



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

Today's Gospel

Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, "There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time, the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.'" The Lord said, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

LUKE 18:1-8

Reflection

Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught his disciples and followers by means of parables—brief narratives intended to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. For modern audiences, there is often a tendency to link each figure with a concrete person or character. Jesus' intention was more universal. In Christian traditions, many have viewed the judge as God, and the woman as a supplicant. This opens up an interpretation in which God is a guarded dispenser of justice or mercy, and must be constantly pursued. The woman, as one seeking a fair decision, is repeatedly denied her request, and must doggedly pursue God's dispensation. All this focus can surface, despite the opening statement: **Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.** The issue at hand is a faithful disposition to prayer, to recognize that all matters and circumstances are held in God's embrace. It is not simply a matter of offering multiple prayers to elicit a desired response. Prayer is relational, not transactional.

The more general intention of this parable is borne out in the following parables in Luke's 18th chapter. **The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax-Collector** clearly has little to do with religious leaders and publicans. The roles could easily be reversed. The matter at hand is that of personal arrogance in the presence of God versus humility of spirit, recognizing the merciful love that embraces all. Status has nothing to do with it. As Jesus notes: **"All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."**

In the parable of **Jesus and the Children**, he is not encouraging people to surrender adult rationality or discernment. Rather, he is exhorting his followers to approach their relationship to God with the innocence and humble joy of the very young. God's love is not negotiated. The Kingdom is received in a heart unencumbered by rationalization or self-validation.

In the parable of the **Rich and the Kingdom of God**, the measure of passage to the Kingdom has nothing to do with bank statements or property holdings. The soul willing to sacrifice everything for love of God has already paid the price for acceptance!

A brief perusal of the Lucan parables shows us the subtlety and profundity of Jesus' method of preaching and teaching. His intention is to draw his followers more deeply into the mystery of God's love and connection to all peoples. The parables serve as invitations to faith and discovery, not mandates to control belief and behavior.



Statue of Jesus
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

- What parables have had the most impact on your sense of God in your life?
 - Are there parables that have caused you confusion or doubt? Why?
 - Do the parables enhance your sense of how scripture can be used for teaching?
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