

Welcome

Call to Worship - 'Let us sing to the Lord every one of us, as long as we live may we sing praises to our God. May our singing please Him, for our gladness comes from Him!' - Psalm 104 v 33-34

Hymn 129

The Lord is King! lift up your voice

The Lord is King lift up thy voice
O earth and all ye heavens rejoice
From world to world the joy shall ring
The Lord Omnipotent is King

The Lord is King who then shall dare
Resist His will distrust His care
Or murmur at His wise decrees
Or doubt His royal promises

The Lord is King child of the dust
The Judge of all the earth is just
Holy and true are all His ways
Let every creature speak His praise

Come make your wants and burdens known
Christ will present them at the throne
For He is at the Father's side
The Man of Love the crucified

One Lord one empire all secures
He reigns and life and death are yours
Through earth and heaven one song shall ring
The Lord Omnipotent is King.

Josiah Conder (1789 – 1855)
From Psalm 148

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

God our Father, we praise You this day. We honour You, for You are the One who has created all that there is, on Earth and in Heaven.

Everything we see declares Your glory, it shows us what You have done.
It proclaims Your majesty and power.

Lord, we are gathered here together in Your Name. We are here to praise You, to thank You, to worship You, to speak with You in our prayers, to listen to all that You have to say to us this morning.

May we be attentive listeners, eager to hear You and to act upon what you are saying.

Forgive us Father for the times when we have not listened to You.
When we have ignored what You have said & gone our own ways & not Yours.
Help us to realise that You always know what is best for us.

Lord Jesus, we continue to celebrate Your great victory over sin, over death and over the devil. We rejoice with all Your people in Your resurrection from the dead, paving the way for all who believe to be raised to new life themselves.

Help us Lord to live lives that are worthy of You.

To love You with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our strength and to love others as we love ourselves.

Forgive us Lord for our selfishness and greed, for our impatience and our lack of love and concern for those around us.

Help us to see others as Jesus sees them and to treat them as He does.

Help us not to judge, lest we ourselves be judged.

Help us to grow in our faith; to be encouragers to those who need encouragement, to be comforters to those who need comforting,
to be patient and understanding towards others and to be ambassadors for Jesus at all times.

Receive now our offerings, with our grateful thanks and use them as You see fit, for Your glory and the building up of Your Kingdom.

And hear us Lord as we pray together as Jesus has taught us:

Our Father in Heaven

Hallowed be Your Name

Your Kingdom come

Your will be done on Earth as in Heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil

For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours

Now and for ever.

Amen.

New Testament Reading - Ephesians 3 v 12-21 (GNB - Barbara Usher)

¹²In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God's presence with all confidence. ¹³I beg you, then, not to be discouraged because I am suffering for you; it is all for your benefit.

The Love of Christ

¹⁴For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. ¹⁶I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, ¹⁷and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, ¹⁸so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. ¹⁹Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

²⁰To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: ²¹to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever! Amen.

Hymn 180

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks with a grateful heart

give thanks to the Holy One,

Give thanks because he's given

Jesus Christ, his Son.

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say, 'I am strong!'
let the poor say, 'I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us!'
And now let the weak say, 'I am strong!'
let the poor say, 'I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us!'

Give thanks with a grateful heart
give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
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Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

Henry Smith (b.1952)

Prayer - (Elizabeth Davidson)

During our prayer for others this morning there is a response, when I say 'Lord in your mercy' I invite you to respond 'Hear our Prayer'.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you, Lord for leading us to worship you today whether in church or online. Be with each one of us and make us aware of the closeness of your presence as we worship you our heavenly Father. As we listen to your reading from Luke's gospel, we hear Jesus tell the parable emphasising we must not be discouraged and continue to pray. At this time of conflict and great uncertainty in your world we bring before you –

