

Keep Asking for Help Until . . .

Luke 18:1-8

#14 in Stories Jesus Told series

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

Father we ask that you help us to preach. Thank you that you are here with us, Lord God. And we ask that you would speak through us. We really don't know what words to say, but Jesus, you are the Word to say, so we pray that you would be said through us. It's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Sermon

Luke 18:1

"And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray . . ."

Pray constantly.

Not "Have devotionals," but "Be devoted."

"He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."

So do you always pray and never lose heart?

I lose heart, and sometimes I just stop praying. Do you? Why?

Monte Python clip 1

[A hooded monk is chanting.]

Monks: *Pie Jesu domine. Dona eis requiem.*

[The monk hits himself in the head with a board.]

Monks: *Pie Jesu domine. Dona eis requiem.*

[A line of hooded monks chant while each holds a board in both hands. They all hit themselves in the forehead in unison with their boards. They continue chanting as they follow one another in a line past serfs working around them.]

Monte Python clip 2.

[Inside a chapel, a man, dressed in a white robe stands up to lead a group of boys in worship.]

Leader: *Let us praise God, . . .*

[All the boys stand up silently]

Man: *Oh, Lord, . . .*

All Boys: (In unison): *Utmost.*

Man: *Oooo, you are so big, . . .*

Boys: (Chorus in unison.) *Ooo, you are so big, . . .*

Man: (Eyes widening in emphasis) *So-o, abso-lutely huge, . . .*

Boys: (Using similar intonations) *So abso-lutely huge...*

Man: *Gosh, we're all absolutely impressed down here, I can tell you!*

[The camera focuses on a group of serious faced boys, all with their hands folded on the railing before them.]

Boys: *Gosh, we're all absolutely impressed down her, I can tell you!*

Monte Python clip 3

[A bearded and crowned king's face - God - is encircled by bright yellow light and a cloud of smoke in the sky. His eyes are yellow and his British voice intones loudly and echoes a little bit.]

God: *Arthur, . . . King of the Britons, . . . Your knights of the round table shall have a task to make them an example in these dark times.*

[A group of knights and a medieval crowd of people stand behind King Arthur look up at "God".]

King Arthur: (Enthusiastically.) *Good idea, oh Lord!*

God: (Indignantly echoing loudly in the sky.) *Of course it's a good idea! Behold! . . .*

[God's face fades and then disappears in a yellow light as angels are heard singing "ah-ah-h." Then, a picture of a silver goblet is shown in the midst of the light and clouds. The music gets louder.]

God: *Arthur, this - is the holy grail!*

[King Arthur, the knights and the crowd look at each other and then back up at "God". Meanwhile, "God" continues to speak and angels sing: "ah-ah-h" in the background.]

God: *Look well, Arthur. For this is your sacred task to seek this grail.*

[The picture of the grail changes to show God's face again.]

God: *That - is your purpose Arthur. . .*

[God's face in the sky is shown with trees in the foreground.]

God: *The quest for the holy grail!*

[God's face disappears and a door-like clouds slams closed in the heavens.]

Sorry, but I'm a middle-aged American male and that means that much of what I've learned about prayer, I've learned from *Monte Python*. And I have stopped praying because sometimes it feels like I'm banging my head against a wall.

A tourist in Jerusalem spoke with an old Rabbi at the Wailing Wall who had been praying for hours. He asked, "What do you pray for?"

The Rabbi said, "I pray for Israel, family, the nations and Shalom."

"Do you find your prayers effective?" asked the tourist.

"Effective!" exclaimed the Rabbi. "It's like talking to a wall!"

"Pie Jesu domine, dona eis Requiem."

"Pious Lord Jesus give them rest" – whack, but no rest, and so I stop praying.

It just feels like I'm talking to a wall and punishing myself.

Sometimes I wonder if my prayers are ineffective because I don't know how to pray:

"Oh Lord, ooo, you are so big – so absolutely huge – we're all really quite impressed down here . . ."

In Luke 11, (seven chapters earlier) the disciples say to Jesus: "*Teach us to pray.*" And He says, "Oh, say this:

Abba, Dad, Father, Holy is your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our bread for the day. Forgive us as we forgive and keep us out of temptation. “

Period.

