



Special Music: "In Jesus Name"

Katy Nichole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxB7y9KFWSs>

Luke 18:1-8

- 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.**
- 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.**
- 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'**

- 4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think,
- 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’ ”
- 6 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. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

WHAT PRICE THE JUSTICE

What price the justice
For innocent lives
What are we willing
To sacrifice
For our children
to see the light
Of another day?
We argue 'til
We're blue faced
As our offspring taste
Too soon
The sleep of death
For our freedom.
Have we no shame
As we allow
Our sons and daughters
To be slaughtered,
Shielding our precious freedoms.
These are not soldiers
Gathered in war,
Protecting our shores
From vermin abroad.
No.
This cancer eats from within
And we seem powerless
To rein it in,

To remove its malignancy
With any consistency
As it manifests itself -
Adolescent blood,
Red as the rivers
Of Normandy and Gettysburg.
We are drowning
In the lifeblood
Flooding from the arteries
Of our progeny.
And yet we stand
Stalwart and unmoving
Proving
We are a stiff-necked people,
Unwilling to seek compromise
Seeking only to analyze
Even as we bury
Our future.
We must not surrender,
Tired though we be.
United we turn
To a higher Judge
Who authored our existence
And through our persistence
Will hear our prayer
And provide a better answer
If we will only listen.

Nineteen children and two adults, dead. An 18-year-old boy, Salvador Ramos, who had just shot his 66-year-old grandmother, turned his attentions to Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX, to continue his rampage which ended with his own death. Although Ramos had a troubled home life and was bullied at school, he had no criminal record or gang affiliations. He was due to graduate from Uvalde High school in just two weeks. Ramos had recently legally purchased two semi-automatic rifles, one of which he used in the assault, the other was found in his abandoned truck. He was also carrying a handgun. He entered the school unchallenged, and the police were slow in responding and entering the building. The carnage rained down upon the innocents was the second largest mass shooting in the United States.

Not only was there a tremendous loss of life, but the trauma caused to the survivors will live with them the rest of their lives. It brings little comfort to anyone involved that our government refuses to even discuss the problem, for whatever reason. Is life so cheap these days that we can't even enter into a discussion about the issue because of its political implications?

How long must we sacrifice the lives of our children on the altar of political awareness? Are the lives of our children not worth more than that? I know it sounds harsh, but while we bicker and avoid meeting the issue head on, our children are paying the price with their lives. While politicians try to make the matter about stricter gun laws or lack of proper mental health care, people bent on creating mayhem and committing murder are still able to walk into our schools with weapons and slaughter our children. The issue becomes a brick in political

platforms, as politicians push their personal agendas and problem itself is ignored. Again. Until it happens. Again. Like the cravings of a monster whose hunger is never satisfied.

Committees will be formed. Lunches will be had. Fundraising will occur. Promises will be made. Deals will be brokered. But no one ever seems to want to own the problem of looking for a fix for these all too often occurring incidents. In the end, our children are dying to the hot air of endless chatter pretending to be debate. When change does not occur, fingers will be pointed, voices will be raised, excuses will be given in the hopes that a different issue will surface to take the American people's minds off the problem.

For those who try to blame one or the other political party, I will iterate: Placing blame does not solve the problem and will cause us to hide the reality of the problem from our eyes. The problem is that children are bleeding and dying in our schools. The problem is that there is no church, community center, school, or building where people gather that is safe from the senseless act of mass murder where the victims seldom know the perpetrator.

I hear the voices of futility as people scream to keep the issue in the public eye and not let it fade away again. They are right to do so. We should be outraged that nothing has been done to address this travesty. Some fixes have been put in place here and there (metal detectors, security guards, even teachers with weapons), but no large-scale solution has been implemented as local school boards are left to address the issue on their own. No one believes that it will happen again... until it does.

So, preacher, this is an important topic, and we should be talking about it, but what does it have to do with the “Parable of the Persistent Widow?” For the last week we have heard ever newer versions of the carnage in Uvalde, each with more information and details. Rehashing it doesn’t seem to bring any relief or solace. Besides that, no one dies in the “Parable of the Persistent Widow,” so how is it even relevant? Please allow me a little latitude here and I will show how this story relates to our current predicament.

This is one of the few parables where Jesus actually tells us what the parable is about before relating the story:

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

Jesus is very clear concerning what the story is about. “Always pray and never give up.” So, why bother with a parable? The Bible is full of stories about God telling people not to give up.

- 1) There are the angels talking with Abraham telling him that he will be the father of nations even though his wife Sarah appears to be barren.
- 2) We have Noah on a hand-crafted boat floating on an seemingly endless ocean and God telling him not to give up because they will find land.
- 3) We have Moses in the desert encouraging the children of Israel to keep going as the promised land is almost within their grasp.

