



Sermon Growth Guide

September 28, 2025

Justice

Luke 18:1-8

Key Verse: Luke 18:7 “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?”

Big Idea: When we seek justice, persistence in prayer to a loving God is essential.

Foundations

This is one of the many parables that Jesus tells as He is on His way to Jerusalem. They are not stories to pass the time while they are on their journey. Jesus knows why Jerusalem is the destination. He is on His way to fulfill His saving purpose for the world. He knows what He will be facing, but He also knows that His followers do not yet understand what is going to happen. They will be thrown into confusion and severe controversies. The parables are meant to prepare and encourage the disciples for the times ahead.

By the time we reach this point in the story, we have witnessed the healing of lepers with a lesson in gratitude. We have heard Jesus speak about sin and forgiveness and the Kingdom of God. And we have heard graphic descriptions of those who ignore the fact that the Son of Man will come in power.

Clearly, Jesus is teaching that there will be confusion, surprise and unpreparedness when God comes to visit His people. There will be injustice because of human selfishness and things will not be as they should be. People will yearn for justice.

So, this widow, already shoved to the outer limits of society because she is a widow, has also suffered an unnamed injustice for which she seeks a lawful outcome. She pounds on the judge's door until, exasperated, he grants her request. Jesus tells us that there are things that we should pray for, knowing that God will make right what is wrong.

Understanding God's Word

Read Luke 18:1-8. Then read Matthew 7:17 together. Many think that Jesus' portrayal of God as an unjust judge is hard to understand. Why do you think Jesus allegorizes God as an unjust judge who neither fears God nor cares for people? What does this parable teach you about (a) persistence in prayer, (2) the character God and (3) the nature of justice from God's perspective?

Applying God's Word

Re-read aloud Luke 18:1-8. Discuss the following questions: (1) Jesus doesn't talk about going out and righting wrongs in this parable. How do you think prayer and action go together (See Matthew 5:23-24)? (2) Why do you think Jesus tells us to not lose heart when we pray? What kinds of things can cause you to give up on prayer?

Witnessing God's Word

How do you think persistent, hopeful prayer in the face of injustice might be a form of witness? What does it say to the world about God? About the nature of God's justice? What can the believer's practice of persistent prayer mean in a discouraged world of cynicism and disillusionment?

Is this world thirsty for justice? Yes, it is. Are you? Yeah, me too. Some of these topics we have to make a little bit of an argument, like last week with purity. You might say, "I'm not sure people even want purity." People want justice. In this series, How to Get What You Want, today we ask, what about justice? People want Justice. Usually when we say "justice" we are thinking "retribution." "I hope that guy gets what's coming to him." If you did an awful thing you had better get a punishment to fit the crime. Take the assassination of Charlie Kirk. We rely on a justice system, the Department of Justice, because we want a punishment to fit the crime. But it's worse than one crime. We see people celebrating the murder on social media. There was a State Representative killed along with her husband last month in Minnesota, a killing at an ICE facility in Dallas, and on and on. Now what do we want? It's more than just crime and punishment, retribution, getting what's coming. I want a different world. I want a society that knows evil when it sees it. I want a world where political violence is out, where murder is intolerable, where young men are not sucked into dark pits of nihilism and anarchy, crawling out on a roof with a rifle. There is so much we want, isn't there? Justice. Charlie Kirk's wife, Erika, stood on stage in front of 100,000 mourners a week ago and forgave her husband's killer. Maybe that moves us closer.

Justice is more than a Christian thing. Everybody wants justice. Yale did puppet show studies on babies. The babies watched a puppet show with two rabbits and a tiger passing a ball. One rabbit with an orange shirt helped the tiger when he dropped his ball. The rabbit with a green shirt took the ball and ran off the stage with it! The babies watched this puppet show ten times. Then they put the two puppets in front of the babies to see which one they would pick, the mean bunny or the nice bunny. 80% of the babies reached out for the nice bunny. One baby smacked the mean bunny on the nose! We are born looking for justice.

True crimes is an entertainment category. 84% of us watch true crimes shows weekly on television, YouTube or podcasts. Why? We are all looking for justice. We are justice-thirsty beings made in the image of a justice-bringing God.

Jesus told a parable about a woman looking for justice. "He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" (Luke 18:2-3) There was an unjust judge and a woman seeking justice. "Imagine that," Jesus said. It's not hard to imagine. She said, "Give me justice. Let me get what is right from the one who only wants to give me wrong, let me experience what is fair from my enemy. Put it right." Jesus doesn't go into it any deeper. We don't know what the issue was. What does she mean by justice? What does she want?