That's it!

No seminars, no classes, just “say this.”

Then He adds,

“Look: If you ask a friend for bread, he'll give it to you, just so you'll stop bugging him.”

“So ask and you'll receive.”

“Seek and you'll find.”

“Knock and it will be opened unto you.”

“If you, who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children. . . how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask?”

No classes, no sermons, just ask.

See? He doesn't seem to be concerned about how we ask, but that we *do* ask.

Yet, often I don't ask because I think, “Well, my ideas can't change God's ideas.” Like he said to King Arthur, “Of course it's a good idea!” So . . . why talk about it?

One night when my daughter Elizabeth was little, she ended a long involved and confusing bed-time prayer by saying, “But I guess you know all of that because you can read my brain. Amen.” “Amen,” which we think means, “stop” but it doesn't mean “stop.”

But why should I pray if God already knows everything that I'm going to say? And like Scripture says, He doesn't change? Well, maybe He just likes to hear your voice like I love hearing my daughter's voice? And maybe prayer doesn't change God, but prayer changes you. Or maybe God's unchanging and eternal desire is that He would change you so you would pray and change Him, or at least move Him—from a mountain, to a manger, to a cross, maybe His eternal desire is a love story.

Well, sometimes I've stopped praying because I don't think it makes a difference, and sometimes I think I've stopped praying because I'm a little stressed that it will. In my day, I've seen some real, bona fide miracles, and they can really mess with you. And I've prayed some prayers that I now realize He answered and the answer was painful. I mean sometimes the Lord bares “*His holy arm*,” as Isaiah calls it. Sometimes God delivers His justice and we don't like the justice He delivers. And so we think it might be wise just to leave Him well enough alone.

See? God can be a bit terrifying, so we lose heart, and stop praying—a bit terrified that He might be an unjust judge or maybe a just judge, and we're terribly unjust.

Well, chapter 18, verse 1, Luke writes,

He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not [ekkakeo – not give up].

So if this parable makes you want to give up, you probably don't understand it.

Luke 18: 2-6 He said,

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, "Give me justice against my adversary." For a while he refused, but afterwards he said to himself, "Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down with her continual coming." And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?"

So what's the point of the parable? "Tire God out with nagging?" If so . . . that's discouraging, for God doesn't get tired. So that makes me want to give up. But Luke says the point is "Don't give up." So maybe we don't understand this parable. And maybe we should ask, "What is it that this widow is asking for?"

Luke 18: verse 3, "*And there was a widow in that city.*" Along with orphans, in that ancient patriarchal society, widows were the most destitute, vulnerable, and abused of people. And that's because they lacked a "covering." They lacked a "voice" and a "strong arm." They lacked a "helper." They lacked a "husband."

Luke 18: 3

And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to [this unjust judge] saying 'Give me justice (ekdikeyo – "bring out right") against my adversary (antidikos – the anti-right).' For a while (literally, for chronos – for time) he refused.

How many of you ask for justice – but it just doesn't seem to happen in this age, and so you want to give up?

Luke 18 verse 4

For a while (literally, for chronos – for time) he refused, but afterward he said to himself, "though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice (ekdikeyo), so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming." And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous (adikos - unjust) judge says. And will not God give justice (do the ekdikesis – the justice, the bring out the right, the vengeance) to (of) his elect, who cry to him day and night?"

So, as we were wondering, "What is this widow asking for?" Well, first and foremost, number one, she's asking for help. Sometimes we belittle prayers like this, but Jesus is telling the story so that we'd keep asking for help - because I guess we all really need help. You know, to pray for stuff

“proseudromi” in Greek is really to do something that is nothing, or nothing that is something. It is announcing you can do nothing and asking a helper to do the something. She’s asking for help. More specifically, she’s asking for *ekdikesis*, which is often translated, “vengeance.”

The Roman occupiers appointed judges in every region, but usually they didn’t fear Yahweh or care what the Jews thought of them. But a desperate Jewish widow might have no other place to turn – if someone stole a goat, or slandered her, accused her, or violated her “rights.” She needed help – particularly in the absence of a helper – a husband – a strong arm.

