

Finding Hope in Dark Days

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[0:00] You can be turning to Luke chapter 18. Luke chapter 18.

What we'll be looking at, we'll be looking at the first eight verses. This section we're about to look at is meant to be a great comfort, but many people don't see it that way.

People often cite this parable to prove that if we badger God enough for what we want, he gives it to us. Or if we're going to get any of our prayers answered, we have to badger God like this widow did this unjust judge.

To get what we want. Now, from scripture, it is true that we are to pray earnestly, and we're to pray often, and to seek the Lord with all of our heart.

Luke 11, 9 through 10. We looked at that a while ago now. And that told us how we're to keep going to the Lord for our needs. Matthew 7, 7 and 8 talk about asking and seeking and knocking.

[1:26] But this parable does not teach that. Now, there is an aspect of continually going. But that's not the emphasis of that parable.

This parable is about how and why we should not lose heart in these hard days while we wait for Christ to return.

So let's look at Luke 8, verses 1 to 8. Luke 8, 9. Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10.

Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10. Luke 9, 10. Luke 10, 11. Luke 10, 11. 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 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 so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

[2:38] 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?

Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for your word. I'm so glad that that's been our theme this morning as we come and worship.

We thank you that you've given us your word. And even as we have read from the book of Daniel this morning, we've seen that you've given your word, you've given instruction, and it's been for basically in Daniel, the same purpose is for what it's given here.

For our instruction and for our encouragement. For our hope. I pray that you would be with us, Father. I pray that you would help us to gain hope from this passage today.

[3:44] I pray that you would make plain the picture of Jesus that's here. The picture of our God that's here. And Father, may it work in us. May it equip us. May it sustain us through these days.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this parable, it really runs in from the last section. And remember, as we talked about the last section, it started out with the Pharisees saying, when will the kingdom of God come?

And Jesus answers, it's in your midst. Speaking about, he has brought the kingdom of God. He is there. And he's building the kingdom of God. He's bringing those who are his into the kingdom. And he's building that kingdom. But it's an ongoing process. We talked about the already and the not yet. How it's already here, but it's not quite fulfilled. In fact, it's going to be not yet until Christ comes back.

And he speaks of those days, of what it's going to be like when he comes back. And so, let me, he says, this means that we're going to suffer persecution.

[4:53] In that passage, he talked about how those days would be hard. He says, you're going to long for the days of the Son of Man coming. And we talked about how, in that saying, he's telling them, they're going to long for the day when Christ comes back and makes everything right.

Their life is going to be difficult enough. Their life is going to be hard enough that they're going to wish for, they're going to long for, they're going to look forward to the day that Jesus comes back and makes everything right.

So that's pointing out that in this time from when Jesus returned to heaven, he ascended to the right hand of the Father as he sits there in intercession for us from that time until Jesus comes back, there are going to be a lot of situations where we can't wait till it's done.

Why? Because it's not fun sometimes in this life. There's joys, but there are things that we suffer. There are trials. There are tribulations. There are things that weary us. Sicknesses and afflictions. There's the care of raising children.

[6:10] The care of wanting to make sure they come out right. And the care of wanting to make sure they know the Lord and serve the Lord. And that care goes on sometimes well beyond the time they leave the house.

But it's not just that. During this time, things are hard because people don't like to hear the gospel. People don't like even to be told what is right and what is wrong.

And people will resist those kinds of things. And I don't know about you, but the older I get, the more I can't wait for Christ to come back. So that everything is made right.

So that people don't think it's all right to kill a baby to make my life better. So that people don't think it's all right to live together without marriage and spoil the kind of society God would have us for.

There are all kinds of things that are going on. And we hear of Christians suffering in Nigeria in the 1040 window and even here and all over the world.

[7:20] There are more people martyred for Christ in the last couple hundred years than from the time Christ arose until that point. There's a lot of suffering going on for Christians.

2 Timothy 3, verses 12-14 says, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

While evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed knowing from whom you learned it.

Know what Christ has said. Acts 14, 22 says, Strengthening, this is what Paul did as he was finishing one part of his ministry.

He says, Oh, let's go around and he says, Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

[8:30] A Christian's life, from the moment he trusts Christ until he's with Christ, it's full of suffering. Not every moment, but many moments.

God uses suffering in our lives. God works in and through it. But also, it's full of suffering because the ungodly have no desire to follow Christ, no desire to follow his rule, his law.

And sometimes it gets discouraging because while we wait for Christ to come back, there's no hint of judgment on the wicked.

