



CHRIST CHURCH

ORDER OF SERVICE

December 27, 2020

Next Week

January 23, 2021

CHRIST CHURCH | 8:30 AM

FIELDHOUSE | DOUG WILSON

CC DOWNTOWN | 9:30 AM

NUART THEATER | BEN MERKLE

CHRIST CHURCH | 10:30 AM

FIELDHOUSE | DOUG WILSON

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ORDER OF SERVICE

ANNOUNCEMENTS & MEDITATION

- CALL TO WORSHIP -

+ ADORATION

Minister: Bless the Lord who forgives our sins.

Congregation: His mercy endures forever.

+ SCRIPTURE

Psalm 18:1-3

Minister: Lift up your hearts!

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord!

+ PRAYER

+ HYMN

Joy to the World! The Lord is Come.....566

- CONFESSION -

Exhortation

PSALM

Lo! He Comes.....522

CONFESSION OF SIN

Congregation is invited to kneel if able.

Romans 3:10-11

+ ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Romans 5:15

Minister: Your sins are forgiven through Christ.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

+ CONFESSION OF FAITH: APOSTLES CREED

Minister: Christian, what do you believe?

Congregation: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

+ RESPONSIVE READING

Minister: Let us come and worship the triune God!

Congregation: This is good and right for us to do.

Minister: He dwells above, in the highest heaven,

Congregation: And in the heart that is humble and low.

Minister: Let His wonderful name be forever exalted.

Congregation: Amen

+ PSALM

Gloria in Excelsis.....706

- CONSECRATION -

+ SCRIPTURE READING

Micah 5:2-4; Luke 2:1-20

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

NEW MEMBERS
Tim Rice Family - CC 1st

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM
Collette Sumpter - CC 1st
Congregational Charge: **Little child, for you Jesus Christ came to this earth, struggled and suffered; for your sake He crossed Gethsemane and went through the darkness of Calvary; for your sake He cried: 'It is finished'; for your sake He died and for your sake He overcame death; indeed for your sake, little child, and you—still— know nothing of it. And thus the word of the apostle is confirmed: 'We love God, for He loved us first.'**
(Taken from an old French Reformed Baptism Rite)

HYMN
It Came upon the Midnight Clear.....593

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER
Opening: Psalm 108:5-6
Thanksgiving: 2 Corinthians 9:9-11
Petitions: Matthew 21:21-22

+ HYMN
While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.....569

SERMON
CC: The Errors Baked into Faithful Pray
(Doug Wilson)
CCD: 1 Peter 2:4-10 (Chase Fluhart)

PRAYER
Ending with *The Lord's Prayer*.....725

+ OFFERTORY
Prayer

What Child Is This.....580
- COMMUNION -

THE BREAD
Echoing Their Joyous Strains.....581a

THE WINE
Echoing Their Joyous Strains.....581b

- COMMISSIONING -

+ CLOSING DOXOLOGY
The congregation may raise hands
All glory be to God on high.....569

*Praise to God the Father sing,
Praise to God the Son, our King,
Praise to God the Spirit be
Ever and eternally.*

CHARGE & BEDICTION
Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. Jude 1:24-25

NEXT WEEK

CC/CCD: Doug Wilson, Ben Merkle
SCRIPTURE READING: Genesis 3:9-15; Galatians 4:1-7
MUSIC: 240, 158, 236-37, 182, 251, 411, 241, 581a-b,225

“MAY I COME TO THE LORD’S TABLE?”

The Lord’s Supper is observed every Lord’s Day at Christ Church. We warmly invite to the Lord’s table all those who are baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and His body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the wine with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. You also acknowledge to the elders of this congregation that you are in covenant with God, being active in a congregation which is covenantally bound to the triune God through Word and sacrament. If you have any doubt about your participation, please speak to the elders before or after the service.

CC: THE ERRORS BAKED INTO FAITHFUL PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

As many of you know, it is our custom to have a “state of the church” message around the beginning of each new year, and that message will be coming next week. But, if you like, you may consider this message to a preamble to that state of the church sermon. How so?

The year behind us, 2020, has been quite a year, and it may have occurred to some of you that when 20 turns 21, it might start drinking, and *then* what shall we do? Of course, we shall pray about it, but there is a particular kind of prayer that we need to understand in times like these.

