

**New St. James Presbyterian Church
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, October 19, 2025
Guest Preacher: Margaret McGugan
“Will Christ find faith on earth?” Luke 18:8**

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

Jesus asks his disciples: ‘When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’

I must confess, I am one of those people who reads a magazine from the back cover to the front. I don’t remember when I started doing this, or why.

It seems the editors put the good reading material in the center of the magazine and usually the answer to any crossword puzzles at the back.

So, it should be no surprise that I would start this morning’s message with Jesus asking a question about faith in verse eight and not starting with prayer in verse one.

Jesus’ question about faith or maybe what kind of faith when he returns on earth had my attention.

I believe this question includes us since Jesus has not yet returned.

When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

Wow, what a question especially when we realize that this question was first asked over 2000 years ago by Jesus himself in the company of his disciples.

Was Jesus worried about the faith of the disciples knowing what opposition lay ahead in their lives?

Or was he worried about keeping future generations faithful when all they have are the stories and parables as printed in their Bibles.

No one knows when Jesus will return but when he does, what will faith look like?

Who will be his believers? Who will be his faithful people?

But when Jesus is questioning about faith, what exactly is he referring to.

What is faith in Jesus’ mind?

For Jesus it was a complete and unwavering trust in God’s plan.

Today, one definition of faith is an assurance of what we hope for and the conviction of what we do not see.

John Calvin wrote that true faith is not passive. Instead, it demonstrates three actions—love, obedience and service.

So, if we take John Calvin's definition that faith is not passive than it must be active or an action of doing love, doing obedience, doing service in God's name.

The Apostle Paul tells us to proclaim the message; 'to be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable. Convince, rebuke and encourage with utmost patience, for the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desire and will turn away from listening to the truth.'

Which now leads us to the middle of the magazine, where the story of a widow and an unjust judge develops.

It is a typical day in court; the judge prepares for each case brought before him and hands out his verdict.

In the court room proceedings, a widow demands to be heard. 'Grant me justice against my opponent' she cries out.

Jesus tells us that this judge neither fears God nor has respect for people.

So, when a widow demands to be given justice against her opponent, the judge scratches his itching ear and dismisses her. He has no time to listen to a woman who has no money, no status and frankly he is not interested in hearing from this meagre person. Let her yell it out on the streets but not in his courtroom.

But this widow, whom we know nothing about, not even her name, is resilient. She is persistent; she refuses to quit when the world tells her to walk away. "Grant me" she insists. Grant me justice."

We are not told who her opponent is or what has happened to cause this woman to want her case heard by a judge.

But in her reluctance, she badgers the judge day in and day out until he gives ear to her complaint.

This appears to be a stand off between persistence and resistance.

Both people are standing for what they believe whether it is for the good or not, neither will give up until one or the other gives in.

The judge is finally worn out from her persistence, and wants her to stop bothering him, so he grants the widow justice.

We are not told what justice, what rightfulness the widow received except that she heard something that answered her grievance, and she left the courthouse.

This widow set her hope in God for justice and continued to request it until her bowed knees ached.

She held onto God's promises even when everything around her felt unstable.

Jesus is once again bringing to light a vulnerable woman with raw, honest faith to our attention.

Jesus is reminding us to stand our ground and to hold onto hope and the conviction of what we do not see, because God is our hope and God is just when we don't think there is hope or justice in our lives, or in our world.

As Christians, we are called to seek justice for all people, especially those who are oppressed or marginalized. We are to love as Jesus loved.

Saint Augustine once said, "Justice is love ruling well."

To be just is to act in love, ensuring that everyone receives what they are due—whether it's protection, care, or accountability.

But there is still more to this parable that I jumped over to reach verse eight and Jesus' question.

Jesus told his disciples right from the very first verse that they need to pray always and to never lose heart.

Perhaps one of the things Jesus is hoping to find among his faithful when he returns, is what God required of Micah.

'O human, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.'

What will Jesus find? What kind of faith will be present when he returns?

As mentioned earlier, true faith is not passive. It reveals actions of love, of obedience and of service.

Even today some of us have an opponent that we want justice from. The opponent of illness, loneliness, poverty, uncertainty in our world.

Even today, we cry out, 'Grant me justice against my opponent' whatever that opponent may be in your life.

Sometimes, we don't think God is listening to our prayers.

Sometimes, we don't think justice will be granted to us.

Sometimes we cry out, pounding our fists for justice...and we hear nothing from God.

Perhaps, when we cry out in anguish, we want something from God when we should ask what it is we need from God.

A few years ago, when my husband Rob and I first went to Florida for a vacation, we met a couple from Long Island, New York who were seeking refuge from their traumatic lives.

We had just parked our car and were heading to our room when we saw a woman trying to push her 6 foot 3 husband in a wheelchair up ramps attached to the bumper of the van. Rob asked if he could help and we became instant friends. I will call them Susan and Tom for the purpose of relaying their story.

Tom was a veteran having served time in the US Navy and Susan was a bank teller in downtown New York.

Tom was an avid surfer and strong swimmer. He loved life. But then in the prime of his life, he was diagnosed with Alpha 1 Anti -Trypsin Deficiency for which there was no cure. A debilitating lung disease that fills the lungs with fluid, and Susan was taking Tom to a clinic to have the fluid pumped out of his lungs when we first met. His oxygen levels were unsteady, and he was on oxygen to sustain his breathing. For 29 years he struggled with this deficiency.

Susan was like the widow in the parable, 'Why', she kept asking. He was the picture of health.' Why, He is a good husband and father."

Tom was a great guy. He was funny and he loved his family.

Tom had a t-shirt that read, "you can't scare me, I have a daughter." If you told him, you had a bully in your life, he would say, 'I know a guy' who would take care of the bully.

Typical New Yorker.

Every night while we were in Florida, Susan and I would sit out by the pool, and I heard her cry out for justice.

I witnessed her tears of sorrow and her fists pounded on God's door.

I had no answer that would relieve Susan of her pain. All I could do was listen and assure her of God's love as any friend would do.

She wanted to know why Tom was stricken with this horrible illness that would take his life someday.

Susan was a devout Christian who refused to quit when the world told her to walk away. At times, she felt powerless. She was tired.

And I know her knees were aching from bowing down in prayer as she held onto God's promise of eternal love. Her faith was being shaken to the core, and she wanted to know why.

Tom died Thanksgiving weekend 2020 when the world was silent.

He was honoured by a ceremony overseen by the Navy. The American flag draped over his coffin was folded and presented to Susan.

She was crying tears of joy and tears of sorrow over the phone, and I felt justice had come to her, but it may not have been the justice she was seeking.

Isaiah tells us: "For God is good and his steadfast love endures forever."

This is what we have to hang onto. This is our lifeline during hardships.

God's goodness and God's love.

For neither of these promises made by God will leave us.

God's love and goodness endure forever in this world and the next.

Wherever you are in your life: whether you are a picture of health, a widow demanding justice or someone asking why-- always remember what Jesus first told us in this parable...pray always and do not lose heart because God will grant justice to his faithful ones."

I wonder, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

Amen.