We're like, so often, like Asaph in Psalm 73 where life is difficult and we get discouraged because the rich and the wealthy die content in their beds with their belly full and the righteous starve. death. There's no hint of justice. The wicked world will go on in its unrighteous ungodliness right up until the judgment comes.

[9:39] And we saw that last time in Luke chapter 17 verses 26 to 30. Nothing signaled that the people in Noah's day were about to be destroyed.

Of course, yes, there was an ark. And yes, there was the preaching of Noah, but there were no signs. There was not a group of people who started dying in sequential thing and building up until they finally realized, we've got to get this right or God's going to kill us all.

Life went on. Luke 17 talks about that, that life goes on as if nothing was happening until the day when Noah entered the ark and then the world was destroyed.

Nothing happened in those days before Lot left Sodom and Gomorrah. Nothing happened that indicated that within a certain amount of time fire and brimstone would rain down from heaven and totally annihilate that whole area.

Nothing warned of that. and we learned last time that there will be no sign, no sign at all to signal to this present world, hey, in 10 minutes Jesus is coming back.

[10 : 55] It's just going to happen and the world is going to continue living as it did, as it has since Christ has left, living for itself, living in its pleasures, living against those who would tell them this is God's law, this is how you need to live.

Nothing will change that. And because nothing changes that, our relationship with the world will be difficult until Christ comes back.

will be difficult to live and that can get discouraging. And I'm so thankful Jesus knew that.

I'm thankful for the way it worked out. God blessed in the words that Kelly was leading us to this morning, the word of God, how Christ has given us his word and we read the book of Daniel and how all these nations would do this and do that and fight against these people and fight against that people and no one would stop them until the Son of Man came and that it's dealt with.

But in the meanwhile, we can become discouraged. And so over and over and over again in Scripture, we find Jesus coming back either himself or through those he sent to teach and preach giving encouragement to God's people.

[12 : 26] There's coming a day when it all be made right. There's coming a day when justice will be served. But the temptation to be discouraged is now.

The time of temptation to be discouraged is now. All kinds of things can be a discouragement. We think of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 he had an affliction that God gave him.

It wore on him. It affected him badly. We don't know what it is or was. But it was discouraging. It was so bad that Paul speaks of some of the people that he visited were willing to pluck their own eyes out and give them to him.

They would have ministered to him. They had such pity on the suffering he was enduring that they were willing to show that kind of compassion.

And Paul was I think at times discouraged by this to the point he prayed three times earnestly Lord deliver me from this.

[13 : 39] God says no my grace is sufficient. The suffering continued. There was another instance in Paul's life. He was imprisoned for preaching the gospel.

And from Philippians to the Philippians he writes that the gospel's been going out. And because he's in prison there have been more people preaching. And you think that would be a great encouragement to Paul.

But part of it wasn't. Because not everybody was preaching out of love for the Lord and a love of joining in the work. There were people who were preaching just to make Paul miserable.

In Philippians 1:15 and 70 there are those who are preaching Christ out of envy and strife hoping to add to my affliction. When is this going to be made right?

When is it going to be wrong for people to preach or do anything just to make somebody else miserable? When is it going to be dealt with that people who afflict Christians are dealt with?

[14 : 46] and justice comes. The suffering and trials Christians face while we wait for him can cause a Christian's heart to be discouraged.

We can get all wrapped up in self pity. Lord I can never get ahead because of the situation at work and the way my fellow workers treat me.

I just never can get that promotion. And Lord you know we can barely make our bills. You know and it's primarily it's because of that one person said or it's because of that one boss or whatever and the situation can become overwhelming and we can just get all wrapped up in self pity and get discouraged.

Or it can be any number of troubles. this is primarily speaking of persecution but the same thing is true because the same teaching is multiplied in many places in scripture.

There are all kinds of things that can discourage us as far as suffering can as there are all kinds of things can discourage us and cause us to lose heart in this life.

[16 : 06] All kinds of sufferings can cause us to get to the point where why bother? Why bother to serve Christ?

It's so hard. I keep taking a stand that I won't do this at work and I keep not getting promoted and I keep going through all this stuff and finally you get to the point you know if I'm ever going to get ahead I've got to give in.

People lose heart lose desire to serve Christ. It's just so hard nothing changes it costs so much. What do you do when suffering and persecution and trials seem endless and there's no sign of the return of Christ?