Whenever we ask God for something we are asking God for *ekdikesis*, although then we really struggle to define what that means. Here in the English Standard Version, it’s translated as *“giving justice.”* In my interlinear, which attempts to translate as literally as possible, it’s *“bringing out the right,”* and it’s also translated as *“vengeance.”* Well, when we go to a judge for justice, we usually think we know what justice is, and we hope the judge will agree. And yet, we need judges precisely because we can’t seem to agree on what justice is. If a judge doesn’t agree with our definition of justice, we judge the judge to be an unjust judge.

And of course, this raises a profoundly challenging question, which Jesus seems just delighted to ask, “Is God an unjust judge?” How on earth could we answer that question? We can’t even answer the question, “Is Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton a just or unjust judge?” How could we answer the question, “Is the Creator a just judge?” “Is the Judge a just judge?” See? As soon as you say, “God is not just,” you have judged the Judge and made yourself Judge. As soon as an atheist says, “I don’t believe in God, for God is not just,” he announces faith in another God, that is, himself, or perhaps an unknown God – that he thinks he knows – a God he calls “justice.”

So, “Is God an unjust judge?” Answering that question would require a miracle, for we would have to judge justice. . . . And yet we all assume that very miracle, for we all argue about justice. It’s like we all have some dreadful, strange, imperfect, holy, yet deadly knowledge as to what the just, the right or the good is – knowledge like fruit, stolen from a miraculous tree. And because of that knowledge, we cannot help but ask this question, “What is just?” “What is right?” “What is good?” “Is God an unjust judge?” “Is God good?” See, that all depends on your definition of justice. As we’ve been preaching, most people seem to define “justice” as “getting what you deserve.” And grace as “getting what you don’t deserve.” But if justice is simply “getting what you deserve,” then justice is simply the end of you and all creation, for God created all from nothing and Himself so we have nothing with which we could deserve anything from Him except Him. Like Paul writes in Romans 11: 35, quoting Job 41: 11

*Oh who has given a gift to God – (or hindered God) – such that he should be repaid? For from him and to him and through him are all things to him be the glory forever. Amen.*¹

If you think “getting what you deserve” is justice, I pray to God that you are not a father, for you will be one hell of an evil daddy, for your children can never repay what you’ve given. I pray you’re not a father and I pray you’re not a husband, for if you think justice is “getting what you deserve” you haven’t married a bride; you’ve hired a whore. And isn’t it interesting that that’s exactly God’s complaint against Jerusalem throughout the Old Testament? “You play the whore, you want to be a whore.” “You want to buy my love, even take my love like a thief.

In Lamentations chapter 1, verse 1 through Jeremiah the prophet, God says of Jerusalem—His bride: “*How like a widow has she become,*” not just a bride, playing the whore – a bride who has become a widow, as if someone murdered her husband.

So, is God unjust?

Well, as I was saying, when most folks ask a judge for justice, they are asking the judge to agree with their judgment. And if he doesn’t, they judge the judge to be unjust. They may even judge, that justice is executing the judge. However, if you were to truly ask a judge for justice, you would actually desire his or her judgment, for you would trust that the judgment was just. And that’s how you’d gain knowledge of the good. You wouldn’t try to take the judgment and manipulate the judgment, you would receive the judgment because you had faith that the judge is good . . .

Well anyway, this widow wants justice from an unjust judge and Jesus seems to be saying, “Even if the judge seems to be just, keep asking for justice and you’ll get justice.” *Ekdikesis*.

Now this is terribly, brutally important to understand: Unlike it is in the English language, “righteousness, justice, and vengeance” are all one word group in Greek.

Dike – can be translated, “right” or “just.”

Dikaïos is translated “righteous” or “just.”

Dikaïosune is usually translated, “righteousness,” but also means “justice.”

Dikaion means, “make right” and is translated ‘justify.’

Ek means “out.”

So **ekdikeyo** means “bring out right” or “justice.” It’s also translated “avenge.”

