

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, 2 saying, "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. 3 "And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 4 "And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Social justice is a term that we hear daily. Someone has I believe very well pointed out that the word justice needs no defining prepositions. Justice is justice. The word needs no modifiers.

Our world is completely pre-occupied with fairness. Someone got more than I did. It isn't fair. The world isn't fair. To me. I didn't get my fair share. Those guys got what I should have got. Everything is rigged so that they win and I lose. That group is oppressing me.

Our passage this morning is about justice. But it isn't class struggle and race struggle and gender struggle when God speaks of justice. What is biblical justice, and what is this passage telling us? I think this will be a fascinating study this morning.

Justice is the settling of accounts, the adjusting of accounts between two parties by a third party. That immediately poses another question. Adjusting of accounts by what parameters. What is the measure that says; This is right, this is wrong? What is the baseline?

The answer goes all the way back to creation. God who created the worlds is altogether righteous and holy. He is no respecter of persons. His judgements are righteous altogether. His judgements are perfect.

When Adam rebelled and sinned, suddenly everything was broke. The first man born murdered the second man born. What is the repayment for loss? Who decides? Justice and some means of enforcing judgments is necessary for a sinful and lost world.

We lie. We cheat. We steal. We take. And it all just magnifies from there. Anything and everything that sinful man can do to eliminate and get the advantage of what someone else has, all happens in a sinful world with no restraints.

In Genesis, we see God himself intervening. The world becomes so vile that God gives it a cleansing bath, the flood of Noah, and just takes out everyone except 8 people. Noah and his family.

In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, again, men become so out of control and vile that God himself intervened. He sent an angel to warn Lot to get away from that place, and fire and brimstone came out of heaven and burned it up. In the story of the tower of Babel, God intervened against the wickedness against Him by causing confusion in language.

When God chose a people to be His own, in which He would reveal truth to be written down for all time, He gave them Moses who wrote the first 5 books of the old testament. Now fallen man had a comprehensive record of what righteousness looks like and a definition of sin.

Moses was the original judge deciding in judgement for a whole nation. In Exodus 18 we have the story of Jethro, Moses father-in-law who comes to visit Moses and to see all that God had done for the children of Israel. And just a brief re-cap; Exodus 18:

13 And it came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as

judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 “When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and make known the statutes of God and His laws.”

17 And Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you are doing is not good. 18 “You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 “Now listen to me: I shall give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, 20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do. 21 “Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them, as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 22 “And let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 “If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace.”

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.

This is a turning point in the history of sin and righteousness and judgement. A law is written down. The people are taught what the law states. They are given judges to adjudicate disputes. 1000's 100's 50's 10's With obvious appeals to the next higher judge all the way up to Moses who is sort of like our supreme court.

Pinch yourselves. Here we are this morning with a system of government in place that was based upon the commandments God gave to Moses and the system of judgement and adjudication that goes all the way back to Ex. 18.

It's an easy path from us this morning, to England, to western civilization, and Europe after the reformation, to Rome, to Paul, to the disciples, to Jesus, to Israel, to Moses.

Our governments and the processes of judging between sinful people who lie and cheat and steal and murder is all based in the revelation of God given to Moses. In a sinful world, governments are necessary because without restraints, you have Portland and Seattle and the Capitol debacle. Chaos. Dysfunction. Every kind of evil under the sun.

And our world around us is well apprised of where our restraint and order is based. And they hate it. It's 2021 for goodness sakes. We're still running on a paternalistic system that came down to us via western civilization based in writings from some sky God?

Some sky God says we can't have sex? Some sky God says we have to be male and female? Some sky God says there are limitations to our personal autonomy? Some sky God set up some paternalistic system where men get to have the final say? Are you kidding me?? All of that has to be overturned!! We have to start over and get rid of all this old stuff from some book that came from some sky God that says we have to do stuff His way.

And Psalms 2 written over 3,000 years ago says;

- 1 Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples devise a vain thing?*
- 2 The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed:*
- 3 "Let us tear their fetters apart,
And cast away their cords from us!"*

Folks, those words are approximately 3065 years old but they could be yesterday's headlines. This world is at war with God. They understand that the fetters that bind against absolute personal autonomy and absolute

sinfulness are in place because of the Lord and His anointed. And they hate Him. This world hates God.

They not only hate God, but they hate anyone who loves God. *The enemy of my enemy is my friend.* We've all heard that. Well, guess what, the battle lines are being drawn, and it's the world and all of its people in agreement with each other over one thing. God has to GO, and any friend of God's is our enemy.