I mean you could say if I only knew that it was September 25th 19 why am I old 2026 you could say I could last six more days maybe but we don't know when Christ is going to come back what do we do how are we ever going to make it through well I'm thankful that Jesus takes opportunity as he's been answering the Pharisees and then he talks to his disciples about how he's going away and all this is going to happen and you're going to wish for the day of the son of man coming he as the perfect human being the God man knows exactly what we would go through and so he takes time to encourage us and he says in verse 1 and he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and to not lose heart and so he says or Jesus sets about to encourage his disciples his disciples not just those who are there but his disciples through the ages we need this encouragement how do we make it through when we don't know when the

Lord is coming back how do we make it through when we don't know when things are going to be made right how do we make it through when we don't know what when what I am suffering will ever come to an end how do I make it through he says that we ought to always pray and not lose heart now can be can prayer be effective can that encourage my heart will God listen to me now the beautiful thing about this parable that Jesus talks about is it it talks about it applies to the situation of being in suffering a long time and what it's like to begin to doubt if you've had rheumatoid arthritis all your life 20 years in and you've been praying and asking the Lord to deliver you or to give you strength and make it not hurt so much 20 years in you might come to a point where you say is God ever going to listen to me does do I have to badger

[19 : 34] God until he listens to me and so Jesus encourages his disciples in how and why to pray and not lose heart and so he gives us this parable he talks about this judge who's in a certain city and he is in that city and he doesn't care about anyone he doesn't care what God thinks or commands now mind you he's not just saying that this judge is impartial he's not saying that because judges in Israel according to 2nd chronicles 19 6-9 they were to carry very much what God thought and you can go throughout other places in the Old Testament scripture and find that judges were to be very sympathetic to widows and their plight and here we have a judge who doesn't care what

God thinks and he doesn't care about widows he didn't care about what any person thought didn't matter if they were his neighbors I mean he was in the city this widow who comes she's from his own city could have been his own neighbor didn't care what she thought didn't care what she was going through she had the plight of a woman who was helpless she was a widow now being a widow in this day and age is not easy it's difficult but in a widow in that day and age if she had no grown children especially male grown children to stand for her if she had no close relative she was defenseless she had no way of making anyone do anything for her and so a judge was to be empathetic sympathetic to that to that kind of job or that kind of situation there was an injustice done and there was ongoing oppression on the part of this widow but he didn't care he wasn't even doing his job this judge is moved only by his own comfort and his own reputation until this widow got so insistent that she finally moved him by her persistence now

Jesus says hear what the unrighteous judge says he points out that the unrighteous judge would not give her justice because he fears her or because he fears God but because she keeps coming to him now so far you're saying David you've said at the beginning that this is not a way to pound God until he gives us what we want we're going to find here at this point where Jesus shows us exactly what he's teaching he says hear what the unjust judge says Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater when it comes to seeking justice from judges he says see how this unjust judge was moved by this woman your

God your judge is not like this judge this is the big thing that Jesus is trying to get across here God is not like this unjust God our God is a much better judge than this judge he's just remember this other guy he didn't care about anybody anything only what was comfortable for him our God is just God the unrighteous judge didn't care for anyone but Jesus says God cares for us because we are his elect it's interesting that he puts that phrase in here he says and will not God give justice to his elect what does that mean that means that God is willing to give justice to the people he chose the people he loves as we cry out for justice we're not as the stranger as the odd person as the person that

God has no relationship with and we don't have to try to convince him to care for us when we go to him he's already set his love upon us he has already chosen us we are already his the unrighteous judge was unmoved by the widow's petitions he only moved for fear of his reputation our judge knows exactly what we're going through Hebrews 4 14 to 16 says since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens Jesus the son of God let us hold fast our confession for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who has in every respect been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need this unjust judge only judged only ruled because this woman pestered him and as many people who's tried to say this is what

[25 : 53] Jesus is teaching you pester God until he gives you what he wants the exact opposite is taught by this parable you don't need to pester God to give you what you need he wants to give it to you he cares for us we are his people he is moved by our petitions and so Jesus is or it's actually Luke's statement about what Jesus was teaching Luke's statement at the beginning saying that we ought to always to pray and not lose heart is because we have a righteous loving promise keeping God not like the unjust judge we don't have a judge that we go to and have to try to force him to meet our needs we have a judge who wants to meet our needs who is going to meet our needs who is listening to us who is moved by what we go through and so we ought to be people who do not lose heart and who always pray because we pray to that kind of a judge and notice and some will say this doesn't make sense he says and will not

