THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE (Luke 18:1-8)

INTRODUCTION: Just like last week, I'm going to start off this morning by asking a few questions.
1) Does God always answer our prayers ***immediately***—or is there sometimes ***a delay***? One of my "famous"—or "not-so-famous"—"Duh, Pastor" kind of questions, right? Here's a much more ***difficult one:***
2) Which prayer has been prayed the longest…by the most people…and has ***still not*** been answered?

Here's a clue: "Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, **Thy** (next word?) ***kingdom*** come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9-10)

How long has that prayer been prayed? Nearly 2000 years—by millions of people—right?
--Sadly, many of them don't realize ***what they are asking*** when they want Jesus' kingdom to come to earth!
--And sadly, many of them pray for ***God's will to be done*** on earth when they themselves ***have no desire to do it!***
3) One last question: is ***it hard to persevere*** in prayer when you've been praying for something for a ***long time*** and the answer still hasn't come? It is hard, isn't it?

Jesus, of course, ***knew*** that! He knew how prone we are to "faint"—to lose heart—and that is why He gave the disciples—and us—a parable to remind us that we "ought always to pray, and not to faint." And we have those exact words in Luke 18! Please turn there and follow along as I read verses 1-8.

Jesus didn't ***just give us*** the parable, though! He instructed us to "hear"—meaning "listen to and consider"—"what the unjust judge saith." But ***what did*** the unjust judge say? And what can we ***learn about prayer*** from what the unjust judge ***said?*** That is what we will be looking at this morning.

1. The purpose of the parable (vs 1)
There are ***only two*** parables—of the 38 plus that Jesus told—where it specifically says ***why*** He spoke the parable. And they are both in this chapter! Notice what it says in verse 9.

But we're not looking at ***that*** one—we are looking at the parable of the unjust judge! Notice again what it says in vs 1. The verb "faint" here does not mean to pass out and fall to the ground—it means "to be utterly spiritless; to fail in heart." The Greek lexicon in **Biblehub states**: "The verb carries the idea of spiritual, emotional, and moral fatigue that tempts a believer to abandon a God–given assignment or attitude. It appears only six times in the New Testament, and in every instance the Holy Spirit uses it to urge steadfastness under pressure." (Strong's 1573)

So the purpose of the parable is to teach us the ***necessity of praying always*** if we want to avoid spiritual exhaustion and to overcome the desire to quit doing what God has called us to do.

2. The picture in the parable (vss 2-5)
A. An unjust judge
--I'm calling him that because that is what ***Jesus calls him*** in verse 6!
--Notice how Jesus ***describes*** this judge in verse 2: he "feared not God, neither regarded man"
1) He feared not God. It is a bad…and sad…and dangerous mindset ***not to fear*** God!
--God—through Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived—plainly stated that it is our ***duty*** to fear God!
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God**, and keep His commandments: for this is the **whole duty of man**. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Why fear God? Because it is our duty to do so—and because God is the One who will judge us in the end! In Romans 3, Paul gives a long ***description*** of the ***unsaved*** and ends it with: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:18)
--And let's not forget the question asked by the ***repentant*** thief on the cross to the ***unrepentant*** one: "Dost not thou **fear God**…?" (Luke 23:40). Not only did this judge ***not fear*** God…
2) He regarded not man. In other words, he had no compassion or feelings for people. He didn't respect them as people—they were merely "part of his job" as a judge.

And because he did not "regard them," he was ***not swayed***—emotionally—***in his decisions*** by his care for people because ***he didn't have any!***
--So Jesus describes this judge as one who "fears not God, neither regards man."
--And the ***judge describes himself*** in the same way! Notice the end of vs 4: "…Though I fear not God, nor regard man…"

What kind of judge would you be if you didn't fear God—or care about people? A self-pleasing, self-serving one! You would have no thoughts of accountability—and you would have no thoughts of compassion.

So you would make decisions based on what you ***could get out*** of it—not on what is ***just or right!*** That's what this judge did—and that's why Jesus calls him an "unjust judge"!

