

Daily Devotional, Friday, November 22, 2024
Proper 28, the week of the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost The Rev.
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Infusing the Future Into the Present

Key phrases for reflection from today's Gospel reading:

18:1 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. 18:1 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 opponent." 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."'

You will find the full text of today's Gospel reading at the end of this reflection.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings (BCP, 993)

AM Psalm 102; PM Psalm 107:1-32

Mal. 3:1-12; James 5:7-12; Luke 18:1-8

Today we celebrate the Feast of . (See below.)

David's Reflections

New Testament scholar Walter Wink said of prayer, "Prayer infuses the air of a time yet to be into the suffocating atmosphere of the present. . . . The future belongs to whoever can envision a new and desirable possibility." # This parable presents us with a gripping call to infuse the air of the future into our suffocating present.

In the parable of the unjust judge Jesus makes an unusual point of comparison. The delay of a judge in hearing the pleas of a widow is compared with the delay of answer to prayer. The delay that Luke has in mind in reporting this parable (a

parable only occurring in his Gospel) relates to the delay of Christ's return. The earliest Christians lived with the expectation that Christ would return within their lifetimes. (See Mark 9:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). As the years intervened, Christians began to realize that Jesus would not return as soon as they had thought and hoped (Luke 19:11-27). That delay, in light of their previous expectation, created two opposite reactions. One was an apathy, a lack of urgency; the other, the practice of demagoguery, an attempt to predict the day and the hour of Christ's return (2 Thessalonians 2:1ff).

Luke gives us this parable to urge us to maintain hope, not to slip into apathy that God has forgotten to finish the divine saving work. We are to continue to envision the new possibility of God's fulfillment of new creation without deluding others with the claim that we know the day and hour. We are to continue to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven." The woman was beseeching an unjust judge who cared not for God or people. We are pleading with a just God, who regards us with compassion. If that judge could act out of self interest merely to put an end to the widow's troubling visits, our God, who is opposite in character to that judge, certainly will act in our best interests.

Not only will God answer that prayer, "Thy kingdom come," in an ultimate way by bringing this age of the world to an end and finishing the work of salvation begun in Christ, but God also will infuse the fresh air of the future into our present moment. We may be praying for the ultimate end by asking "Your kingdom come," but we may see the kingdom come partially in a less dramatic fashion. We may see a mentally ill person healed, a foretaste of the total healing of all in the kingdom. We may see an unbeliever come to faith, a foretaste of the full revelation of God in the kingdom. We may see a relationship reconciled, a foretaste of absolute peace coming upon the world. We may see someone freed from the power of the demonic, a foretaste of the total vanquishing of Satan in the kingdom of God.

So, we are to pray for the ultimate coming of God's kingdom in the return of Christ. But, we are to anticipate it in all the ways the kingdom reveals itself in wholeness, healing, forgiveness, justice, and deliverance. And, we are to throw ourselves into the present realization of the kingdom by witness and service, seeking to bring more of the kingdom's wholeness and freedom into our own experience and that of others. Whenever someone comes to faith in response to witness, God's

name is hallowed (revealed) and God's kingdom comes. Whenever someone is healed, delivered, reconciled, transformed, the kingdom has come. The ultimate consummation has been given us in miniature. The fresh air of God's future has been infused into our suffocating present.

Every celebration of Holy Communion is done in anticipation that we could be sharing a heavenly table with Jesus before the next Communion. It is in that expectation that we offer the Lord's Prayer in every service of Holy Communion. "Your kingdom come"--may we dine with you at the heavenly table this week. "Hallowed be your name"--may the whole world see your nature and glory at the return of Jesus this week. "Give us today our daily bread"--may we taste the bread of heaven with you at table this week. "Forgive us our sins"--may we experience final and full forgiveness in your presence this week. "As we forgive those who sin against us"--may we enter with you into the perfect peace of the kingdom this week, where no more wounding of each other takes place. "Deliver us from evil"--may this be the week for the total vanquishing of evil from God's creation and from our lives.

Like the widow, we keep offering our prayers, counting on a just and loving God who hears every prayer and who will never fail us. To pray is to trust and to pour out our hurts to God. Not to pray is to cease trusting and to cease sharing our despair and hope. May we persist in infusing the fresh air of God's future into our suffocating present through prayer.

Collect of the Day, Proper 28, the twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 236)

#Karl Barth, cited in *Homiletics* 3 (Apr - June 91):26.

Today we celebrate the Feast of C. S. Lewis, apologist and spiritual writer (died 22 Nov 1963 CE).

<http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/cslewis.htm>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/C-S-Lewis>

Collect of the Feast of C. S. Lewis

O God of searing truth and surpassing beauty, we give you thanks for Clive Staples Lewis whose sanctified imagination lights fires of faith in young and old alike; Surprise us also with your joy and draw us into that new and abundant life which is ours in Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*

A Collect for Fridays

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. *Amen.* (BCP, 123)

For Peace

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 258)

In the Evening

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.* (BCP, 833)

A Collect for Mission

O God of all the nations of the earth: Remember the multitudes who have been created in your image but have not known the redeeming work of our Savior Jesus Christ; and grant that, by the prayers and labors of your holy Church, they may be brought to know and worship you as you have been revealed in your Son; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 257)

Daily Office Reading, Luke 18:1-8

18:1 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 opponent." 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?'

Daily Prayer Offices in The Book of Common Prayer

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Noonday Prayer, p. 103, *Book of Common Prayer*

Order of Worship for Evening (Vespers), p. 109, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Devotionals, page 136, *Book of Common Prayer*