**The Parable of the Woke Widow**

Bible Study for St. Johns, Wheaton, 1/19/2020

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1. **Prevalent Disheartenment**
* A cause of disheartenment among Christians
* Anger at injustice: evil done to them and others
* Apparent triumph of the devil
* Result of disheartenment and spiritual tiredness
* Irregular prayer for ourselves and others
* Sleepy prayerlessness
* The new fashionable class of ‘woke’ people
* People awake to perceived exploitation, oppression and social injustice
* Political and social activism
1. **The Parable in Luke 18:1-8**

1Then he (Jesus) told them (the disciples) a parable to show them that they must pray always and not lose heart. 2He said, “In a certain city there was a certain judge who neither feared God nor respected any one. 3And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Vindicate me against my adversary.’ 4For a long while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect anybody, 5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will vindicate her, so that she does not keep coming until the end and give me a black eye’”

 6Then the Lord (Jesus) said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7But will not God provide the vindication of his chosen people who keep crying out to him day and night, and delay long over them? I tell you that he will provide vindication for them speedily. 8Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will then find faith on the earth?”

1. **The Strange Character of this Parable**
* The shameless widow
* What injustice had she experienced?
* Who was her adversary, and what had he done to her?
* How does her persistence threaten to give the judge a black eye?
* How are we to be like her?
* The unjust judge
* Why is it said that he did not fear God or respect anybody?
* In what way was he unrighteous?
* Why did he relent?
* In what ways is God like this unjust judge?
* Jesus: puzzling remarks
* What has regular prayer to do with injustice?
* Why does he speak about faith rather than persistent prayer in 18:8?
1. **Explanation**
* Introduction: 18:1
* Note the emphatic sense of “must”
* The adverb “always” = regularly each morning and evening (v.7) rather than continuously
* Losing heart = growing tired
* Parable: 18:2-5
* Contrast of judge and widow: opposite ends of social order in a city
* Indifference of judge to basic criteria for administration of justice in Israel: divine law and public opinion
* Status of widow as most disadvantaged citizen who was under God’s protection (Deut 10:18; 14:21; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13)
* Demand for public vindication of her innocence: vindicate = give me justice
* Adversary = her opponent in a court of law who has treated her unjustly
* The devil as our adversary who accuses and condemns us before God (1 Pet 5:8; cf. Rev 12:10)
* Double sense of “until the end” in v.5: end of her life or end of the world
* Reasons for the decision of the judge: widow’s persistent demand for justice and his concern for his reputation from defeat by this woman
* Explanation by the Lord: 18:6-8
* Two ways of taking v.7: will he delay long over them, or will he be longsuffering with them?
* Function of rhetorical questions in v. 7&8: seeing the apparent delay of justice and vindication from God’s point of view
* The description of this official by Jesus as an unrighteous judge in contrast to God as the righteous Judge
* His call to attend to the word of the judge with its promise of vindication
* His assurance of speedy vindication now and at his coming in judgment
* Reason for the apparent delay: concern for faith on earth
1. **Application**
* Basic concern of Jesus: not divine justice but faith in God
* Connection between faith and prayer: exercise of faith in God’s justice and mercy by woke believers
* Prayer as spiritual wakefulness: see Matt 26:40-41
* Call for regular prayer: crying out to God in trouble like the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 2:23-25)
* Call for awakened concern for God’s justice in a society that is obsessed with social justice and our duty to pray for justice for ourselves and others
* The devil as our true spiritual adversary rather than personal and political ‘enemies’
* Promise of vindication against the devil with the affirmation of our innocence now in the divine service, like the tax collector in the following parable in Luke 18:9-14, and at the Last Judgment
* Devotional use of Lord’s Prayer with its seventh petition for deliverance from the evil one and the psalms of lament with their pleas for God’s judgment of his enemies (Ps 7:8a; 82:8) and the vindication of his people (Ps 7:8b; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 54:1)