Next, we have… B. An unrelenting widow (vss 3,5)
--We are introduced to the widow in verse 3. How ***old*** is she? We don't know.
--And we don't know her ***situation***, either—other than she is a widow and doesn't ***have a husband*** to plead her case. It is safe to say she also doesn't have ***a son*** because he would be pleading with the judge on her behalf. Women in those days did not have a say in court, so to speak.
--***What*** does she want the judge ***to do?*** The end of verse 3 says, "**Avenge me** of mine adversary." When we hear (or see) the word "avenge," we think of it as "vengeance" or "punishment." And although the Greek word that "avenge" comes from can mean "punishment," commentators point out that that is ***not the best translation*** in this context.
--The word also means "to defend or protect one person from another." In fact, ***most English translations*** have something along the lines of "**Give me justice**."
--MacArthur suggests that property—and/or money—had been ***wrongly taken*** from her and she wanted things to be made right.
--So she is ***probably destitute***—and most certainly desperate—but is ***not asking*** for her adversary to be ***thrown in prison*** to be punished. She is asking for ***justice to be done*** and wants the law to be followed***.*** And if it is, she believes she will get back what is rightfully hers.

--***How unrelenting*** was she? Vs 3 says "she came unto him, ***saying***…" The verb "saying" is in the ***present*** tense—meaning it was something that she ***kept on doing.***
--In vs 4, it says the judge ***wouldn't grant*** her request "for a while"—indicating she had been asking for a while!
--And in vs 5, the judge says "her ***continual coming***" is "wearying me." In other words, 'She is badgering me… and nagging me…and wearing me out!' The Greek word for "weary" is quite picturesque. It literally means to "strike under the eye"—and give someone a black eye!
--So the widow is not just ***annoying!*** She is ***so persistent*** that it is becoming ***painful for him*** to deny her request! And that leads us to…

C. An uncharacteristic granting of the widow's request (vs 5)
--Notice again what it says in vss 4-5. "I will avenge her; I will grant her justice."
--For ***this judge*** to grant someone's request—when he personally did not gain from it—was very ***uncharacteristic*** of him.
--He wasn't motivated by a ***fear of God***—and he wasn't motivated ***by compassion***. And—in this case—he couldn't be motivated ***by bribery*** because it appears this widow was destitute!
--So instead of ***the widow*** "cutting a deal" with the judge, ***the judge*** "cuts a deal" with the widow! "**I'll give you justice**—but only if you promise to leave me alone!"

So there's the picture! And that brings us to… ***3. The puzzlement over the parable***
--In vs 6, Jesus says, "Hear what the unjust judge saith." Is Jesus teaching us that in order to get things from God, we need to ***wear Him out*** with our prayers until He finally ***gives in?*** For a long time, I thought ***that was the point***—and many commentaries interpret it that way.

But if that is what Jesus is saying, that is puzzling—at least in my mind—for ***two*** reasons.

A. It contradicts other teaching. **Matthew 6:7-8** "But when ye pray, **use not vain repetitions**, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be **heard for their much speaking**. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him."
--So here in **Matthew 6**, Jesus says, "Don't be like the heathen who use vain (meaning empty) repetitions, saying the same thing over and over again."
--But in **Luke 18**, Jesus commends the widow for her persistence in asking the judge for the same thing over and over again!

But "nagging God until He answers" doesn't just contradict other teaching…

B. It is contrary to the character of God
--**Matthew 7:11** "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, **how much more** shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Here Jesus is saying that if we—as fallen and sinful parents—delight in giving good things to our children when they ask, how **much more shall** our heavenly Father delight in giving us good things when we ask Him?
--Romans 8:32 "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also **freely give us all things**?" Here the thought is that since God already gave us the ***greatest*** gift, why would He not be willing to give us ***lesser*** gifts?

So if annoying… and badgering… and pestering God until we "wear Him" out is not what Jesus means when He says, "Hear what the unjust judge saith," ***what does*** He mean?