In 2 Thessalonians 2 Paul explains about how God restrains sin until an event happens and the restraints of God are removed and God sort of tells a sinful world, have at it. Go for broke. No more restraints. Sin it up. It's what you've wanted. Go for it.

5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

The Spirit of God working through His church is the salt in this world that restrains sin. That was true even before the church to an extent. The law of God given to Moses was a restraint that affected the whole world. God has always graciously given restraint to unbridled sin.

When God removes that restraint, which the whole world is rioting for Him to do, then sin just explodes in this world unchecked. The book of Revelation is a record written before it happens of what that time frame will be like.

The four horsemen of the apocalypse and the chapters that follow indicate two great kill-offs. Murder and pestilence will wipe out 1/4 of the world's population. And later we get a second number, 1/3 of all the people, dead. According to my math, 1/4 and then a 2nd 1/4 of the 3/4 that were left equals 1/2 of the population of the world. Astonishing numbers.

That's what unbridled, un-restrained sin brings. Half of the world's population

decimated by pestilence and famine and disease and war and murder. In a seven year period.

Think of the party when the restraint is removed. Absolute personal autonomy gone wild. No God. No rules. No people who loved God and His rules. All gone. PARTY!! But then quickly that party becomes a world out of control and billions, literally billions of people will die in that seven year time frame. Because God pulled all of His restraints and hell literally has it's day on this planet. Unbridled sin.

That's actually the backdrop for what Jesus says to His disciples in this little parable we're looking at this morning.

The context and the time frame is still the coming of the Lord Jesus and His kingdom on earth. That's what began this discussion back in Chapter 17 verse 20 when some pharisee's ask Him when the kingdom will come.

We've spent 2 weeks already talking about how Jesus answered that question, both to the pharisee's and also to His disciples. And this discussion, this parable, is about prayer during all time, but especially during that time frame immediately before He returns to set up His kingdom on earth.

All restraints are vanished. Sin is unbridled. The world is in chaos. Does God have a remnant, even during that timeframe, after the church is taken out? Yes.

In Revelation and many other places we are introduced to a one world ruler, the anti-christ is how we refer to this person in this time frame, and this single person has rule and control of the whole world. He has a prophet that can do miracles, and he is aligned with Satan. The anti-christ, the false prophet and the image are sort of an unholy trinity during the tribulation period.

But God is going to be calling out a remnant even during that time period of unbridled sin. In Revelation we see 144,000 missionaries from the 12 tribes of Israel who are going to evangelize the whole world. We also have the two

witnesses of Revelation 11. God will have His remnant even in the tribulation period.

The problem is Christians don't last long. Without the mark of the beast, you cannot buy, sell, or be a member of the one world rule. You're outside and when the antichrist catches up with those folks, the penalty is decapitation. It's all written down.

With that backdrop, since that's the context for what Jesus will teach about prayer, what He says becomes even more relevant. It's relevant to us now, in our time frame, but in the tribulation, it's magnified.

I Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

The context is the conversation about the return of Jesus and the events surrounding that time frame, but Luke tells us, this applies to all times. All epochs. In every time and in every place, but especially during the tribulation period, God's people should pray and not lose heart.

Theoretically, even before the tribulation time frame, this world that hated and crucified the Lord Jesus, also hates those who belong to Him. Paul says to Timothy, writing from prison, imprisoned for the name of Jesus, he says; *Indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

2Tim 3:12

That's just the normative thing for people who belong to God living in this world ruled by Satan. Persecution is normal. Expect it. We in America for 250 years have been the exception, not the rule. Normality according to Paul for ALL who desire to live godly lives in this world, is persecution.

There's a war going on. The world ruled by Satan against people who belong to God. And what do you do when you're a soldier in battle? You let your field commander know what you need to survive. Pray! Without ceasing, Paul says to the Thessalonians. All Christians at all times. Pray and don't lose

heart. We don't have to scratch our heads to interpret what Jesus is really saying here. Luke tells us right up front. *I Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,*

We're so far removed from this. Lolly-gagging through life. No problems, no pressure, retirement account floating in some computer, comfortable house, hot shower every night, comfortable bed, too much yummy food, as you can well see.

We couldn't be any farther removed from what Jesus says here to His disciples. E.T. phone home. This world is your enemy and you need to cry out to God at all times and not lose heart. OK, I'll see if I can set aside 5 minutes to speak with God, but honestly, there isn't much I need.

Shame on me. I should be on my face weeping for this community that is perishing around me. Scheduled for destruction. Fire is coming. And I'm silent. And my silence means they pretty much leave me alone too. No persecution. Although if I walked up and down my street warning people of the fire that's coming, persecution might find me.

