

GOSPEL MESSAGE

October 19, 2025

LECTIONARY 29

Prayerful Perseverance

How should we pray? What should we pray for? We might sometimes treat prayer like putting coins in a divine vending machine, and some rely on the story of the persistent widow to claim that God will indeed shower us with blessing if only we pray “enough.” Yet, despite fervent prayer, we don’t always get that job, the illness comes anyway, the doubts continue. If we take literally the claims of those who promise prosperity for God’s people, the condition of humanity suggests none of us has been persistent enough. Because, after all, life happens to all of us.

In Jesus’ parable, the woman is not praying strictly for herself; rather, she is praying for justice. A better word may be “vengeance.” The persistent widow is coming to the judge and crying out, “Avenge me! Avenge me against my adversaries!” Her focus is laser-sharp, and she does not give in to distractions. She waits with fervent hope that there will come a day when the judge brings balance, restores what has been lost, and humbles those who have done wrong. The widow is asking for something much larger than her daily needs. She is pleading on behalf of the world.

Like Jacob in Genesis 32, sometimes we wrestle with God, pleading for our own blessing. Our striving can feel overwhelming or even pointless. But Jesus invites us to focus and be persistent, to cry out to him day and night.

Though our prayers are not always answered in the way we want or expect, we can count on God to keep promises. We can count on a day when we are all restored. We can count on a time when God will avenge all of us against the crushing force of death. We can hang our hope on the fact that God receives our persistence with love, patience, and grace.

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