

19th Sunday after Pentecost- Proper 24 (C)

Luke 18: 1-8

Oct 16, 2022

Christ Episcopal Church

Towanda, Pa.

Rev. Betsy W. Sentigar

Three questions arose for me as I pondered the readings for today:

1. How does what we learn through stories of faith keep us telling that story?

1. Our original scripture was derived from an oral tradition. Stories were told and handed down generationally. There is the notion that once these stories are recorded and written down, they become static or “fixed”. Oral story telling is adaptive and creative. Its purpose was to fit in the culture of the time it was told. In our faith tradition, texts emerged which were handed down in this manner.

These stories were life giving and encouraging to those who would listen. They inspired and encouraged listeners.

In 2nd Timothy this story is told by a teacher whose life is ending . He encourages listeners to know their teachers, hold fast to the sacred writing which instructs for the purpose of salvation in Christ Jesus”. His words are a treasure he wants this students to know. Hold fast to the good teaching you received. This is a gift of God. He is imparting wisdom to the next generation. He wants his student to continue this good teaching to give strength in times of suffering to share. Keep the ember alive , stoke it up and pass it on.<sup>1</sup>

Canonized scripture written down centuries ago and is inspired by God. The literal greek translation offered is that all scripture is “God breathed”. It is living, endlessly relevant and able to speak to us in every era. To have the breath of God is to have life. Scripture has been misused in every generation, yet the Spirit shows up, guiding us, speaking to us and assisting us. The story of God’s unwavering love is no less true now than it was in the beginning of creation. The enlivening breath of God is no less active. Scripture and story tellers help to shape our vision of God- his

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<sup>1</sup> Sermons that Work Pentecost 19© “Telling the Story” Rev. Lucy Strandlund Oct 14, 2022

invitation and movement in the world.. It helps to look around and see how the Holy Spirit is active and working in our lives.

We need to embody the good news of God for others to know God. Share your stories to help kindle God's gift in your helping you to do the work of God. They are important today as they have been in ages past. Share this good new in your witness. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Persistence in the woman represents what? The woman in our story of Luke today is persistent to say the least, so much so that she frustrates the judge to such a level of annoyance that he will do anything to get rid of her. Her success costs him time, energy and action which he would rather not grant her. He freely admits his annoyance and even is prideful of his apathy and denial of anything that does not benefit himself. He can be seen as a model of our world today, the systems of injustice being imposed upon innocents.

Many leaders put power and self regard before the welfare of their people wreaking havoc and upside down civility. All widows in 1st century were poor and powerless. What agency has God given us that we don't recognize?

Many populations of women suffer at the expense of these unjust systems. The oppression in Afghanistan and Iran are currently under the spot light in the difficult news of the world. This woman in today's gospel is not named as so many "women" in the Bible are not. Community discussion of this passage suggests that the woman is the Wisdom figure.

She can be seen as the Christ figure in this passage, persistent, unrelentless and a justice seeker. This is born out of faith, not doubt. We know God is capable and he wants us to ask..

Her faith shows us Jesus who taught us be persistent She guides us to remember his faithfulness in his message. Her faithfulness assures us of God's trustworthiness.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

Here/s a larger question “Where do you see God in the world, persistent, always present (perceived or not) and actively working in the randomness of the world?

3. Will Jesus find faith on the earth? God’s love is unconditional, constant and unending. He loves everyone including those who deny him. This fact of denial has fueled conversation among community. With that said, I believe God is out there loving everyone and is close even to those who hurt and maim his creation, his creation of humankind, the earth and all that is in it, creatures great and small. Without getting too focused on this point, I think God is close to those who despise, alienate, and deny Him. He is as close as their breath and lives in their heart. Unaware as we often are, the window of our soul s dull and closed of to the beauty and desire that God so wants to impart in us . I would go as far as to say that it, crosses traditions of faith and culture.

In our human failings, powers and principalities take upon themselves the role of being the arbiter of segments and populations within a society - empowering unjust advantage or repressive and intentional disadvantage. I’m not advocating for anarchy but for just systems in society. Our role in the church and as individuals is to seek was is just, what is true , and what empowers each human being to exist in their best selves. Access is not equal, rights are not laid down proportionately.

But there is a wideness in God’s mercy. It calls us forward to actions enabling just systems. This is what the church is advocating - to be an agent of God, living the heart of Jesus Christ- alongside him in his walk. If you seek, you can find this work being done here, in community and widening from there. It begins with us.

Do you remember the collect this morning asking God in Christ to preesrve the works of mercy carried throughtout the world? That prayer collects us in that request. It begins with us. We see it here is this place. I see God’s work in your. Jesus lives!

I will close with a quote from St. John of the Cross:

....I saw the river over which every soul must pass  
to reach the kingdom of heaven,  
and the name of thata river was suffering.....

and I saw the boat which carries souls across the river  
and the name of that boat was love.

Love as Christ loves you. Share his love, proclaim his love. Live that love.

<sup>3</sup> And now to God, whose power working in us can do much more than anything we can ask or imagine. To him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

**Engaging in further reflection:**

You Tube Video: "[What does Social Justice Mean to You?](#)"

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=what+does+social+justice+mean+to+you](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=what+does+social+justice+mean+to+you)

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 3:20-21