

THE PARABLES OF JESUS
“PARABLES OF PRAYER”
LUKE 11: 5-13; 18: 1-8

WHY IS IT THAT WE FIND SO LITTLE TIME TO PRAY? AND WHEN WE DO FIND TIME TO PRAY, WHY IS IT OFTEN AN UNSATISFACTORY EXPERIENCE? DO WE HAVE MUCH FRUSTRATION BY WHAT SEEMS LIKE “UNANSWERED PRAYER?” WHY DOES IT SEEM LIKE THAT FOR SOME PEOPLE, PRAYER APPEARS TO BE A DYNAMIC DIALOGUE, BUT FOR US IT’S OFTEN A MONOTONOUS MONOLOGUE, AS IF NO ONE WERE EVEN LISTENING? DOES PRAYER REALLY CHANGE ANYTHING?
JESUS GIVES US TWO PARABLES ENCOURAGING US TO PRAY, NO MATTER WHAT.

THE PARABLE OF THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

A FRIEND KNOCKS AT THE DOOR OF A FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT REQUESTING FOOD AND REST. IT WAS THE CUSTOM OF THE TIMES TO PROVIDE SUCH TO TRAVELERS. BUT THIS MAN WHO WAS AWAKENED HAD NO BREAD TO OFFER THE FRIEND, SO HE GOES TO A NEIGHBOR’S HOUSE TO SECURE SOME LOAVES TO PROVIDE FOR THE MAN. THE NEIGHBOR IS RELUCTANT TO HELP BECAUSE OF THE LATENESS OF THE HOUR, BUT THE MAN IS INSISTENT. HE WILL NOT GO AWAY, NOR WILL HE LET HIS NEIGHBOR FRIEND GO BACK TO SLEEP. HIS PERSISTENCE PAID OFF.

THE POINT OF THE PARABLE IS TO TEACH US PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER IF WE DO NOT RECEIVE OUR ANSWER IMMEDIATELY. IT IS NOT THAT GOD IS UNWILLING OR RELUCTANT TO HELP AND HAS TO BE PRESSED INTO ANSWERING US. THE WHOLE CONTEXT OF THIS PARABLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT HE IS EAGER TO GIVE TO US. BUT IF WE DO NOT WANT WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR ENOUGH TO BE PERSISTENT, THEN WE DO NOT WANT IT VERY MUCH. TEPID PRAYER IS NOT ANSWERED.

WE ARE ENCOURAGED IN THIS PARABLE TO “ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK.” WHEN WE DO THIS, JESUS ASSURES US THAT WE WILL HAVE A RESPONSE FROM HIM. WE MUST NEVER THINK OF GOD AS UNWILLING TO GIVE. HE IS ALWAYS READY TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO HIS CHILDREN. IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE WILL ALWAYS GET WHAT WE ASK FOR, BUT TRUE PRAYER IS NEITHER UNHEARD NOR UNHEEDED.

THE PARABLE OF THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW

IN THIS PARABLE JESUS IS TEACHING MUCH THE SAME THING. A WIDOW SEEKS JUSTICE FROM A JUDGE, AND THIS JUDGE IS DESCRIBED AS BEING UNJUST AND HE WILL NOT LISTEN TO HER PLEAS. THIS WIDOW WAS IN A HELPLESS POSITION. SHE HAD NO MONEY TO BRIBE HIM, SHE HAD NO INFLUENCE TO MOVE HIM TO ACT ON HER BEHALF, AND SHE HAD NO PRETECTOR TO BRING PRESSURE ON HIM. SHE WAS ARMED WITH NOTHING BUT THE FACT THAT RIGHT WAS ON HER SIDE. SHE DID NOT ASK FOR VENGEANCE, ONLY JUSTICE. WHEN THE JUDGE DID NOTHING, SHE COULD COME BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN. THIS PERSISTENCE BY HER EVENTUALLY WORE THE JUDGE DOWN. HE FINALLY RELENDED AND RULED IN HER FAVOR, THEREBY GRANTING HER REQUEST.

JESUS IS NOT, OF COURSE, LIKENING GOD TO AN UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE. THE PARABLE IS OF THE “HOW MUCH MORE... VARIETY.” IF A WICKED MAN WILL SOMETIMES DO GOOD, EVEN IF FROM BAD MOTIVES, HOW MUCH MORE WILL GOD DO RIGHT AND BLESS HIS PEOPLE WHO PERSIST IN PRAYER. A RIGHTEOUS GOD WILL VINDICATE HIS CHILDREN AND GRANT THEIR PERSISTENT REQUESTS.

JUST AS THIS WIDOW’S ONE HOPE WAS THIS JUDGE, OUR ONE HOPE IS GOD. WE MAY NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND THE DELAYS OF THE LORD, BUT THERE IS SURELY A PURPOSE IN MIND, TO HELP US BETTER AND TO GLORIFY HIM.