



Movement One – A Difficult Situation

Luke 18:1-8 NLT “1 One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. 2 There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’”

6 Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?”

[TEACHER NOTE: Share a story about perseverance and never giving up. You can share a personal story from your life, your community/group, or try using the story below.]

Let me tell you about a very difficult situation. Nick Vujicic was born in 1982 in Melbourne, Australia. Nick was born without arms and legs. Initially, his mom refused to look at her baby after birth, and his mom and dad left the hospital. They returned, raising Nick to “look on the bright side of life,” according to Nick.

His early years as a child and teenager were difficult and fraught with bullying. He even considered taking his own life due to the strain and isolation he experienced. He had very supportive parents but was faced with a very difficult circumstance of how to have purpose in a world in which he did not function very well. Now, he’s a Christian motivational speaker who shares with students all over the world.

Here's a YouTube video to hear from Nick Vujicic directly:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN_zSoBldRw

Movement Two – Jesus, the Storyteller

Let's turn to Luke 18 together. As we look into our biblical text today, we see two people. The first is a judge, and the second is a widow. The judge didn't fear God or care about others, but the widow served God and cared about justice. The judge was stubborn and selfish, and the widow was persistent and righteous.

Jesus was a storyteller, but I don't mean that he lied or stretched the truth. I mean that Jesus often taught through stories and illustration. Jesus told stories for a reason. Jesus chose his characters and his examples on purpose, and that's certainly the case here as well. These two characters have a similar defining characteristic. They are two sides of the same coin in some sense. They both are determined and persistent.

On the one hand, we have a judge, possibly something like a mayor for us today. This man ruled both without care for the things of the Spirit and without a concern for others. This judge had all the power in the city, but he used his power for his own good and without concern for God or others. He was persistent in his selfishness and his isolation, and we're told the judge was very unjust.

On the other hand, we have the widow. Her husband had died, and she was more than likely an older woman without power, property, or rights in this period and time. Jesus did not tell us what her case was or why she came before the judge for justice other than to note that the widow made a direct request for vengeance against an adversary. The widow stood alone, and not even her kids (if she had any) showed up to defend or plead her case. She was determined to be treated fairly. She was persistent in her pursuit of justice.

These two are opposites of each other. Both were determined but in different ways. The widow so continually approached the judge requesting justice that the judge was "driven crazy" by the widow's persistence, which caused the judge to finally act with justice on her behalf. In the Greek, this is an interesting turn of a phrase; literally her words were beating the judge under the eye like being hit by a boxer. We may would say the widow was 'wearing him out' or 'beating him black and blue.'

Once the judge was worn out or driven crazy by the widow, the judge relented and granted justice for her. Jesus was clear in his explanation in verses 6-7 saying that the judge was not justified even in finally giving a just decision. Jesus made it clear that the judge's stubbornness and selfishness condemned him.

Absent in this parable, which is not the case in most of Jesus' parables, is the presence and characterization of God. Typically, God is represented by one of the persons in the parable. God was not in this parable of the Righteous Widow and the Unjust Judge. In fact, as we shall see, it is the assumed absence of God that Jesus addressed directly.

I believe there is a hidden set of questions that Jesus answered with this parable.

- Why is no one coming to defend this widow?
- Where is God in God's righteous rule?
- How can the Kingdom of God be present in an unjust world?

Jesus answered some of these questions directly as He said that God would bring justice to His people in the end, bringing right treatment to those who are found faithfully following Him (vv. 7-8). God's judgement is not like the stubborn or selfish judge. God rules with righteousness and will one day set things right in perfect justice.

Movement Three – Story with a Purpose

Let's take just a step back to consider where this story of the persistent widow shows up in Luke's account of Jesus' life, teaching, and ministry. Luke 18 is towards the end of Jesus' public ministry with His disciples. In Luke's Gospel, these final stories before Jesus went to Jerusalem serve as reminders to the disciples about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

If we look just one chapter previous, to Luke 17, Jesus left a clue as to how the parable in Luke 18 functioned for the disciples. Jesus told His disciples about the importance of being found faithfully attending to the work of the Kingdom of God instead of looking for signs for when the Kingdom of God would be close at hand. Jesus called to memory the people who scoffed at Noah through the years it took to build the Ark only to beg for entry once the flood waters arose. Jesus also called to mind Lot's wife who turned back instead of continuing with purpose of being rescued. You can read for

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