

19th Sunday after Pentecost: Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

If God were to come to you today, and say to you, “I am going to grant you Justice, ask of me whatever you wish, and I will make it so,” ... what would you ask for? Because today in our Gospel, we see a widow coming to a judge, asking that she be granted justice against her opponent. And we are not told what it is she is seeking justice for, and perhaps this is because it does not matter. All that really matters is that we can relate to her. There are things for which we desire justice that only God can help us with, and Jesus encourages us to pray always for the things we are seeking justice for and to not lose heart. Jesus promises us that whatever it is we persistently seek justice for before the Father in Jesus’ name, he will do it. This is told to us in John 14:14. And today Jesus also tells us he will not delay long, he will quickly grant justice to us. And furthermore, this justice will be delivered when the Son of Man comes.

Meaning, we ask now for justice, and we may or may not receive this in terms of human timing, but this is why Jesus tells us to not lose heart but to follow the example of the widow encouraged to call out day and night until Christ’s second coming. This is really what Jesus is referring to today. Jesus is referring to his second coming, and we know this because Jesus ends with “yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” This is the setting for our readings for today. We all want justice against the injustices in the world around us, and we need to pray continually that Jesus will come to deliver justice, and it will be granted to us in a Godly timeframe of not delaying long. A thousand years is like a day to God, and so it has been only a couple of days since Christ was crucified. And I believe this is what our Gospel today is referring to. We seek justice on earth continuously and without relenting knowing Jesus must come to establish this perfectly; and from a Godly perspective, Jesus is coming soon.

But so back to the personal question of what is it that you would ask justice of from God, if God were to come to you today? Sometimes the justice we seek is a very personal matter. Often this is when we have been wronged in relationships or by society. We have all experienced injustice of some sort, and so when God comes to us, it is these personal matters that may come first to the forefront of what we might ask for.

But would we first ask of God that God execute justice against us? Against our own misbehaviors? The times that we have failed or even harmed others? If you are sitting here as a believer in Christ Jesus, believing that he died for you to pay for your sins and you have placed your faith in God's provision for all your wrongs, then you have already done this. You have already asked God to administer justice on your life with the knowledge that only the righteousness of Jesus can justify you. And God has justly proclaimed you justified because Christ paid your debt. None of us could withstand God's justice, had Jesus Christ not died.

This is what the prophet Jeremiah is speaking about today. We have seen over the past several weeks how God warned the Southern Kingdom of Israel that they need to repent and apply God's just laws to their lives, but they do not listen and/or they are unable. They fall short, having been deceived by the practices of the surrounding nations which they have incorporated into their own nation. And God, being just, punishes them through the Babylonian captivity. And so we see that God is just. When we sin and do evil, there are consequences. For both individuals and for nations. But Jeremiah, through the Spirit of the Lord, explains that though the initial covenant with God could not bring about justice, because no one could keep God's laws, God used the first covenant to teach us of the need for the second covenant which God promises through Jeremiah today. Today in Jeremiah we read of the promised new covenant. The covenant we personally benefit from as believers in Christ Jesus. As God promised through Jeremiah five hundred years before it happened saying: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant...It will not be like the covenant that I made ...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." But so, what is the law that is written on our hearts and how is it that we can now possess it?

The law is God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to be Holy. This is who is now written upon our hearts. And the reason the Holy Spirit can indwell us to empower us, is because we have been justified by the

work of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is the new covenant. This is the good news. The good news is that God has made a provision for us so that all the justice that we deserve, the consequences for our own wrongs, has been eradicated. God remembers our sins no more, (Jer 31:34). This is important if we are to pray for justice and not be hypocrites. For we cannot see clearly to fix the injustice around us unless God removes the injustice within us. Jesus speaks of this when he tells us to remove the beam in our own eye so that we can see clearly to remove the specks in the eyes of others, (Matt 7:5). This is the first and foremost petition for justice that we need to make before God. That God justify us. God deals justly with our sins because Jesus paid for them. And we do this initially when we come to him, and we continue to do it in our walk with him. It is a two-part washing of the type of washing that we are told of in Ephesians chapter 5 where it states: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." Christ died or gave Himself up to sanctify us – that is a one-time event that cleanses us thoroughly, but Christ continues to cleanse us in our walk by the washing with water through the word (Jn 13:10). And what is that word? Holy Scripture. It is what Paul describes to Timothy today as, "the sacred writings that are able to instruct you (1) for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.... [and] (2) for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." There is a one-time washing but also an ongoing sanctification, and God wants both for us. And Jesus grants the former and the Holy Spirit enables the latter. We can thereby know ourselves to be not only justified but also walking justly before the Lord.

But so, having been justified by the Perfect Judge, what is it that we can now see freely to ask for next? And I don't know about you, but my heart is grieving over crimes being committed with little or no consequence. And the increase of violence in our world. And an unequal application of justice under our laws. And people calling evil good and good evil. And God's Holy Teachings being distorted by the watering down of God's word. And the ongoing abuse of people, and God's creatures, and God's planet. And power and money pursued at the expense of citizens. And illegal drugs rampantly killing. And the costly cultural lie that we can have a fatherless society and have order. For we may not all have or have had good earthly fathers, but the world needs good earthly

fathers right now; and lacking this gives urgency to our need to call out day and night upon our Perfectly Good Heavenly Father. Like the widow, a.k.a. the church, who is widowed for a time, given our husband died for us; we call out day and night waiting for our husband to return, and *He will*; and so, we pester the Father in the meantime non-stop. The Father is to whom we need to be going to non-stop in supplication for justice right now until our Husband returns. When we pray for Justice on earth, as Jesus teaches us today, there is only one way this will come to complete fruition in perfect execution, and that is for Jesus Christ to come again to judge the living and the dead.

And in light of this absolute truth, what Paul says today to Timothy, I say to you: “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, 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.”

In other words, “prepare ye the way of the Lord,” (Matt 3:3); for “He is coming soon,” (Rev 12:12); to *ensure* that “Justice [*will*] roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream,” (Amos 5:24). And so, our perfect petition is: *Come Lord Jesus, Come!* (Rev 22:20). Amen.