

Bible Study
October 14, 2019

THE TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Exodus 17: 8-13

Luke 18: 1-8

2 Timothy 3: 14—4:2

1. Exodus 17: 8-13

- Amalekites are early inhabitants of southern Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula before the appearance of the Israelites. They have a reputation of being fierce warriors.
- The staff of Moses is the staff of God. It is a symbol of the power God gave to Moses to save the people. He used it against Pharaoh. He also used it to part the Red Sea.
- As long as the staff was raised, the Israelites were winning in the battle. When the staff was lowered, the battle turned against them. As Moses' arms became fatigued, he needed the help of Aaron and Hur to keep his arms raised. This prepares us for 18: 13-27 when Moses appoints assistant judges to help him settle disputes among the people. Moses needs help to govern the people. He cannot do it alone.
- There is also an image of persistent prayer in Moses' holding his arms up. Persistent prayer is hard to sustain. We need prayer partners who support us and encourage us.

2. Luke 18: 1-8

- Jesus has just taught his disciples that there will be a period of distress and persecution before the Kingdom of God is established. They will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man. The first verse clearly announces the lesson: it is necessary to pray always without becoming weary.
- The Parable of the Persistent Widow is similar to the parable of the Dishonest Steward. The main character is a corrupt and evil person. The judge admits that "he neither fears God nor respects any human being." The argument of the parable will be: if this corrupt judge does what is right for the widow, even if he does it for the wrong reasons, how much more will God do what is right for his people when they cry out to him.
- Widows and orphans were the most vulnerable members of society. In a male dominated world, a woman without a husband--- and even more so without an adult son--- had no voice and her rights were often ignored. The prophets of the OT often condemned those who trampled on the rights of widows and orphans. God himself was seen as the protector of widows and orphans. This widow seems to have no one to help her. So she take matters into her own hands and berates the judge publically each day.

- The judge is not concerned with doing right, but he fears that the widow will give him a black eye! That is the literal meaning of the word "strike". In the times of Jesus, public honor, i.e. saving face, was the most important concern. These daily interactions between the judge and the widow were in public with an audience. If the widow gave the judge a black eye, he would be shamed and his reputation ruined. He was not shamed by his failure to do what is just. He was shamed by a loss of pride.
- The moral of the parable is in verse 7: If this shameless judge can be shamed into doing the right thing---albeit for the wrong reason, how much more will God who is good answer the prayers of his people who cry out to him persistently. God will do justice for his oppressed people.
- There is also a social commentary in the parable. There is an implicit critique of the corruption of the legal system in which judges do not do their job and protect the rights of the widows and orphans. The parable is teaching that in an unjust world with much corruption and violation of rights, God is not deaf or absent---although he seems not to answer. Persistent prayer---an implicitly persistent action---will bring God's justice. The widow did not only pray but also pleaded her cause to the judge on a regular basis---she protested and demonstrated publically. True prayer will lead to action.
- Faith in God that is trusting and calm as well as constant and persistent is the right attitude for the Christian in the time of waiting for the establishment of the Kingdom.
- Jesus questions whether this kind of faith will remain on the earth until he returns. He implies that he knows how difficult this kind of persistent faith and prayer are. It is the narrow door.

3. 2 Timothy 3: 14---4:2

- Paul is encouraging Timothy---his student and mentee---to be faithful to the teaching he has handed on to him. False teaching and wrong interpretations will inevitably arise. Timothy must be fearless and relentless in correcting and teaching the truth. He can be certain of the truth of his teaching because he received it from Paul who received it from Jesus. He knows the one from whom he learned it. He was raised with it from childhood.
- Timothy should base his teaching on Scripture---the source of our wisdom which gives us salvation in Jesus Christ. Scripture is inspired by God and can be used for teaching, refuting, correcting, and training. Scripture equips us for every good work.
- Paul solemnly charges Timothy in the name of God and Jesus who will return as judge to proclaim the word. Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, convince, reprimand, and encourage all with patience and teaching.