up prayers for yourself. It actually delights God and invites God in deeper into your life.

The one danger with this boldness and honesty of prayer, is that we can start to make not just our prayers but our whole ways of thinking too much about ourselves and not about our neighbors. So, Jesus invites us to remember one thing every time we pray. Justice.

We are invited to pray for our own concerns and do so boldly and honestly. But as we pray for our own concerns, we are also invited to include the voices and experiences and struggles of all of our neighbors. God loves you. But God also loves that family at the food bank who has to walk the mile from the bus stop. God loves the refugee family that just moved from Afghanistan a year ago, and still struggling to become

welcome in the community. God loves that church member who is going through cancer treatment and the other member who just lost his parent. God loves our neighbor who comes into the church seeking help because there aren't any affordable places to live right now. God loves the family in Richmond who are grieving the loss of a child to gun violence in our city. God loves the young man who is profiled after because of the color of his skin.

God wants it all.

Because God knows our world is too often like that unjust judge in this story – unfair, unkind, unloving. But God is not a judge who is bribed and selfish and disinterested.

God is a God of love. A God of relationship. A God of justice and dreams for a better and whole world, filled with Shalom.

Sometimes the world and its problems and injustice and illness and grief can seem so overwhelming. And we may wonder does anyone care. In those moments, God says, come to me. Speak to me. Pray to me. And know my love. Know my care. Know my justice. And as we come boldly before God, may we share our own lives with the Lord of heaven and earth. And may we share God's vision for true justice for this world. Amen.