Perhaps God's about to force the issue. Maybe the tidal wave for christians is just offshore about to make land fall. What happens if our new government decides that this book is full of hate speech and must be banned? What if we refuse to comply and all of a sudden our internet connections vanish and bills for large sums of money to pay penalties come instead. Just saying.

But even that would be a walk in the park compared to what other christians have had to face down through the centuries. And all of what preceeded us was done with God's restraints in effect in this world.

We could suffer a bit before the Lord calls us home. It would certainly have a purifying effect. All of a sudden it gets very costly to be a christian. Privileges and freedoms are taken away. Someone takes your stuff. Hey we do it to drug dealers, why not christians. Drug dealers are public enemy number 2. Christians and their book is no. 1.

All of that is pretty easy compared to anti-christ who hunts christians down and decapitates them. Before the Lord comes.

Listen to Jesus. He says we should pray and not lose heart.

I Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

And He gives them a parable about praying in time of need, persistently; *2 saying, "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. 3 "And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 4 "And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.'"*

This lady used to be a customer of ours at Sears. I know this lady. She's a pain in the neck. And she's persistent. I'd see her coming and all of a sudden I had to go mount and balance tires at the back of the store.

Jeff and Donna and Pam would see this lady come in the door and they'd look around. Where's Jim? Man, that guy's fast.

In Israel more than any place else, the judges were to be the cream of the crop. The best most godly elders among the people were to sit in the gate of the city and render wise judgements to the 10's and 50's and hundred's and thousand's. Remember what Jethro said to Moses. Not just anybody; *21 "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people **able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain;** and you shall place these over them, as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.*

Wise godly men who would never take a bribe. Bribes was a big deal in the Old Testament. No bribes. No gifts for folks in this position. You don't buy the judge off. Wise, godly, not a respecter of persons. Blind justice. And widows were a big deal too. Take care of the widows. Those that don't have a

strong man to go to the judge and make their case. Those who have no power.

God intentionally set Israel up so that the powerless would be cared for. Widows and orphans. God is pleased when we take care of the powerless among us. And He's angry when we trample the powerless.

So here we have a judge who is unrighteous. He has no fear of God and no respect for anyone. Exactly opposite of what a judge should be in Israel. And he has a widow who is being defrauded by someone. She probably owned some corner of some property that used to be hers and her husband's and now that she's alone, the neighbor has told her to buzz off. He's going to take her property and there's nothing she can do about it.

So she goes to the normal avenue of recourse. She asks this judge to adjudicate the matter and cause the persons defrauding her to cease and desist. And the judge is like . . . buzz off. I don't care about you or the guy that's robbing you. That's your tough luck. And I'm not moved by fear of God to do what I'm supposed to do. Beat it.

But she comes back the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and finally, this unrighteous judge says, this woman is driving me nuts and it's just going to be easier in the long run to give her what she's actually due. He isn't motivated by God and right and wrong. He's motivated by his own convenience. And he gives her the remedy to get rid of her.

Jesus loves these "how much more" scenarios. Your kid asks for a loaf and you don't give him a stone. You give him a loaf of bread. If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more . . .

It's the lesser to the greater argument. An unrighteous judge finally gives in and does what's right. How much more . . . God who alone is righteous altogether, and who loves His elect.

6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will

He delay long over them? 8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily.

The lesson is to cry out to God for justice due. Due who? Actually we really don't want to cry out for justice that is due us. I don't want what I really have coming. That isn't a good prayer for me.

Lord, give me what I deserve. Nope. I don't go there. In fact I find myself saying much too often, please don't give me what I deserve. Please be gracious to me and DON'T give me what I actually deserve.

What we pray for persistently is for Jesus to get what He deserves. Thy Kingdom Come. Lord, this world is raging in hatred against YOU. I'm just the guy in the wrong place at the wrong time getting the wrath that they really want to throw at you, but I'm the guy available.

And so we pray persistently, Thy kingdom come. Please bring your authority to reign on this earth, and your glory. Bring this world what it deserves and glorify yourself. Come Lord Jesus. That's our prayer. Over and over and over. Just like the widow, except our judge is righteous and He wants to come speedily and answer our prayer.

Let's look at several words. *6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now shall not God bring about **justice** . . .*

Justice? Who's been wronged? Who's been harmed? Well, since they can't get at God, they harm His people. The hatred is at Him, but His people are the recipients.

Listen to what Paul tells the Thessalonians. It's almost like a commentary on these words of Jesus. Paul explains;

4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous

*judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well **when** the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.*

God will bring about justice for every one of His saints who suffered here because they clung to His name. That word justice is ek-di-ké-sis and we can translate it justice, but it also gets translated as vengeance. Vindication. For every black eye the world has given to christians, Christ is going to avenge in full.