Ekdikesis is the noun, “making right,” “making justice,” also translated “vengeance.”

In Romans 12: 17 – 19, Paul writes,

¹ In our faith, justice cannot be simply “getting what you deserve” for then there would be only God and no things and only nothing. So in our human courts and business arrangements we can pretend that justice is people getting what they deserve, and yet it’s all an illusion, for everything is grace.

Don't repay evil with evil . . . Dearly beloved, never ekdikeo yourselves – never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath (or passion) of God, for it is written, ekdikesis is mine, I will recompense, vengeance is mine.

Then Paul writes,

“Just be kind to your enemies and in doing so you will heap burning coals – (like brimstone) on their heads.”

As if kindness is the *ekdikesis* of God.

The widow says, “Give me vengeance (*ekdikesis*) against my (*anti-dikos*) my adversary.” Who is the woman’s adversary?? Who is your adversary? Paul tells us that “we battle not against flesh and blood” and Peter refers to “the accuser” as “our adversary,” and yet Scripture makes it clear that he has no power, unless we believe his lies. I could tell some outrageous stories at this point, but suffice it to say, Jesus once revealed to me very dramatically that fear puts flesh on the evil one. So our real enemy is our own faithlessness, our fear. Throughout the Old Testament, God saves folks from all sorts of stuff, but the angel reveals that the Christ will be named “*Jesus*,” for He will save His people from their sins. All sin is a lack of faith. And that means I am my own worst adversary. So, when I ask for justice against my adversary, I’m asking for righteousness in my place of shame.

Well, we all ask for *ekdikesis*—justice, and can barely begin to understand what it is, or maybe who it is. Even so, Jesus is saying, “Keep asking, keep asking, keep asking, keep asking . . .”

Luke 4: 19 quoting Isaiah, Jesus seems to be saying the day of *ekdikesis* (day of vengeance) is at hand - the day of revealing the right, the day of making right, the day of final judgment when “it is finished,” that day (Isaiah 61: 2) “the day of vengeance” is at hand.”

Isaiah 63:4 It’s the day that the “strong arm of the Lord” one like a Son of Man and a slaughtered lamb, the day He tramples the wine press alone – “the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God” that makes a river of blood that is wine and wine that is blood, the day the Lord reveals His righteousness and does justice. And one thing we can be sure of, His justice is not the opposite of His forgiveness.

1 John 1: 9

If we confess our sins

(I think they must be like grapes of wrath)

He is faithful and just (dikaios) to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all (adikia) unrighteousness.”

The idea that justice is the opposite of forgiveness and forgiveness is the opposite of justice is unbiblical and a lie from the pit of hell. Forgiveness is God's *ekdikesis* upon sin, as if God's final judgment is to answer His own prayer spoken from a tree in the pit of hell: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." "Father forgive her for she knows not what she does."

Well, anyway, Jesus says, "Keep asking for help. Because there was this widow (some widow) that kept asking an unjust judge for help . . . and she got it."

Luke 18: 6-7

And [Jesus] said, "*Hear what the [unjust] judge says. And will not God give justice (literally, "do the *ekdikesis*") to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? (literally, "will he not patiently long endure them?")*"

The translators really struggle here, because the Greek word *makrothumea* means "hold back anger for a time." And the way Jesus says it implies that God's anger is directed toward the widow, who is the elect, as if she is her own worst adversary. So the NKJV (New King James Version) translates it this way, "*And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?*"

See? That only makes sense if "*the elect*" are their own worst adversaries. And now, who are the "elect?"

- Well, wouldn't the elect be the ones that Christ has chosen?
- And aren't the ones that he has chosen, the ones that He came to call?
- Luke 5: 32, He told us, "I came not to call the righteous (*dikaioi*), but sinners."
- And aren't we all sinners?