Our world leaders, give them your wisdom Lord, to make the decisions which will lead to peace. We pray especially for Ukraine's president Volodymr Zelensky who continues to lead and encourage his people during this devastating time for his people and their country.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for those who are opening their hearts and their homes to look after the refugees fleeing Ukraine, may they have the best interest of those needing their help and keep them safe. We pray Lord, for all refugees in the world fleeing war in our world.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for our own country for our national leaders, both in Scotland and the UK that they make decisions for the good and wellbeing of all. At local government, as we approach our elections we pray Lord, that those elected will set aside selfish ambition to make decisions in the best interest of those they have been elected to serve.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY

HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for our Queen, we thank you Lord, that she has been a long and loyal servant of our country in difficult times for her, and as she approaches this historic anniversary may she be supported in all she does at this time.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for our church both locally and worldwide at this time of great change, as we approach our National Assembly this month, we pray for our leaders, give them your wisdom in their decision making to enable your gospel to be spread.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

We pray for those who have been so affected by the increase in the cost of living, those who struggle to heat their homes and feed their families, We pray for our children who are sitting exams at this time, be with them, exams so important to their future education and employment. We pray for those who are ill and lonely in our community especially those known to us and we bring them before you now in a time of silence....

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

As your people here in the Borders we ask you to make us aware of those needing our support and help, the despondent, the depressed, please give us the words to encourage them. We pray for our own families and friends, Lord help us to look after those we love and also those we find more difficult to love.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

Lord, please remind us not to become discouraged, that you care and listen to us always and as your son Jesus has told us we should continue to pray to you.

We pray for your peace Lord in the world, your peace in our country, your peace in our community and your church and your peace in our heart, This prayer we bring before you in Jesus name.

AMEN

Hymn 466

Before the throne of God above

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong a perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there! The Risen Lamb
My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased with His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God
With Christ my Saviour and my God

Charitie L.De Chenez (1841 – 1923)

Bible Teaching - Luke 18 v 1-8 (GNB) Parable of the Widow & the Judge.

‘We must never give up!
We have everything going for us!
Our God cares for us!’

Many years ago Robert the Bruce was hiding from the English in a cave in the south of Scotland. He was at the lowest point in his life, ready to give up. He thought of leaving the country and never coming back! He had tried all he could to win over the Scots nobility to his claim to the throne. He had fought bravely against the English enemy and been defeated.

As The Bruce waited in the cave he saw a spider trying to build a web. Time after time the spider failed and fell down. But each time it got up and started again, until finally it succeeded in building it's web!

The Bruce took heart from that humble spider and it's persistence and perseverance. He left the cave, gathered his army and went on to win a great victory at Bannockburn!

"If at first you don't succeed, try try again!"

How persistent are you?
Do you give up easily?
Or do you persevere? Are you determined to see things through?
Or do you get discouraged easily?

Jesus told a parable which was designed to get you and I to persist and persevere in PRAYER! To keep on speaking with God in prayer and to never give up!

LUKE 18 v 1-8 (GNB)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to teach them that they should always pray and never become discouraged. ²“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. ³ And there was a widow in that same town who kept coming to him and pleading for her

rights, saying, 'Help me against my opponent!' ⁴For a long time the judge refused to act, but at last he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or respect people, ⁵yet because of all the trouble this widow is giving me, I will see to it that she gets her rights. If I don't, she will keep on coming and finally wear me out!'"

⁶ And the Lord continued, "Listen to what that corrupt judge said. ⁷ Now, will God not judge in favor of his own people who cry to him day and night for help? Will he be slow to help them? ⁸ I tell you, he will judge in their favor and do it quickly. But will the Son of Man find faith on earth when he comes?"

A more modern setting is given in the book 'Street Parables': In a certain town there was a solicitor who didn't really care about justice or his clients. He just wanted to make as much money as he possibly could. One of his clients was a single mother who was owed child support by her ex-husband.

The solicitor had no interest in the case, since he made no money out of it, but the single mum used to pester him endlessly because her needs were so great.