THE TEXT

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1–8)

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

This parable goes by various names. For some, it is the parable of the unjust judge. For others, it is called the parable of the importunate widow, or perhaps the persistent widow. With this parable, Jesus gives us the meaning of it right at the front end. He told the parable to a particular purpose, which is that men ought to pray constantly and not to get discouraged (v. 1). In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God, and he did not have any regard for man (v. 2). We should start paying attention at this point because we have that kind of judge in our time, believe it or not. Now there was a widow in that same city who wanted to have her case heard against her adversary (v. 3). She wanted to have the judge grant the justice of her case. For a time, this godless judge just put her off, but after a bit he changed his mind. He acknowledged to himself that even though he did not fear God or regard man (v. 4), he was still able to determine that this widow was going to be a royal pain in the neck (v. 5). The only way he was going to get rid of her was through doing some justice, however little it suited him. And Jesus says that we should pay attention to the lesson of this unjust judge (v. 6). How is it possible that God will not grant justice to His own elect, those who cry to Him day and night, even though He puts them off for a time (v. 7)? This is a “how much more” argument. God will vindicate them *later*, and when it happens it will happen *suddenly* (v. 8). God loves the eucatastrophe. But at the same time, why might the Son of man not find faith on the earth when He comes? It would be because the lesson of this parable had not been learned, and people, in the position of that widow, quit coming.

THE NATURE OF PERSISTENCE

Now one of the things we need to do is look straight at this parable, contemplating what Jesus is actually calling us to do. He is actually calling us to be wrong in our prayers, and to be wrong most of the time.

Suppose you have a trouble, and coming out of this last year, who doesn't? And suppose this trouble weighs on you *heavily*, and it has come to the point where you are bringing it before the Lord daily. It could be a health problem, or a financial challenge, or a wayward child, or the caliber of the people running our civilization. It weighs on you, and so as required, you bring it to God. To illustrate, suppose you are praying for a significant amount of money, and it is *not* so that you might spend it on various fripperies. It is a real need. Let us say you bring it before the Lord daily, as this parable requires, and you do so for *years*.

This means that *every* day, you believe that *today* would be a wonderful time for this needed deliverance to appear. You wouldn't be praying about it if you didn't feel that way. But every new day that you pray about it, the repetition entails a recognition that your assessment of the situation *yesterday* was wrong. That *wasn't* the best day for the deliverance. Not only were you wrong, but it was an error that the Lord Jesus—by requiring your persistence in this kind of prayer—*required* you to make. So Jesus wants us to be obediently mistaken.

EMBODIED LIFE IN TIME

Perhaps some of you women who are mothers know what this is like. Those who just identify as women have no idea. But perhaps you have had this experience. You are six months along, and some well-meaning stranger asks you what it feels like to be past due. *You* feel like you are, and it is also apparently the case that you *look* like you are. In this scenario, you *know* that it is not time yet. But suppose that you were the first woman ever to give birth, and so nobody knew how long a pregnancy was supposed to go. *Now* pray about it. That is what delayed answer to prayer is like. The gestation times for answered prayer vary considerably.

But when the answer comes, it comes suddenly. It comes in a rush. Is this not what the Lord explicitly says? He will “avenge them *speedily*” (v. 8).

ON THE MOUNT OF THE LORD

God wants us to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). We are to live our lives walking in the will of God, but this is not the same thing as living off a pre-printed agenda. Once in a blue moon God directs His servants explicitly and in unmistakable ways. But most of the time, we are to simply trust Him. Our lives are a mist (Jas. 4:14). We are a wispy bit of fog off the river that you sometimes drive by, and in a moment it is gone.

We should have the humility befitting small wisps of fog, and so we should pray in the way we are instructed to pray. Not only will God answer us suddenly when He answers, but He loves to do it at the moment when we believe that all is lost. He waits until Abraham has the knife upraised over his son. On the mount of the Lord it will be provided (Gen. 22:14). God waited until the Israelites were close enough to the Red Sea to get their sandals wet in it before He told Moses to extend his rod. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord (Ex. 14:13). Jehoshaphat was told the same thing. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord (2 Chron. 20:17).

So we can be confident that there is one thing that the misbegotten year 2020 did *not* do, and that was to shorten the arm of Jehovah (Num. 11:23).

THE TEXT

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”

and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

(1 Peter 2:4-10)