"None is righteous, no not one" writes Paul, in Romans 3: 10. And then he explains that Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, is the manifestation of God's righteousness [or justice] in order that (Romans 3: 26) God might be "*just and the justified of the faith of Jesus,*" or "*the one that has the faith of Jesus.*"

See? We are justified by faith. And it's Jesus' faith. Faith is reckoned as righteousness, because it is righteousness. Forgiveness creates faith, and faith is righteousness in our place of unrighteousness, and Christ is our righteousness. 1 Corinthians 1: 30, ". . . Christ Jesus, whom God made our . . . righteousness." Jesus makes us right with Himself. And the righteousness is faith – Jesus' faith. (Crazy, wild stuff that hardly anyone believes, but that's what the Bible says.) That's *ekdikesis*.

Luke 18: 6-8

And [Jesus] said, "*Hear what the [unjust] judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night [and he bears long with them.] I tell you, he will give justice (ho *ekdikesis*, the vengeance, the justice, the righteousness) to them speedily.*"

What a totally bizarre thing to say,

*“He will patiently for a long time endure their cries for help, even though they make him angry. But believe me, He will answer their prayers and give them the *ekdikesis* speedily.”*

Well, how speedily? Well, Jesus said this just before He entered Jerusalem. And we know that Jerusalem is His Bride—who has played the whore—and so she’ll kill her Bridegroom, which would make her a widow, but her bridegroom is also the Judge, and as He hangs on the tree, having descended into the darkness of Hell, He issues judgment, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” and “delivers up his spirit” – the Spirit that cries, “Abba, Daddy,” in us.

Well, the twelve disciples are also Jerusalem, and it’s the Judge that’s telling the story, and this will all happen in about a week. That’s pretty speedily. And we are also Jerusalem, and we will all see God’s *ekdikesis* by the end of our age. We will all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ. And I bet we’ll say, “Boy, that was quick. That went speedily.”

But maybe it’s even more speedily. Remember that Jesus is talking about prayer, and God answering prayer, and Jesus says some crazy stuff about prayer. I think this is the craziest. Mark 11: 24 *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

That’s crazy juice for TV preachers!

But St Paul is even crazier, not only will it be yours, it already is yours!

1 Corinthians 3: 21-23 *“All things are yours . . . and you are Christ’, and Christ’s is God’s.”*

Acts 17: 28 *“In God we live, move, and have our being.”*

Ephesians 2: 6 We are already *“seated . . . with [God] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

I know that’s nuts, but it’s like Paul had a vision of something, and now he believes it, but he doesn’t know how to say it. He believes that *“The Kingdom of God”* is actually *“at hand,”* and we could reach out and touch it, except we don’t see it; we don’t have faith.

I once had an experience like that. It was about twenty years ago now. I saw that God was everywhere loving me, and when it was over, I couldn’t worry—for about three weeks, and then it wore off. With my head, I know it to be true, but with my heart I’m still struggling to believe.

See? Maybe God has really already given us *“all things,”* but we’re not ready to receive *“all things,”* for everything is grace and so it must be received by faith – faith in grace.

- We’re like babies that have inherited a kingdom, but can’t yet receive the kingdom, for we’ve barely opened our eyes, let alone begun to talk.

- We're like foolish virgins who find themselves at the door of the wedding chamber, but don't yet have a clue as to what happens inside that chamber.
- We're like sons to whom the Father says, "*all that I have is yours*," but we don't want "*all that he has*," for we don't want our little brothers and sisters. We don't want grace.

So maybe the issue in prayer is not getting what we want, but learning to want what we've already got . . . which is the Son of God and "*all things with Him*," "*all things*" includes "*all people*."

Well, the way Jesus tells the story, it's like this widow shows up in court every day asking for this and asking for that—asking the Judge to make things right. All men are unjust judges, and God is the Just Judge, even though we judge Him unjust. He answers speedily and makes everything right. Yet, the widow thinks nothing is right because she doesn't know what, or who the right *is*.

It's like she's complaining to Justice that there is no Justice.
It's like she's asking her helper to help her find her helper.
Because, you see, That's what this widow really needs . . .
And that's what this widow really wants.

She may not know it. She may be too ashamed to admit it.
She may be too proud to say it . . . even to herself . . .
She doesn't really need or want money, a house, good credit, or reputation.
She cries out for *ekdikesis*, but none of those things will vindicate her.
The only thing that will vindicate her . . . is her husband.