'All I want is justice,' she would often say. 'I only want what is due to me.'

For some time the solicitor kept trying to put her off in the hope that she might eventually go away or try to deal with the Child Support Agency herself.

But finally he realised that this lady was determined & was never going to give up, so he said to himself, 'Even though I couldn't care less about her case and I will make no money out of it, I am going to resolve it because this woman is wearing me down.'

I will ensure that she gets justice before her constant pleas give me a nervous breakdown. She has become a pain in the neck!

Now just look at what that selfish solicitor said!

How much more, then, will our just God ensure that His children, who cry out to Him day and night, are well looked after and see that their prayers are answered?

Do you think He would ever say to them, 'I'm too busy,'

or 'You're not a priority to Me?'

Of course not: He is always eager to answer our prayers. He will see to it that they get justice and quickly!

So let's look together this morning at this important parable.

Here, in this parable, Jesus tells us three things:

First of all:

LIKE THE WIDOW, WE MUST NEVER GIVE UP!

Secondly:

UNLIKE THE WIDOW, WE HAVE EVERYTHING GOING FOR US!

And:

UNLIKE THE JUDGE, OUR GOD CARES ABOUT US!

First of all then:

JESUS TELLS US THAT WHEN WE PRAY WE MUST NEVER GIVE UP!

What does it mean to "keep on praying or to pray without ceasing?"

Well it doesn't mean that we should go around with our eyes closed constantly repeating the same words of a prayer over and over again. Jesus warns us AGAINST that kind of praying!

What it means is that, as Christians, prayer should be something that becomes very NATURAL to us. As natural as breathing. We rarely think about our breathing, we just do it, it becomes a natural habit.

And so prayer should be the same - the natural habit of our lives as Christians, the ATMOSPHERE in which we constantly live!

Prayer is much more than just speaking to God, it is much more than just the words of our lips - it is the desires of our hearts!

It's like we are in constant contact with God, we don't need to say anything, we just recognise that He is right there with us, always ready to listen to us and to help us. To keep on PRAYING means to keep on KNOWING that He is right there with us!

And this is contrasted with getting discouraged.
If we don't pray then we will become discouraged.

If we do not feel that The Lord is right there with us, every day and every night, we WILL become disheartened and discouraged!

If we sever the lines of communication between ourselves & The Lord, we will feel very much on our own, like a soldier cut off from his unit behind enemy lines, with no means of contacting them!

When we say goodbye to friends we often promise to 'keep in touch.' But do we? We might start out with the best of intentions and contact them regularly for the first few weeks and months, but then things start to tail off and our contact is not so regular and eventually it stops altogether!

Don't be like that with God, Jesus warns us here!
Keep the lines of communication open!
KNOW that He is right there with you, that His Spirit lives IN you and act accordingly!

Secondly:

JESUS TELLS US THAT WE HAVE EVERYTHING GOING FOR US

WE have what this widow did not.

The widow was obviously A WOMAN! And as a woman at the time of Jesus, she had no real legal standing before the law. She was a non-person! Only men had legal standing. Women did not go to court; they asked a husband or father or male relative to go on their behalf!

This woman was A WIDOW, her husband had died and it would seem that she had no-one else to go and speak up for her, so she had to go herself!

This woman was also POOR, she had no money to pay for a lawyer, or to bribe the judge, a common occurrence!

Basically in the time and culture in which she lived, she had not a lot going for her! She was a woman, she was a widow and she was poor. How would ANYONE listen to her, far less a corrupt judge who respected neither God nor man.

If the judge thought nothing of God or of man, what was he going to think about a poor widow woman?

Less than nothing!

But, in contrast to this poor widow woman who had less than nothing going for her - you and I as Christian believers have EVERYTHING going for us!!

You and I can come with confidence before God in prayer. You and I can come at any time of the day or night to Him, tell Him what's troubling us and ask for His help.