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay. Ro. 12:19 The world is striking out in hatred and vengeance at God and it's falling on His saints. But God promises here that justice will come. Vengeance and vindication will come.

When? **when** the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire

We aren't too big on eschatology these days. Most folk in the mega church scene couldn't tell you what that word even means. Future things. Why is it that Paul could spend 3 - 6 weeks planting a church in some place like Thessalonica before they ran him out of town, and those folks would have a full grasp of eschatological events.

They could tell you all about the coming of the Lord Jesus in fiery retribution against all those who tormented and hated His saints. They had a full eschatology. They longed for the day. That day! Retribution was coming. Repayment for those who hated them.

Next word to look at here; *“Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now shall not God bring about justice for His **elect**,*

Justice for who? His elect. An unpopular doctrine. Jesus refers to those who belong to Him, who are at odds with this world because they belong to God as chosen out ones. Chosen out ones. God chooses people and transfers them out of this world and into His ownership.

God is bringing vengeance and retribution for His chosen ones. His elect. It's actually a good word, like it or not. It's biblical. God chooses His own. We don't need to understand it. It's just there. He declares it. We are His chosen ones. Chosen before the foundation of the world. My name was written down in God's book before the worlds began.

*His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He **delay** long over them?*

This is subjective. Because when the pressure is on, the missionary's are in the kettle getting cooked, it sure seems to us like He's delaying long.

In Revelation 6:10 we meet some of these very saints that I believe the Lord Jesus has expressly in mind in the context of His coming to bring His kingdom.

10 And they cried out in a loud voice, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You avenge our blood and judge those who dwell upon the earth?” 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.

God works on a different time scale and with a different clock than we have. He says speedily and He means speedily but there's a caveat. If God worked too speedily and brings vengeance on our time scale, some of the elect would be left behind. We need to look at this word, **delay**.

*7 now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He **delay** long over them?*

makro-thoo-meh'-o Delay. God delays for a good reason. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

Same word. God is patient. God delays because He's waiting for the final person whom He has chosen to come to repentance. He's holding back the judgement, the vengeance due to this world that inflicts it's harm on God's elect, until the final chosen one comes to Him, and then the vengeance will come.

May seem painfully slow to you. But God is patient, waiting for that last one.

8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily.

Justice is coming. Vengeance is coming. Repayment for harm inflicted on His saints is coming. We long for that day. Even us who have had things pretty easy. I long for the day when all of the arrogant God haters are judged and Jesus is vindicated.

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

In the Olivet discourse, on the night of His betrayal as the disciples again ask Him about the kingdom and He gives them detailed instruction about the events surrounding His return He speaks of a time, when because of persecution, many who were nominal believers would grow cold.

The question, is a good one *when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"* because the cost is so high. The cost will be your life. Of that time He says;

Matt. 24:9 *"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you*

will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 “And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 “And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 “And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13 “But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

As the tribulation unfolds and the people of God are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. It will cost you your head to belong to Jesus. No questions asked, your head comes off when they catch up to you.

We met this group of tribulation saints in Revelation 6, saying how long Oh Lord, how long?? And we meet them again in Revelation 20. All this world can do is take your life. But that really isn't much compared to what these folks will have for eternity.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Jesus says, Will I find faith on the earth when I arrive? *when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”*

Isaiah answers the question for us, 750 years before Messiah came the first time, he prophecies about what Messiah will find when He comes the second time. If that doesn't give you goose bumps, nothing will. We'll close our thoughts this morning as Isaiah answers the question Jesus posed 750 years later, asking about a time still future, but we don't think very future;

Isaiah 13:

*9 Behold, the Day of the LORD is coming—
cruel, with fury and burning anger—*

*to make the earth a desolation
and to destroy the sinners within it.*

*10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations
will not give their light.
The rising sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light.*

*11 I will punish the world for its evil
and the wicked for their iniquity.
I will end the haughtiness of the arrogant
and lay low the pride of the ruthless.*

*12 I will make man scarcer than pure gold,
and mankind rarer than the gold of Ophir.*

*13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
and the earth will be shaken from its place
at the wrath of the LORD of Hosts
on the day of His burning anger.*

Did anybody say "pre-tribulation rapture"? Can I get an Amen for *that*?
What a bunch of chickens.

The 2 final verses in the entire Bible finish what Jesus taught His disciples
about prayer on this day so long ago perfectly for us this morning; Rev. 22

*20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.