

Hope, Comfort and Freedom in Jesus

*Special Edition
Issue 1*

A
MESSAGE OF HOPE,
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

“Cry Out for Justice” by Kyle Murphy

First, I'd like to tell you how much I (and the rest of our volunteers) miss seeing you all. We want you to know how much we love you and that you are in our prayers. We are praying for your health and safety as well as a quick return of visitation and programming. We are also praying for strength, peace and comfort for you and your loved ones during these unprecedented times.

In an effort to remind each of you how much you are loved and, hopefully, provide some encouragement, we have decided to implement an abbreviated Message of Hope newsletter and this is the first special edition! These shortened versions of the quarterly newsletter will consist mainly of a brief message God has placed on my heart to share with you, along with our prayer of blessing over you – and maybe even an assignment for those of you who are up to it.

In this first issue we will look at the parable of the persistent widow found in Luke 18:1-8. Before doing so though I would like to briefly define what a parable is. In religious circles, I frequently have heard that a parable is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” It can also be defined as “a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or religious principle.” The word parable, or *parabole* in the Greek, is a combination of two roots – *para* meaning “beside” and *ballo* meaning “to throw.” So, the word suggests throwing, or placing, something besides something else for the purpose of making a comparison. Within the overall context of the teachings of Jesus, we see that generally parables were narratives (or stories) placed alongside certain truths for the purpose of illustrating His lessons. They were stories by which something in real life was used as a means of presenting a moral or spiritual attitude or principle.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, we see Jesus share these stories from everyday life (at least for those present of His day and age) and apply a spiritual truth that can be understood and applied in our spiritual journey and how we relate to God and those around us. With this in mind, I believe it is important we not read too much into the parables or get caught up in searching for hidden meanings, but instead focus on the spiritual truths being presented. For me, applying these truths and principles in my daily walk with God is enough to keep me busy!

Turning to Luke 18:1-8, we read the parable of the persistent widow. Before discussing some of what can be learned from the parable, let's get some context of what the people of Jesus' day knew about widows. In his book, “The Parables,” Simon J. Kistemaker explains,

“Widows in Israel seem to have experienced a great difficulty; the numerous protective laws indicate that oppression and hardship were their lot. God himself defends the cause of the widow (Deut. 10:18) and places a curse upon the man who withholds justice from her (Deut. 27:19). Anyone wishing to deprive the widow of her rights would have to face God, the defender of widows (Ps. 68:5). Nevertheless, widows were mistreated. Jesus tells his disciples about a widow in a certain town who has no one to support her against an adversary except an unjust judge. As a widow she is a picture of vulnerability. Her only recourse is to take her case to the judge

with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' The phrase 'grant me justice' is legal language and really means 'take up my case' or 'help me to justice.' The judge refuses to act. The only weapon the woman has is to go to the judge day after day with the same request."

As we continue reading the parable, we find that eventually the judge grows weary of the widow's continued requests and relents. He says, "I will see that she gets justice." Jesus then applies the heavenly meaning – the spiritual truth. In verses 7-8 we read, "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly."

So what can we learn from this parable?

One of the first things I notice is where the widow went in search of justice. She went to the authority – to the judge. In addition to going to the one who was able to act on her behalf, we are told she didn't just go once, but continued going day after day. The widow was persistent and "kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'" I think it is worth noting, even though the judge initially refused to act on her behalf, the widow didn't take matters into her own hands. I can imagine the emotions she might have been feeling – the pain, anguish, frustration, helplessness. If I was faced with a similar situation, I might want to turn to other means to get what was owed me or to get the justice I was seeking. I might want to take matters into my own hands. The widow continued to cry out, though, rather than act out irrationally or turn to violence or retribution. In doing so, she was eventually granted the justice she was due.

The next thing I learn from this parable is that God will bring about justice for His people. Unlike the unjust judge who acted selfishly, God acts on behalf of His people because of His tremendous love for us. Does He expect us to come to Him over and over with the same request before granting it? No, I don't believe that is what we are being taught here. But, the parable does indicate a spiritual truth that we should continually bring our causes before God in prayer. Jesus taught a great deal during His ministry about prayer and He provided a wonderful example in His own life of the importance of prayer. Paul, in his Epistles, also referred repeatedly to prayer and how it should be something we do continually (day and night).

I leave you with these thoughts and reflections and with these spiritual truths. God can be trusted and we can rely on His faithfulness. Also, God is not annoyed by our persistent prayers and He will answer in His time and in accordance with His plan. When the time draws near for our prayers to be answered, God will grant us justice, and quickly.

It may sometimes seem that our time of waiting is too long. In my own life, though, when I look back at my times of pain, anguish, frustration and helplessness – I can clearly see how God has answered my cries at just the right time. I've also come to realize that God is always working and He is always in action, regardless of whether I see it or not. God's purposes are good and Jesus encourages us to continue to cry out to Him day and night. Whatever it is you are facing right now, keep crying out to God!

"The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Numbers 6:24-26; Romans 15:13 NIV)