4. Properly understanding the parable
First off, to properly understand this parable, we need to keep in mind this very important truth…

A. It is a parable of contrast, not comparison!
--What's the difference? A parable of ***comparison*** shows how one thing is ***like another***. Jesus is not suggesting that God the Father ***is like*** the unjust judge! Instead, He is painting a ***contrast*** to show how ***different*** they are!
--Leon Morris refers to it as the "**'How much more'**…variety." (Tyndale NT Commentary, pg 279). Matthew 7:11—the verse we looked at on your outline just a moment ago—is one of those "**how much more**" verses.
--Others refer to it as a "**lesser-to-greater**" argument. In other words, if ***this unjust judge*** will do something on behalf of a widow he doesn't know or care about, ***God***—who is ***so much better and greater*** than this judge—will do what is needed ***on behalf of His children*** that He loves deeply!
--And with that in mind, I want to point out a few of the ways that God is ***different*** from—and ***greater than***—this unjust judge.

1) Contrast in fairness. The judge is unfair; he is unjust. He doesn't fear God and consequently what is fair… and just… and right ***doesn't matter*** to him!

God, on the other hand, is the ***exact opposite***. He is ***the epitome*** of fairness…and justice…and uprightness. He ***always knows the truth***—to include motive—and He ***cannot be bribed.*** And it is ***impossible for Him to judge unfairly*** because He is perfect! Here are just a few of many verses that bear out that truth.
--Genesis 18:25 "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth **do right**?"
--Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and **without iniquity, just and right is He**."
--Ps 89:14 "**Justice and judgment** are the habitation of thy throne: **mercy and truth** shall go before thy face."
(See also Ps 9:7-8; Ps 25:8; Ps 33:5; Ps 92:15)

2) Contrast in caringness (yes; it's a word 😉). How caring was ***the judge?*** Not at all, right? Even if he wasn't a caring individual, ***if he had feared God*** he would have known God's commandments regarding widows.
--Commandments like Exodus 22:22 where it says to "Afflict not the widow" and Isaiah 1:17 where it says, "…plead for the widow."

But he didn't fear God…or care about what God said; nor was he moved by compassion to help her. But God isn't like that, is He? God is again ***the polar opposite*** of this judge! God is ***caring*** (I Peter 5:7) …and full of ***compassion*** (Ps 145:8) …and wants us to come to Him when we ***need rest*** for our souls (Mt 11:28-29).
--God knows the ***number of the hairs*** on our head (Mt 10:30) …and assures us that we are of more value than many sparrows (Mt 10:31) … and promises us that "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Ps 34:15).
--And in Psalm 103:13, we are reminded that "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him." Much more could be said about God's care for us, but I must not skip the fact that God's ***greatest demonstration of His car***e was coming to earth in the person of His Son and dying in our place!
--Jesus said in John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd: and the good shepherd ***giveth His life*** for the sheep."

--Is there any ***greater care*** proof of God's care and love for you than that?

3) Contrast in reason for responding. ***Why*** did the unjust judge ***finally respond*** to the widow's request? Not because it was ***the right thing*** to do—and not because ***he felt sorry*** for her. And not because he ***was bribed*** like judges often were at that time! He gave her what she wanted for one reason and one reason only—"I want this woman to stop nagging me!" In other words, his reason for responding was ***selfishness!***
--Is ***God selfish?*** Not at all! So once again, the picture Jesus is painting is to show us ***not how God is like*** the unjust judge—but ***how different God is*** from the unjust judge!
--Does God do things for ***His glory?*** Yes, He does! Is ***God's desire to be honored*** for what He does ***motivated by selfishness?*** Not at all! ***Truth***—not selfishness—demands that the correct "person" (in God's case, **Being)**—is recognized for what they have done—not someone else!

But God also does things ***for our good***, doesn't He? ***Why?*** Because God is good—and giving—and delights in giving!
--Psalm 119:68 "Thou art good, and doest good…"
--Psalm 145:8-9 "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is **good to all**: and His tender mercies are **over all His works**."
--James 1:17a "Every **good gift** and every perfect gift is **from above**, and cometh down **from the Father** of lights…"
So the point of the parable is this: Persist in prayer because the One you are praying to is absolutely just, caring beyond comprehension, and does what is best for His glory—and our good!

