

Sermon for the Season of Prayer, Oct 8 2023, Luke 18:1-8

Some friends of mine have goats. One of the Nanny goats had twins. For some reason the mother completely rejected one of the twins. You've seen this with cows and sheep.

When they found the baby goat it was curled up in a little ball shivering. It hadn't had that first drink of colostrum.

It was only one day old and it's world view was that nobody loves me, I'm hungry, I'm cold, I'm scared, I'm weak – I'm guessing he didn't even know he was going to die.

When they found him, he didn't try to get away, he didn't struggle, he just stared. **He had given up any hope in anything.**

This is what it means to lose heart – give up any hope I anything.

Jesus says to the praying people of this world don't "don't lose heart".

The baby goat by the way is a happy little orphan who now thinks he's a human.

For Jesus to say "that we should always pray and not lose heart" would suggest that when we do pray it's very likely that we could lose heart.

When things are bad it's so easy to lose heart.

In those times when we have lost our heart, when we have given up, it seems cold comfort for Jesus to simply say "don't lose heart".

They say if you demand a child to do something they simply cannot do it amounts to abuse.

Pray and do not loose heart grieving mother.

Pray and do not loose heart dying patient.

Pray and do not loose heart young couple scraping the rent money together.

Pray and do not loose heart when the fuel gauge says "E".

Loosing heart is a lonely place, **it can be a deadly place.**

I think we have all lost heart at some time – what do you think?

I wonder if this parable of Jesus helps – it's meant to.

Parables are tricky – because they often raise more questions than answers.

I was told there is no one way to explain a parable.

One thing for sure parables **show a point of difference** between God's ways and our ways.

Last week we had the parable of the labourers in the vineyard.

Everyone got one denarius for their work – whether it was one day of one hour. No one can run a business like that. And that’s the point of difference. The crazy economics of giving a full day’s wage for only a fraction of day’s work show us how different God’s ways are from ours.

Or the parable of the prodigal son.

I can’t imagine any earthly fathers welcoming the son, or daughter, who has wasted all their inheritance – which was once your wealth.

The point of difference is that our heavenly Father is radically different from our earthly Fathers.

How does today’s parable help us not to lose heart?

Rule number one it’s going to be different.

It’s a crazy court scene.

It says there is a judge who, has no respect for God, no respect for people, and no respect for the law – he’s the judge!

We have a widow, who’s been thrown out of court over and over but she keeps coming back.

She demands, ‘Grant me justice against my accuser’ – ‘give me a pardon and put my accuser in jail’.

Obviously, she didn’t like judges verdict and “keeps coming” back until she gets the verdict she wants?

She “keeps coming” back – nagging and nagging until the judge beaks.

The Judge finally says: “I have no respect for God, no respect for people, yet because this woman keeps nagging me, I’ll give her what she wants, so that she’ll go away – and leave me alone.’

So, if we keep nagging and nagging God, he’ll give us what we want?

Is this the point of the parable?

I have heard it said – keep persisting and God will answer your prayer.

As soon as we say that we are saying that nagging get’s results – put the best nagger on your prayer team, God responds to our efforts – it’s all so wrong isn’t it?

When we say that, we’re putting God on that same bench as the corrupt, greedy, Judge – a God who gives in to bribery and nagging.

This parable is a picture of what God is not – like most parables.

The Judge hates the widow – unlike God who’s heart is for the widows and the needy.

Jesus makes it very clear: we don’t have to nag God.

Like the good father who runs out to meet the prodigal son – Our heavenly Father runs out and hears our prayers before we even make them. He hears our prayers first time every time.

Hear the point of difference, ***how much more willing is God to hear the prayers of us, the children he loves, than the corrupt judge dealing with the woman he hates.***

If we see God in the same way as the corrupt judge, we will lose heart in prayer. Look to the cross, the fathers love for us knows no measure.

By this we know that anything we bring to him in prayer will be heard, will be noted, will be acted upon.

There are no unanswered prayers.

What about Jesus in the Garden?

Jesus prayed, sweating blood, that the cup of suffering might pass from him, he was talking about the cross – but not my will – your will be done Father.

Did he pray because he thought he could not endure the suffering?

Was he saying take it away from me because I might fail?

Remember he was human in every way as we are.

Jesus went to the cross. Was his prayer answered?

It says he got up from that prayer and set his face like a flint and focused on the cross – he never failed.

A prayer of worrying about his own ability was met with mighty power – probably not the answer he was expecting.

Jesus encourages us to pray in all circumstances – with hope.

We have a beautiful picture of what God our Father is not.

He is not corrupt, he isn't unjust, he doesn't hate people, he doesn't answer the prayers to shut us up.

He loves us and does not need to be nagged into action – **he loves us and asks us to call him into action.**

We only know what we know – very limited – he answers prayers in ways we will never know or understand.

We pray “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” do we really understand the implications of that prayer.

When we look at Jesus on the cross do we really see the answer to that petition, “Your will be done”.

So, pray without losing heart.

Our bishop is calling us to pray for unity in our church, I'm calling you to pray for our community.

I wonder if the bishop will get more people praying than me.

We have a MVLC prayer team praying every week - 2- 3 people on a good day – thank God for them.

I'm praying we have 2 or 3 groups of around 10.

If we don't pray for our church community and our local community – the Bishop won't even have a church to unite.

Please pray as I hope you all do.

But let's pray together in groups as a sign of strength and support.

Presently the MVLC prayer team – those 2 or 3 meet at Christ Church in front of the altar every Wednesday at 4.00pm – that time and location is completely flexible.

Come there, or see me, for another time and place.

Come and pray, don't lose heart, we won't be nagging God. We will appeal to his nature which is the exact opposite of the parable, he loves people, he listens to people, he answers their prayer before they even ask it.

He asks us to call him into action – that is what prayer is.

Luther said: “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”

Are we holding our breath – if so, how long can we do it?

I like Wesley, I think? He says prayer is “storming the throne of grace”.

Don't lose heart. Pray for our wider church, pray for our local church and what we do – or don't do. Pray for me and Paul as Paul and I pray for you. Amen

Lord lift us when we lose heart – introduce us to your throne of grace – help us see your love begging to be tapped for the poor and needy – remind us to praise you and to ask of you often. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.