

10/17/10

THE PSALM AND THE CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 121 (*A song of ascents.*)

Lay Minister: 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?

Pastor: 2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Lay Minister: 3 He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber;

Pastor: 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Lay Minister: 5 The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

Pastor: 6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

Lay Minister: 7 The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life;

Pastor: 8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY O Lord, almighty and everlasting God, You have commanded us to pray and have promised to hear us. Mercifully direct and govern our hearts and our prayers by Your Holy Spirit that we may persevere in steadfast and zealous faith and in sharing your love; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Genesis 32:22-30

(Jacob receives God's help in answer to prayer.)

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 18:1-8

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(Jesus tells a parable on Prayer calling His people to be persistent in praying.)

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 **And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who**

cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.

However, **when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"**

THE SERMON

"The Privilege and Call to Prayer" Luke 18

Have you every felt like you were beating your head against the wall? Monica's son was like many young people today. When he was 11 he drifted from faith. Monica prayed her son would come to faith. But year after year he drifted further and further away, and lived a life that ignored the teachings of Jesus. Have you ever faced a situation that seemed unchangeable? Have you every felt like you were beating your head against the wall?

This month we are not only considering what it looks like to be a Christian, but behaviors of discipleship by which God's children zealously live lives that serve Him. If you ever felt like you were beating your head against the wall, today's teaching on prayer is very important.

In Luke 18 Jesus encouraged unceasing prayer by telling a parable of a widow, a poor woman with little influence. She needed help from a local official but he refused to listen and refused to help her, because she was poor and he was evil. However, she kept coming to him. Jesus says, she finally wore him out and he answered her requests just to get rid of her. However, the one we go to in prayer with our requests, and worries, and concerns is not evil. He is the good and loving Lord and ruler of all. When we go to Him Jesus says, **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.** Be persistent in prayer. The loving Lord will answer you.

But, did you notice what Jesus also said, how he ended the parable? **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"** As people wait and wait and wait, will they lose faith as they face evil and struggles?

The truth is that all of us face struggles in life. Many of our struggles are our own doing, because we are sinful. Whether your struggle is anger or laziness, lying or lust, greed or doubt, whatever kind of selfishness or desire or sin that haunts you, the struggle will never be totally over in this life. But, God sent Jesus to take our sin on Himself and over come our sin when he died on the cross and rose again from the dead. **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.** The struggle will continue in this life, but God has answered our prayer in Jesus, and when this life is over God has heaven waiting. **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"**

What is your struggle? You know in your hearts. We can be reassured that even though we have gone to God again and again and again, he does hear us and answer. But, the struggle can be so long. Instead of talking about being persistent in prayer, we are going to do it. We are going to pray. If you would move closer to the people sitting next to you and hold hand, and bow your heads, and please pray with me that God's love will touch the hearts of our world, and

the youth. Pray out loud, softly, and all the voices will bring their requests to God. . . **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.**

The Christian church in the west is declining. Youth in particular seem skeptical. On August 22 I was coming home from a meeting in Spokane with my wife, Kathy. As we drove through downtown I noticed a young man wearing a T-Shirt. This t-shirt had a circle on it, with a cross in the circle, and a slash through the cross. Written across the top of the illustration were 2 words, "Bad religion." Our culture, our youth, seem to be drifting away from God. We spend money and have programs, but, the general drifting from God seems to continue. We try and try and try and can feel like we are beating our heads against the wall. No wonder Jesus says, **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"** Please take a moment with me, join hands, and let us pray. . . **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.**

However, not only are numbers down for Christians in America, but we all know someone we care about who does not know or believe in the love of God for us in Jesus. About 10 or 15 years ago our previous District President, Warren Schumacher, gave us a card and asked us to write down 5 names and to pray for these people who did not know Jesus. I wrote down 5 names. Actually, one of them has moved toward the Lord, but my list now is 7 people for whom I care, that I keep praying for, but I don't see a response yet, not as I would like. **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"** Please take a moment with me, join hands, and let us pray. . . **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.**

The Lord has not only called us to pray persistently, he has taught us how to pray. He wants us to pray for the good of his people. He wants us to pray that a faithful witness is made, "hallowed by Thy name." He wants us to pray for the spread of the Gospel, "Thy Kingdom Come." He wants us to pray for righteousness, and forgiveness, and resisting temptation. He wants us to pray for the needs of all His people. Give us this day our daily bread. With the struggles of the church we could say with Jesus, **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"** Please take a moment with me, join hands, and let us pray out loud the prayer our Lord taught us. . . **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.**

By the way, Monica's son. She kept praying for 17 years. She could have said with Jesus, **8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"** But, he came to faith. God worked in this man so that he was baptized and changed his life. He became known as St. Augustine, a great teacher and leader in the church around 400 A.D. **7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.**