Because of what Jesus did on the cross, you and I can confidently approach God our Father in prayer, with no fear of being turned away:

Ephesians 2 v 18 - "Now all of us can come into the Father's presence, thro HS, because of what Christ has done!"

Ephesians 3 v 12 - "Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can come boldly and confidently into God's presence!"

This woman, because she was a widow, had no man to speak up for her!
This woman, because she was poor, could not afford a solicitor to take her case.

By contrast, we, as Christians, are part of a huge world-wide family of believers.
A family ready to help us in our time of need.

We, as Christians, have Someone to speak up for us who is both our Brother and our Advocate - Jesus Christ!

John addressing his fellow Christians in 1 John 2 v 1, writes: "We have an Advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One who is truly righteous."

We also have all the PROMISES which God makes to us in the Bible - promises that He will always keep!

Promises to listen to our prayers & answer our requests.

Jeremiah 33 v 3 - "Call to Me and I will answer you!"
and many, many more!

We also have God's Holy Spirit who will help us when we pray:

Romans 8 v 26-27: "If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. The Holy Spirit does our praying FOR us & IN us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs and our aching groans. The Holy Spirit knows us far better than we know ourselves! He knows our condition & keeps us present before God."

So in contrast to the widow, we, if we are Christians we can boldly and confidently approach our Father in Heaven, BECAUSE of what Jesus has done for us on the cross!

In contrast to the widow, we have Jesus as our Big Brother & Advocate to speak up for us & represent us!

In contrast to the widow, we have the unfailing promises of God in His word - when He tells us that He will always listen to us and always answer us!

AND, as if all that is not enough, we have the Holy Spirit, who will help us when we pray and even pray FOR us!

So in contrast to the widow who had less than nothing going for her - we, if we are Christians, have EVERYTHING (Father, Son & Holy Spirit) going for us!

And, there's more! In great contrast to the widow who came to a court of LAW, we, if we are Christians, come to a throne of GRACE!

The widow pled out of her poverty, but, when WE pray we have all of God's riches available to us -

Philippians 4 v 19 : "God will supply ALL your needs from His glorious riches, which have BEEN GIVEN TO US in Christ Jesus!"

And finally:

JESUS TELLS US THAT OUR GOD CARES ABOUT US!

God is NOT like the judge in the story,
He is the complete opposite!

The judge cared about no-one -
God cares about everyone!
The judge ignored the woman for a while -
God is attentive to our every cry!

The judge was not interested & had to be forced to grant her request -
God is concerned about all our needs & responds to them out of His great love for each one of us!

When we pray we do not come to God as a non -person with nothing going for us -
When we pray we do not come to God on our own, with no-one to speak up for us - When we pray we do not come to God out of poverty -

When we pray we do not come to God in fear and trepidation -
When we pray we do not have to pester God into doing what we ask -

Because, if we are Christians, when we pray we come to a Faithful Father, who loves us so much more than we could ever imagine -

When we pray, we come to a Devoted Dad, who is always attentive to the cries of His children -

When we pray, we come to a Patient Parent who is always concerned about our needs -

When we pray, we come to a Gracious God who is always ready to answer us when we call!

A Faithful Father!

A Devoted Dad!
A Patient Parent!
A Gracious God!

THAT'S whom we come to when we pray - and so we can come to Him as a child comes naturally to his or her loving & caring father - with ease, with great respect, with confidence - knowing that He is longing to hear from us & graciously respond to our requests.

A Faithful Father!
A Devoted Dad!
A Patient Parent!
A Gracious God!

Hymn 547

What a Friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to Him in prayer
O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations
Is there trouble anywhere
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Are we weak and heavy-laden
Cumbered with a load of care
Jesus is our only refuge
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Do your friends despise forsake you
Take it to the Lord in prayer
In His arms He'll take and shield you
You will find a solace there

Joseph Scriven (1829 – 1886)

Benediction - 'And now may

the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forevermore.'

(3 fold Amen)