People mean all kinds of things when they use that word. Retribution. Getting even. Equal application of the law. A lot of times they mean, "I want it to bend my way. I want things the way I want them. I want it fair, as I see it. Fair as I see fair." Fundamental world view questions come into play. What is fair? Who decides? Is there a God in heaven, or are we playing the game without a referee? If there is no God, "justice" is nothing but a word to describe me getting what I want. It's a power play. Nicky Gumbel says that's not justice, but "just us." If it's just us, we fight it out to get what we want. But justice, true justice, is "just as" God wants it. Justice isn't "just us" but "just as" God defines. That's a little clever, but it helps. What did the woman mean when she said, "give me justice"? True justice is God's justice whether you want it or not. When we don't get what we want, we squirm and wriggle and the unmet need, the unsatisfied hunger eats at our bones and drives us to desperation. What do you do with this need? I want justice.

The woman goes to the local magistrate, the local judge, who is famous for being horrible. Where else can she go? But the reason Jesus tells the story is not to share a fable about fairness. Did you see it? It's what? "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1) That's what we are learning about. Prayer. Seeking God. Even when it seems like God isn't answering. Never give up. Pray, wait, and trust. God's justice, the world just as God intends, is on the way and it will surely come. Pray and never give up. She kept at it, didn't she? She kept coming. "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think...'" (Luke 18:4) She didn't give up. She kept pressing, kept praying. Jesus likes that. The road to just as God wants has been laid down and paved. Jesus is leading us down that road. But along the way are some hard turns, difficult hills and valleys, and none of us knows how long the road goes. Keep on, Jesus says. Keep on.

Finally, the unjust judge does what is just. God can use anyone. God can make a straight lick with a crooked stick. With God, even what was meant for evil can turn for good. The reason the judge changes his mind is so she won't come and give him a black eye! Our English translations are sanitized. "Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!" (Luke 18:5) He's not afraid of being beat up. He's afraid of looking bad. "What happened to your eye? Roman soldier?" "No, it was Betty Lou. She got fed up and belted me." Don't get to that point. It won't get to that point with God, says Jesus. Who is God? Don't you know? "And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. 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?'" (Luke 18:6-7) God will bring justice. It is on the way. The order is in. We

are just waiting for it to arrive. "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?" (Luke 18:8) Quickly is a relative term. We wait. Justice is not here yet, is it? We wait, longing for God to put things right. It will come.

But, and here's the point, when it comes, what will Jesus find us doing? What are you doing with your unfulfilled thirst for justice? What happens when you see injustice continue, when evil seems to win, when death seems to make a claim? Jesus told a story so that we would keep praying and never give up. "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) Or will he find that we have given up, that we have lost our faith, that we said at some point, "I don't think he's coming." Like the Israelites, we said, "I don't think he's coming down that mountain; let's do it ourselves; let's make our own gods; let's take it up into our own hands. Let's get revenge." Cowboy justice. What are we to do? Faith on the earth. Will Jesus find it? Faith that God is in charge. Faith that the Kingdom of God is coming. Faith that we can trust that God will act and set all things right in time.

What do you do with your thirst for justice? It can pitch us into all kinds of frustrated behaviors that only make things worse. Have you ever spilled oil on the side of your car? The more you wipe it the bigger the mess gets. I'll jump on social media. That will do it. I'll attack my friends and family with scorching language. I'm not pretending it is easy to discern what is right, but I do know we do a lot that is wrong, and we regret it. What do you do with that thirst for justice? We say, "God, destroy all the evildoers! Let everyone on the face of this earth get what they deserve!" Wait a minute. What does that mean for me?

What can we do? Jesus says keep praying. Here's a story about how to pray and never give up. It's about a woman seeking

justice. Keep praying. Keep waiting. Waiting is not nothing. Waiting takes energy and intentionality. God works in the waiting. Keep watching. When you see the Kingdom of God breaking through, jump in and help! Jump in and dig around it and nurture it and cultivate it. Make space for the Kingdom of God to sprout up in your life. And wait, watch and work. Yes, work. The more familiar you get with the vision of the world just as God intends, the coming Kingdom of God Jesus talks about, the more you will recognize when it is being violated. That's not right. That's not the Kingdom. This is different from saying, "That's not fair," or "That's not how I prefer it," or "That's not how I want it." This is saying, "That's not the Kingdom Jesus says is coming." You might not say that out loud, depending on the circumstance, but you can move with conviction with that vision in front of you. Resolve to live no lies, to traffic in truth. Resolve to share the good news of the Kingdom that is on the way and what Jesus has done to bring it. Resolve to work lovingly in those places of brokenness where the distance between what you see and what is coming is so painfully stark. And resolve to do all these things as a servant of the neighbor in front of you, with gentleness and respect.

What do you do with injustice? Turn to Jesus. "God, destroy all evil." How can we have a God who executes wrath on injustice but also forgives? "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:25-26) Jesus became the punishment against injustice, so you and I, who are unjust, could be justified to the Father, forgiven and redeemed. Turn to Jesus.