

**Gospel and Sermon Transcript -19th Sunday After Pentecost - October 19, 2025**

Chime calls us to worship and prayer.

And as we do, we want to be holding up Pastor Julio Romero,  
whose retirement celebration was yesterday.

And he said at that time that today,  
in two of the three congregations he serves,  
they will hear his final sermon, one of those probably  
momentarily.

So I think we could probably be thinking of him  
and praying for him as he delivers that sermon.

And then he's got one more next week.

His official last day is October 31.

So he is winding things down.

And the call committee at the three congregations,  
I understand, has been busy and interviewing.

And we may hear some things fairly soon  
about the person who will be ministering and Pastor  
at Faith, St. Catherine's, Good Shepherd, Niagara Falls,  
and Trinity for Heary.

Funny, we would talk about prayer in church.

And the gospel reading would talk about it too.

Today we hear about praying and not losing heart.

That just might be apt for the world we find ourselves in.

### **The Gospel**

Holy gospel according to St. Luke, the 18th chapter.

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray  
and to not lose heart.

He said, "In a certain city there was a judge  
who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him  
and saying, 'Grant me justice against my accuser.'

For a while he refused.

Later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God  
and no respect for anyone, yet this widow keeps bothering me.

I will grant her justice so that she will not wear me out  
with her continued coming here.'

And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says.

And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones  
who cry to him day and night?

Will he delay long in helping them?

I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

And yet when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

The gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated?

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you from the one who was, who is,  
and who is to come, the one who is just and merciful.

So which prayers does God answer?

The ones of the fleeing rabbit to have its life spared  
or of the pursuing bear that this meal may be blessed?

Or perhaps, and I don't know where I would get a reference like this,  
but what if you live in Seattle?

And maybe there's a sporting event of some sort going on later.

And you pray for victory for your team.

Or what if you live in Toronto?

Which prayer will God answer?

Yogi Berra has a bit of a response.

He was a man of deep faith.

We'll start there.

But you know the rest of his life, right?

He's a catcher, and he's tired of watching all of these religious  
prostrations and gyrations and chancel-franthing,  
and as people would get up to bat, he loses his patience.

And he finally says to a batter from the opposing team,

"For heaven's sake, would you just let God watch the game?"

Yogi, I think maybe God needs to do more than watch

the game of the world that we live in.

I don't know how much God cares about sport.

Maybe some.

That might be heresy to say that, I don't know.

But God does care about justice

and tells the story of a widow who literally,

and I love this translation and wish it would have been in the Bible

because it is the literal translation,

but it gives the judge a black eye with her continued hectoring for justice.

You ever had a black eye? You ever had a shinier?

Oh, I've had many.

And I can tell you all about it.

It's kind of embarrassing to go back to school with one.

Sometimes they hurt a little, but it's also a mark.

And you're forever having to explain to people how you got it.

Sledding misadventures occasionally.

Altercations with siblings more frequently.

The unrighteous judge has got a black eye.

And he knows himself enough to know that

if nothing else, maybe he could grant justice to this widow

and avoid more blackening of the eye.

What a bizarre parable.

Told to a group of people who have in fact lost heart.

A group of people whose temple has been sacked.

A group of people dispersed.

And a subgroup of people

who had heard that Jesus had promised to return soon

and his appearance not forthcoming.

Kind of need to hear this.

Don't lose heart once in a while.

We don't always get to be the righteous widow

blackening the eye of the unjust.

We don't even get to be Jacob.

We get to be the cage match with the unknown visitor in the night

in order to receive a blessing.

Spoiler alert.

It was not happily ever after, even after the wrestling match

and the blessing, but you know, that's for another time.

More often we are the people who lose heart.

We wonder if our prayers mean anything.

Do they avail anything?

Do they result in anything?

Sometimes people pray for us.

You know studies show that if you know someone's praying for you when you're hospitalized that your outcomes are likely better just from the strength you draw from knowing that somebody cares enough to pray.

And sometimes people pray for us in our stead when we just flat camped.

About 30 years ago, the Bishop of the ELCA, Herbert George Anderson, was widowed and devastated and still needed to lead a church.

He would speak to the writers of the Lutheran magazine about what that experience was like and about going to worship and sitting and being numb with grief and dumbstruck with sadness, unable to even pray.

But along the way he discovered something.

He discovered that people were praying for him when he couldn't.

And he began to draw strength knowing that there were people surrounding him, praying, doing the work of the church, praying, when he couldn't.

How powerful is that to know?

And it's a reminder that our prayers are not DIY.

Our prayers are not just for our sake.

They really are for the sake of community.

That's why monastic communities get up in the middle of the night  
even now and they pray.

They pray believing that their prayers support public servants,  
public safety people like firefighters and police and paramedics.

They pray into the night knowing that there are nursing mothers  
trying to quiet fussy babies.

They pray in the middle of the night knowing there are people  
who can't sleep and can't pray either  
because anxiety has so gripped them.

And they pray knowing that there are things beyond our capability  
that affect us and the prayer is that God hears, God sees,  
and God responds.

There are individuals who really are gifted to pray.

And sometimes just knowing that, I think, is encouraging.

Decades ago, I visited somebody who was homebound,  
a very gentle soul, unlike that righteous widow blackening the judge's eye.

And I asked her, "What does your prayer life look like?"

And she said there was a practice that she began when she was very young  
and she was continuing well into her 80s.

Every morning, she would pray the Lord's Prayer.

She prayed at noon and she would pray it when she fell asleep.

And unlike some in your company, she didn't pray it as fast as she could so she could get out and play baseball with the Gha'liya Brothers.

I don't know who I'm talking about there. Probably me.

She prayed it with depth and sincerity.

Every day, rain or shine.

But imagine this Lord's Prayer as we've talked about in previous weeks.

Not exactly an innocuous prayer, if you're a Caesar.

Not exactly an innocuous prayer, if you are the unjust judge.

The politician who doles out favors only to one's cronies

or hopes that maybe there is a nice, fat lobbyist check somewhere

that our well-being is not dependent on government's legitimate or otherwise.

That when we pray our Father who art in heaven, we are saying, "Guess what, Caesar is not it."

That the rule and realm of God comes from there.

That our dependence is on the one who sustains us daily

and assists us in our relationships and ultimately delivers us from evil.

Doesn't that sound rather revolutionary that people of faith, including the very gentle Gwendolyn,

would pray this prayer and mean it three times a day?

To lose heart maybe is the same as to lose hope.

You've heard me quote Augustine, one of my favorite quotes that I picked up about a year ago at this time.

He says that hope has two daughters.



One daughter is angry at the injustice and the inhumanity in the world.

The other daughter is courage. Courage to do something about it.

I'm going to let you contextualize those remarks.

I guess there was something going on in the States yesterday.

A couple people got together over coffee or something to talk about, "Justine, I'll let you work with that."

I don't know how many millions of people marched.

Some of them even in frog costumes and dinosaur outfits,

because they had enough injustice and they wanted humanity.

Now you know my feelings about yesterday's proceedings.

But I bring this up to say that that is hope.

Discontent with injustice and inhumanity.

And some courage to do something.

To harbor hope enough to pray for justice.

And maybe once in a while, even to be a bit of answered prayer for the rest of us.

Amen.