- 4) We talked about Elijah being in the desert under the broom tree and God sending him an angel to tell him to get up and keep moving because his work was not done.
- 5) God tells David to keep moving and avoiding Saul because there will be a day when David will become king.
- 6) God encourages Nehemiah to continue rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem even as he is mocked and threatened.

And so many more incidents than I can recount in this sermon. When Jesus tells his disciples **“should always pray and not give up,”** there is a great deal of Biblical history that validates what he is saying. But just to make his point abundantly clear, he tells the **“Parable of the Persistent Widow”** to ensure they understand.

Jesus sets the stage by saying:

“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.’

In other words, we have a judge for the people that isn't really into the whole religious thing. And he really doesn't much care for the people who live in the town either. This particular judge is not really interested in justice or solving problems. As a matter of fact, he is pretty self-centered, believing himself to be important because of his position, somewhat untouchable.

And then we have the widow. We don't know what someone has done to the widow but there is no question that has been treated unjustly. The issue is that the judge doesn't want to be bothered with doing the right thing, the very thing that his position requires of him. The judge didn't even acknowledge the widow. He just wants her to go away. But the widow is tenacious and not about to let her problem be ignored. To her, even widows deserve justice.

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!’ ”

The judge keeps putting her off and she keeps coming after him. She simply will not let it go. Eventually it gets to the point that the judge begins to worry that widow might do him physical harm if he continues to ignore her. The judge knows that he hasn't been doing the right thing. He knows that the widow deserves justice. But he simply doesn't care. He has more important matters to deal with. After all, he's an important guy, being a judge and all. It isn't until he feels threatened that he decides to act. He does not act to bring justice to the widow, but to protect himself. He is just trying to keep himself from getting hurt.

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says.”

Jesus wants us to pay attention to what the unjust judge has just said. By saying this, he is telling us that the judge is not interested in justice. Even though the judge does not fear retribution from God, he does fear retribution from the widow. How strange it is that a judge is unjust in a society built on the tenets

of Jewish Law? He has no fear of the Creator of the universe, but he does fear the wrath of a husbandless woman.

I want us to step into that for a minute. Aren't many of our elected officials much like this judge? They don't seem to fear the Creator of the universe, but they do fear what will happen at the polls. The power of the American voters frightens them. Especially when those people speak with one voice. When those people put their foot down and say, "Enough is enough!" When those voters refuse to let an issue die that is important to them. When the people refuse to get sidetracked and dissuaded. When the voters refuse to permit their priorities to be changed. Those politicians may not fear God Almighty, even when they pay God lip service, but the voice of the people scares them. Just imagine what the people speaking with the voice of God can accomplish.

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?

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

God cares about his children. He will not let them be forgotten and abused. When we weep, God weeps. But we need to be tenacious in our prayers and our tears through our weeping. How can we expect God to care when we allow ourselves to be distracted by the rhetoric, the smoke and mirrors of politics?

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

What an interesting thing for Jesus to say. He ends his story with a question. You can almost hear the pain in his voice. "When I return, will there be any believers left? Will the voice of God have been silenced among humankind?"

Will there be no one left to praise the name of the Creator of all that is. What kind a world will I return to?" Jesus would never have brought this up if he didn't think this was a possibility. Truly, will we stay silent in this madness and not speak into this darkness with the voice of God? If Jesus were to return today, would he find us working to save and lift God's children? Would He find us listening to the voice of God? Or playing mind games and semantics with politicians?

I don't have any magic overnight solutions for this problem, but I do know two things with absolute certainty.

- 1) We need to be praying, not just for the families that have lost loved ones, but also for those who will lose loved ones in the future if we don't work together to fix this. Those prayers also need to include the Salvador Ramus' of this world who are struggling and failing to find light in a world that rejects them.**
- 2) God is a just God and listens to those who call upon Him. We get angry after the fact knowing that we have failed to do our part in protecting our children, while also blaming God for allowing it. We fail in our responsibilities to do the right thing, and then get mad at God for our failures. We need to be in constant prayer for a Godly solution so that no more precious blood is spilled.**

We, as a people, need to stand up, admitting before God that we have failed our children. That we have failed our teachers. That we have failed the

disenfranchised Salvador Ramos' of this world. That we have in our frustration accepted a status quo that is not acceptable to God. The fact that this incident happened in Uvalde should be a wake-up call for us. It can happen anywhere.

So, this week, let us kneel before our maker together and pray for our brethren in Uvalde. Let us weep with them as Jesus weeps with them. Let us pray for our schools, our nation, our leaders, and for the neglected people in this world. Let us pray for a solution. Let us listen for God's response and take action so that no more blood is spilled. Let us humble ourselves before God, admit our sin of omission, and move forward together. Let us speak as one, with the voice of God and make the changes necessary our society to protect our children. We must never forget that we are the voice of God's justice in a world too quickly given to apathy and resignation. God calls each and every one of us to be that voice.

God bless you all!

AMEN

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