And the Judge answers speedily . . .
Actually, He answered long before she asked.
The Judge has been arranging all things, so that she *would* ask.
The Judge is her Maker . . . and her Husband.

Isaiah 54: 4-5

Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

So who is the widow?	Us!
And who is the Judge?	God—God in flesh—Jesus.
And why are we a widow?	We crucified the Judge—our Husband.
And why did we crucify the Judge?	We judged Him to be unjust.
And why, oh why, did he let us crucify Him?	To reveal that He is Just.

But now look to the judgment seat, for it is also a throne.
He's standing on a throne, as if He'd been slain, and risen from the dead.

Now listen to His judgment: *Behold I make all things new. It is done.*
I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end."
That's Revelation 21: 5. He's speaking to His Bride. And that Bride is you.

And so what's your problem? What's our problem? What's not right in us?
We don't trust Him. To put it in theological language, we lack faith.
But don't worry, Jesus says, "Sweetheart, just keep talking. Just keep asking for help."

Remember what God said to Adam on the sixth day, before He divided Adam into Adam and Eve?

He said, "*It's not good that man should be alone.*
I will make a helper fit for Adam" - which means mankind.

Adam looked at all the animals, male and female, but couldn't find his helper.
That is, we, mankind, couldn't find our helper (our *ezer*). Over and over in the Old Testament God says, "The Lord, I AM your *ezer*." The word never refers to a human husband or wife. A human husband or wife refers to it. Male and female refer to Christ and His "called out ones," writes Paul.

Do you understand?
At the cross, Yahweh, the Lord God made himself a Helper fit for us. God is our Helper.

Jesus is saying, "Sweetheart, just keep asking for help and one day you'll realize you're not just asking for help, you're asking for your Helper. I am your Helper."

Why does He not answer for a time?
Or why does it seem like He doesn't answer for a time?
Well, maybe He wants us to ask of Him in time....
that He might romance us for a time,
that He might grow faith in that time,
that we might trust Him for all eternity.

Actually, we're trapped in time until we've learned to not only ask for help, but come to trust our Helper. And we will trust our Helper, for He romances us from eternity. It is done. He is the beginning and end of our story. And it's a love story.

The Judge answers suddenly. In fact, He answers long before the widow asks the question. It's actually His judgment that created the question and makes you ask the question:

"Will you help me?"
Then, "Will you give me justice?"
Then "Will you make my world right?"
Then, "Will you make me right?"
"Justify me, for I cannot justify myself?"
"*Ekdikesis*:" "I want righteousness in me. I want You in me—righteousness in my place of shame."

Someone once asked George MacDonald, “If God is so good, and if He knows all that we need, why should it be necessary to ask for anything?” MacDonald answered, “What if He knows prayer to be the thing we need first and most? What if the main object in God’s idea of prayer be the supplying of our great, our endless need – the need of Himself?”

Understand? Just the fact that you’re asking, means God is already answering.

To ask for the right is to already be a bit right.

To ask for justice is to already have some justice.

You ask for righteousness. And righteousness is, that you would ask; faith.

Faith makes you ask, and faith is righteousness, it is a seed of righteousness. And it will grow.

When my children were little, I loved to hear them ask. And they learned to ask by asking. They learned to talk by talking. I’d hold them in my arms and say, “Say Dadda, Say Dadda.” Hebrew fathers would say, “Say Abba, say Abba.” I gave them my word to help them ask. Asking was my will, my idea in them. And they asked and asked, and asked, and asked, and asked. And yet I didn’t always give them what they asked, even though I was capable of giving what they asked, and even though everything that was mine was theirs. I didn’t grant every gift the moment they asked, for I knew that first and most, they needed not the gifts, but the giver. I knew that, more than my help, they needed and truly wanted ME—their helper. I actually don’t care so much about *how* they ask (whether they conjugate their verbs or dangle their participles). It’s not *how* they ask, but that they ask – for *me*.

My children are all young adults now, and you know what scares me the most? What wakes me up in the middle of the night? The fear that one of them will stop asking for their helper, due to shame. It’s the fear that one of them is alone. Jesus said, “*Ask and it will be given you.*”

See? Hell is not asking for Heaven.