But there's another thing to keep in mind in order to properly understand this parable. We need to…
B. Consider the context
--What is the context? Notice what Jesus was talking about in Luke 17, beginning with verse 20: "And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said…"
--So Jesus is ***asked about*** the coming kingdom of God on earth when He reigns as king—although the ones asking didn't want to acknowledge that Jesus was the King! Jesus' answer is rather lengthy—it starts with verse 20 and goes all the way to the end of the chapter.
--And there is nothing stated in the beginning of chapter 18 to indicate that the audience—or topic—has changed. So Jesus still has ***end-times events*** in view when He gives the parable of the unjust judge.
--We also see that in how Jesus ***ends*** the parable! Notice the middle of verse 8: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh"—obviously for the ***second time*** because He is with them now—"shall He find faith on the earth?"

And that brings us to… ***5. Pondering the questions in the parable (vss 7-8)***
--In vs 6, Jesus says, "Hear what the unjust judge saith." Hopefully you agree that Jesus is ***not saying***, "You have to ***pester*** God to until He ***gives in*** and gives you ***what you*** want." What is Jesus saying?

--That we should persist in prayer because we have a God who is just…and caring…and will do that which is for His glory—and for our good.
--But as we consider what Jesus ***talked about before*** the parable—and what ***the widow asked for***—these questions at the end of the parable take on a meaning that we might otherwise overlook.
--Question #1—found in vs 7—is… A. And shall not God avenge His own elect?
--I believe it is extremely important not to overlook the fact that Jesus uses the same word—***avenge***—that the ***woman asked*** the judge for—and that the ***judge granted*** her.
--What did ***the woman ask*** for? She asked for ***justice***. She asked for ***the wrong*** to be made right.
--What did the ***judge grant her?*** The **same thing**—justice. She went away satisfied; the wrong was made right.
--Are God's people "***wronged***" at times? Yes; they are! Are we treated ***unjustly?*** Yes, we are!
--Are the "wrongs" going to be "righted" someday? Yes; they will—but ***not until Jesus*** comes back!
--And when He does, He will "avenge"—He will make things right—for the elect, meaning those that belong to Him!
--"**Though He bear long with them**" is a bit difficult to understand. Does it mean that God is longsuffering ***toward those who are treating*** His people unfairly? Possibly. But I lean toward it meaning that God waits—a long time, from our point of view—to return and "set things right."
--But how can God "**bear long with them**"—and yet "avenge them speedily"?
--The idea behind the word is that ***once it happens***, it will happen in a hurry. It will not be a long, drawn-out process.

And that brings us to **Question #2**: B. When Jesus comes, will He find faith on the earth?
--We see that question in the last half of verse 8.
--Is Jesus asking whether or not there will be any believers when He returns?
I don't believe so!
--Based on the context—and the teaching of the parable—I believe Jesus is asking ***two*** things.
1) Jesus is asking whether or not there will be any believers that will be ***persistently praying!*** Persistence in prayer indicates that you have a need that you can't meet, but that God can—and that's why you keep on praying!
2) But I believe Jesus is also asking this: Are God's children ***praying for His return?*** Are they wanting His kingdom to come…and for Him to set things right…and for Him to be honored as King of Kings and Lord of Lords?
--In II Timothy 4:8, Paul writes to Timothy about a crown of righteousness that he will receive from the Lord and then adds this: "…and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

What about you? Are you looking forward to the return of Jesus? We should be—and not just because of the results of our past election!

So what would God have us do?

1. Are you persistent in prayer? If not, you should be! Why? Not because God needs to be "badgered"—but because He is a caring and giving and loving God who knows our needs and what is best for us!

2. But that is only true if you are a child of God! God's care and love for you ends if you die unforgiven!

3. Are you looking forward to Jesus' return? We need to ask God to stir within us a desire that He be honored and glorified—not just that we have an easy life!