God give justice to his elect who cried to him day and night will he delay long over them and in our position our thinking in this day it's been 2000 years the answer is yes but the answer is no will he delay long over them no he will not delay over them that's the answer that Jesus is intending here he says I tell you he will give justice to them speedily you say speedily doesn't feel speedily I can tell you person after person who lived their whole life suffering because of persecution I can tell you person after person who lived their whole life suffering because of physical ailments things in the family things that go wrong and they would say does God answer speedily yes yes he does God has promised swift justice

I am going to read a longer passage from 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 4 to 10 we will find as I mentioned earlier that this theme this idea that's talked about in the first part of chapter 18 is repeated over and over in scripture this idea that Jesus is going to bring justice that Jesus is coming he will protect his people he will deliver his people that theme is repeated over and over in scripture we even saw it in Daniel this morning 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 4 to 10 they will say where is the promise of his coming for ever since the father fell asleep all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation for they deliberately overlook!

this fact that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed! of water and through water by the word of God and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged by water and perished so saying God said this world was made of water and they have ignored the fact that God also said he would flood the world and he did by this same word the heavens and the earth that now exist I'm sorry and by that means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perish but by the same word the heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly so it happened once it's going to happen again promise fulfilled promise will be kept but

Peter goes on he says but do not overlook this one fact beloved that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance but the day of the Lord will come like a thief no one will know it will happen it will come and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed Peter knew he knew people would be discouraged because it seemed like it was a long time but Peter said remember it's been done once it will be done again remember that

[31 : 09] God is patient what if and I know it's going to happen sometime and there's going to be a cutoff point but if you know Christ here today what if that judgment happened in 19 let's say 15 that got back behind everybody if that judgment happened in 1915 nobody here would know Christ now like I say there's coming a day but he was patient because he wanted you we have to wait will he come swiftly will he bring justice swiftly yes but he's also merciful and wanting more to come God's

not forgotten when I first started this passage studying this passage the passage I'm about to read came to my mind almost instantly and I find great comfort in this passage revelation 6 verses 9 to 11 when he opened the fifth seal

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne they cried out with a loud voice oh sovereign Lord holy and true how long before you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth and they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete who were to be killed as they themselves had been is it swift yes has it come yet no will it come soon yes so you and I ought to be praying and not losing heart when it comes it will be swift just as Jesus said here when it comes it will be complete as in the days of Noah only those who have been saved through God's grace will make it through as in the days of Lot only those who have been spared by God's grace will escape the judgment when it comes it will be swift and it will be complete and those who were mocking those who were persecuting all those will be rightly judged and will be like those in Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5 where we're singing praises to the lamb who judged rightly and had brought justice on the earth so Jesus is telling this parable to tell you to keep praying and don't lose heart because he is not like this unjust judge that has to be pestered until he finally does something he is not like that he is a God who's chosen you who loves you who's working in your life who has plans for you he has tender compassion towards you he is a God who will come and will deal with these things and he will deliver you and Jesus ends this with such an odd verse it's a verse that's left with no answer and no expectation of an answer and so it's meant to be a challenge to us when he comes will he find faith on the earth we could say it this way when he comes will you be trusting him while you're still going through your suffering will you be remaining faithful will you be trusting him for your strength to go through your suffering will you remain faithful in standing on the promise that God will deal with the unjust in your suffering and trial are you still looking for Jesus to come back it's been 2,000 years since he left he's still coming are you trusting that all you have suffered will be made right by our caring and righteous judge I have not seen nor ear heard nor entered into the heart of man the things that God has for them who love him our light all our sufferings will feel like a light and momentary affliction compared to the glory that will be revealed in us when Christ comes back will he find you trusting are you praying do you remind yourself of who [36:27] God is and what he has done and what he has promised to encourage yourself lest you lose heart you should because he's not a God that needs to be badgered to watch out for you he's a God who's ready to watch out for you who is watching out for you even in your trial there's no temptation taking you but such as is common to man God will with temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to endure it God will give grace so if it's three days or five thousand years Jesus will still come back and we can still trust him and he is working and he is a good judge and he cares for us let's keep praying and trust him let's pray thank you father for your word lord as we've talked about this idea of your word going forth and Christ being our word your word I thank you father that in your love for us you've you've built these passages into scripture and you've wanted to encourage us to keep waiting and see your grace and mercy even in your waiting and pray that you would help us to never lose sight of the fact that we have this just judge who will swiftly make everything right I pray that you give us courage give us strength give us a resting heart on you we pray in Jesus name amen may may may may