

Jesus told his disciples 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?"

Luke 18:1-8

I've always found Jesus' characterization of his Father here to be somewhat amusing; basically, Jesus is saying that with God, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. I actually think Jesus is using humor here to make a bigger point; which is that persistence in faith is a virtue.

For most of us, life comes with plenty of challenges, setbacks, and troubles. There are just a lot of obstacles between us and the vision of life Jesus offers. Jesus acknowledges that here in this passage and at multiple points in the Gospels. When he speaks of carrying our crosses daily or when he says that following him is like a yoke and a burden, he reveals to us His, and by extension, God's profound understanding that life can be hard. I think that's why God is always so concerned about those who live at the margins of society, the poor, the oppressed, the sick; because God knows it's even harder for them and that the gap between us and them is so much smaller than we might otherwise pretend.

Prayer, of course, is the foundation of the life of faith. It's the most important commitment we can make when we decide to follow Jesus. And despite the tenor of the parable in this passage, we know that prayer isn't just about giving God our wish list. It is mostly about allowing us to be transformed by an intimate relationship with God whose essence is love.

To be persistent in prayer is to remain in relationship with God, even when things are hard – maybe even especially when things are hard. To never give up on our commitment to follow Jesus and to be God's agents of love in a hurting world. To be persistent in prayer is to deepen our relationship with God and to take on, more and more, God's character of merciful and generous love. To be persistent in faith is to make

ourselves more Christ-like. So that upon the return of Christ, He might know and see that faith abounds.