

Encouragement to Pray for the Coming of Jesus

We know what it is to long for something important to us, and face such lengthy delays that you give up hope. Many of us long for relief from the drought. Some people long for justice when they have suffered at the hands of others. Often we are powerless ourselves to bring about the change we long to see.

Today in Luke's gospel we meet a woman who longed for justice. A woman who was persistent in bringing her case. In the end, she achieved her deep desire. Strangely Jesus uses this parable to encourage us to pray and not to lose hope. Let's explore the parable today.

While some of Jesus' parables might need some explanation, this parable starts off with a clear statement of its purpose:

Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

We are introduced to the judge - he is described in vs. 2 as one who:
neither feared God nor cared about men.

The second character in the parable is a widow - she is particularly vulnerable and appears to have been taken advantage of by her adversary. She seeks justice. Her quest for justice is constantly thwarted with the judge dismissing the case. Yet she persists. In the end the judge reluctantly finds in her favour. She gets justice.

Jesus' point is that even a vulnerable widow can get an unjust judge to do the right thing, even against his own will. But what has this got to do with prayer?

Encouragement to Pray for the Coming of Jesus

Jesus has told the parable to give us encouragement to persist in prayer and not to become discouraged, so that we give up. In prayer we bring our concerns to God, the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth. Jesus tells us that God is nothing like the unjust judge of the parable. Look at vs. 6-7: *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.*

Of course God, who loves justice, will give justice to those who call out to him. You don't have to twist his arm, or try to persuade him to act against his will. God, who loves justice will not delay in answering. He will answer speedily.

Yet Jesus also recognises that we may face what appears to us to be significant delay before God answers. Look at vs. 7 - as Jesus asks: *Will he keep putting them off?* It sounds like there will be an apparent delay. Indeed, that is precisely the reason he told the parable: *to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

Our persistence in prayer is not to twist God's arm, but rather to express our real dependence on God to do what he has promised to do. Jesus says God will not delay - in vs. 8 Jesus says:

Encouragement to Pray for the Coming of Jesus

I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.

Without delay. God himself has a timing for accomplishing his plans. He will not delay. There won't be last minute hitches which mean God has to adopt plan B. The rest of vs. 8 reveals the key event when God will answer our prayers for justice as Jesus concludes his teaching asking:

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

The event that Jesus is referring to is his Second Coming. The return of Jesus as King to gather his people and to bring judgement on those opposed to him. Whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer we pray: **your Kingdom come**. That is exactly what will happen when Jesus returns. He will bring and establish God's Kingly rule. He will come as God's King, to gather his people to be with him for all eternity, and to bring judgement on those who reject Jesus as their King.

The return of Jesus seems to have been delayed. At least to our perception. In fact it has been so long since his death and resurrection that today many dismiss the mention of his return with a mocking laugh. In the same way the people of Noah's day dismissed the thought of God bringing a massive flood in judgement on their evil and violent generation. In 2 Peter 3:8 Peter writes about the apparent delay in Jesus return saying:

The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

The coming of Jesus as King, will bring judgement for those who oppose or ignore him. God is patient and giving people every opportunity to 'come to repentance' and recognise Jesus as their King, who died for them and was raised again.

Encouragement to Pray for the Coming of Jesus

This passage reminds us that there is still time for those who have not turned to Jesus as Lord and Saviour to do so. Do keep praying for your family and friends who still need to see Jesus as the King they can trust and the Saviour they need. If you realise that you do not see Jesus that way, then do stop and ask yourself, "What is stopping me from giving myself to Jesus as my King?" He calls on us to "Repent" - to turn away from whatever holds us back from him.

Through the passage Jesus reminds those who love and serve him that we should keep praying. What to pray? Well, we can pray for anything - nothing is too large that is outside his power to rule, and nothing is too small to bring to him. And we should especially pray for God's Kingdom to come with the return of the Lord Jesus. That will be a wonderful time. How wonderful to see our Saviour face to face. How fulfilling to be together with him, never to be separated again. Come, Lord Jesus, come!