

Date: October 19, 2025 (Pentecost 19)

1. Texts: Jeremiah 31:27-34; Ps. 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8.
2. Subject: trust in God.
3. Topic: trust as essential to faith in the absence of proof.
4. Aim: encourage.
5. Proposition: "Trust is required, even when proof is absent."

TRUST NOT PROOF

A parable is a story told by Jesus to teach us a lesson about God and his people using everyday situations, sometimes with a surprise. If you can retain only one thing from this sermon, please let it be this definition. A parable is a story told by Jesus to teach us a lesson about God and his people using everyday situations, sometimes with a surprise.

The Parable of the Unjust Judge is a work of fiction, like all Jesus' parables. It is a story.

It is a believable story because, in Jesus' day as in ours, judges had power and influence. Widows had neither. It is a believable story because it uses an everyday occurrence.

In this story there is no real surprise. The widow kept complaining until the judge could take no more. Because he didn't want to be bothered, the judge gave in. No surprise.

So, what do we learn about God and his people? That's the interesting part.

Remember, the judge is **NOT** like God. This is a parable of opposites. The judge only responded to the woman because she bothered him. God responds because he loves us.

The widow could not trust that the judge would hear her case. We can trust that God always hears our cries.

Pestering the judge with repeated requests wore down his resistance. We don't need to pester God—ever.

Ultimately, the Parable of the Unjust Judge is about our trust in God. We have no proof that God exists. We have no proof that he hears our prayers. We have no proof that he answers prayer. This parable of opposites teaches us the centrality of trust to faith.

Faith is a relationship. In our case, the relationship is between God as he is revealed in Jesus through the Holy Spirit and us. This relationship is marked by mutual love, trust, self-sacrifice and surrender.

God loves us. He trusted his Son into human care—we call that the Incarnation. That act required self-sacrifice, as God gave up part of his own existence so that the Christ could enter time, space and human experience. God surrendered himself to humankind, even though that led to his own death on a cross. Love, trust, self-sacrifice and surrender.

As followers of Jesus, we love God with all that we are and all that we will become. We trust God to be God in and for us. We sacrifice our hopes and understandings for his. We surrender our futures for ones of his own making. Love, trust, self-sacrifice and surrender.

Today's parable of opposites pushes us towards a deeper reflection on the role of trust in our faith. We'll have to struggle with what trust in God means—especially in the absence of proof.

We certainly can't trust that God will give in to all our demands. He clearly does not answer every prayer with a resounding "YES!" Sometimes—maybe often—we don't even have proof that God exists, let alone that he answers prayer. The widow in the story could see the unjust judge. She could interact with him. Heck, she could pester him. We can't do any of that with God.

To trust someone is to rely on them, no matter what others might say. To trust someone is to believe that the other person has your best interests at heart and then to act on that belief. Trust puts your life in the hands of someone else, secure in the reality of their love and concern for you.

We trust the almighty God. We trust the God who created all the possible universes. We trust God who sacrificed himself for our sakes. We trust God.

That means that we choose to believe that God loves us. We choose to act as if God is a living, vital force in our lives. We decide that God is real, even without proof, and live according to that decision. Our faith and trust in God are central to our existence because we choose to make them so.

But trust and the resulting faith are nothing if they are not lived out in the real world through our actions. Trust and faith must be seen to be real. We choose. We behave. We speak. We act. Such are the demonstrations of the reality of our trust and thus of our faith. We choose to create our world in the image of God. His trust and faith in us are reflected in our trust and faith in him.

These are the realities behind the Parable of the Unjust Judge. That's why Jesus could say,

Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?¹

Faith is a relationship with God as he has revealed himself through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. That faith is marked by love, trust, self-sacrifice and surrender. The Parable of the Unjust Judge challenges us to choose to trust God. That enormous truth lies at the root of this story, told by Jesus, to teach us a lesson about God and ourselves.

AMEN.

¹ Luke 18:6-8.