Hell is losing faith in your Helper.

Hell is being alone.

I love to hear my children ask, and perhaps, even more, I love to hear my bride ask.

In the fall of 1977, Mrs. Rydberg sat me next to Susan Coleman in Masterpieces of American Literature. Almost immediately, I developed a plan. I even prayed, “God, if it might possibly be your will, please let Susan Coleman go out with me.” She’ll tell you that she stole my idea—logos) for her final thesis paper. But I was more than happy to give her my idea for the final thesis paper. It was my plan. In fact, I would arrange everything in my power so that she would ask for my help so I could give my help.

I took her to scary movies so she’d sit close and ask for my comfort. (I wanted to be her comforter.) I took her camping and I carried her pack. I wanted her to ask for my strength. (I wanted to be her strength.) I listened to her talk about stuff for hours, and hours, and hours because I wanted her to ask for my counsel. (I wanted to be her wisdom.) I constantly arranged things so she’d ask for my help – all in the hope that,

one day, she would ask . . . for Me. And so on October 30th, 1981, I asked her, “Susan, I’m asking you to ask not only for my help, but for *me*—your helper.” Actually, what I said was, “Will you marry me?” “I want to marry you.” That was my judgment; that was my justice.

I think Jesus is saying, “Guys, keep asking for help and one day, you will want your Helper.”

Madeline Le’Engle writes, “Until I tell God what I want, I have no way of knowing whether or not I truly want it.” So speaking your wants, reveals what you really want.

Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life.*”

So you may ask for a car, but what you really want is “the Way.”

You may ask for direction, but what you are learning to want is “the Truth.”

You may ask for healing, but you are learning to want what you really want, “the Life.”

See?

You’re not just asking for a house, you’re asking for a husband, and to become His home.

You’re not just asking for help, but the Helper.

You’re not just asking for a pet kitten, but the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Like C.S. Lewis wrote, “Our desires are not too strong, but too weak.” . . . Maybe asking makes them grow.

Jesus is the Logos,
That means He’s the rhythm in the song,
The joy in the laughter,
The beauty in the sunrise.
He’s romancing you with all creation
And He’d like you to ask Him for more, more – of Himself.

So, listen closely, old woman; listen closely Jerusalem:

You’re not just asking for justice, are you?

I mean you’re not just asking for what you call justice?

- getting what you think you deserve
- giving people what you think they deserve
- tit for tat – it doesn’t satisfy, does it?

What you call justice is desecration and death.

What God calls justice, is creation and life. “His commandment is eternal life,” said Jesus.

You’ve asked for what you call justice.

You’re not just asking for justice (dead justice), your heart’s desire is the Judge.

Communion

And now PAY ATTENTION, for this is His judgment:

On the night He was betrayed by us, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.” And He took the cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood.” It’s a

marriage covenant. This is the JUSTICE of God and now, would you trust Him? That means: Have faith.

Jesus ends His story with a question that may also be translated as a statement:

Luke 18: 8

“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Faith is a miracle.

It is judging that the Judge is just.

It is saying, “I love you,” back to God, from the heart.

Talk to God; He answers with your life and Jesus is what He means.

Jesus is the Word, and Jesus is what you want. Jesus is your Judge and Jesus is your Bridegroom.

God creates all things with His word.

And He wants you to agree with your own creation.

He wants you to want to be created.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Benediction

Well that’s called prayer, what you were just doing, singing that song. Keep that up. Just keep praying. Don’t give up! Talk to God. Now, I know you think that He doesn’t answer. That’s what I often think. And like I said, a few times in my life, He’s answered in ways that just blew my mind, my science brain, and I thought: “He’s actually there! He’s actually listening!” So, Keep talking to God. He answers with your life. Do you realize that? He’s the Creator. That means He’s speaking everything into existence all around you, so talk to God. He answers with your life, and He means Jesus. And Jesus is what you want. He’s your helper. Keep asking for help, for one day you’ll realize you’re not just asking for help, you’re asking for your Helper.

Believe the Gospel, Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.