

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 16, 2022



PERSISTENCE

as an act of resistance

by Drew Downs

It is easy to root for a widow driving a judge crazy with her persistence. We love celebrating "the little guy" in their struggle. We also love celebrating this as an act of individual faith. This persistence, however, is also an act of resistance.

It is easy to recognize the individual and her claim before an individual judge. Much like we can watch a movie about a corrupt cop or a bought judge and think they are just one

bad apple. No worries about the bunch. But the story is not to reflect a **unique** and uncommon experience. It is a teaching for all of the poor who face injustice throughout their lives from a system that would break them down. So this is quite literally about keeping the faith in the midst of adversity.

Showing persistence when others would have you stop to outlast their own resistance is a **common** need and a reflection of hope.

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Toxic Conversation

Twitter has a reputation. Much of it is justified. But not all of it. I have found Twitter to be, at times, a humanizing place. Where we see all manner of behavior. And much of it is cries in the wilderness. To be noticed. Befriended. Supported.

Once again, a conversation about Communion dominated what many Episcopalians saw in their feeds. None of it is actually worth getting into without sitting at a table, something to drink, and time to spend.

What dominated the discourse was, once again, misplaced understanding, strident certainty, and anxious vitriol. It struck many of us as sadly tragic. What a waste of time, and more importantly, opportunity.

Sometimes we feel justified in getting angry on behalf of the oppressed. And sometimes we feel justified in getting angry at the angry. And then, sometimes, we feel justified in getting angry that *anyone* gets angry. Without the hint of irony. Or introspection. Or, more importantly, fidelity to why the first anger is fundamentally different than the second. Or third.

I get tired of these spats because they make a terrible Christian witness. They also make our church look petty, snotty, and abusive. And while it is easy to throw the whole thing away ("that's Twitter!"), doing so without dealing with what it reveals, particularly **abuse**, is, itself, something far short of righteous.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 16, 2022

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: Preserve the works of your mercy, that your Church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 18:1-8

"Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart."

Reflection

In this gospel story, we get a parable of persistence. And I have a feeling that it feels really instructive.

It is a short parable. But it is a masterclass in connecting with the audience's need to find enough *confidence* to persist. There is no doubt that the hearer comes away ready to storm into the boss's office to go get that raise!

But...Jesus isn't teaching us about persistence *in general*. He's talking about persistence in faith. Specifically when it all feels like too much.

ORDINARY TIME

Just like two weeks ago, when the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith—we're receiving this gospel passage *after* something dispiriting has been said. In that case, Jesus said that they would need to keep forgiving the repentant and their response amounts to *Well, Jesus, to do that, we will surely need more faith than we have!*

After last week's cleansing of the ten with leprosy, Jesus speaks of dark times ahead: a time of division and death. But he also speaks of persisting in the midst of it. Keeping faith during the dark hours.

This parable about persistence in prayer is not about the general sense of persistence. And it isn't even *really* about the prayer. It's about our relationship with God *when we feel most lost or abandoned*.

I speak a lot about context precisely because this parable reads completely differently when we read the preceding verses about the days before Noah entered the ark, remembering the lesson of Lot's wife, and how we will feel when people vanish from our lives. This isn't about persistence. It's about persistence when we think everything is unraveling.

The pandemic brought these sensations to many. And just as many have felt relief in simply "getting on with things." But that sense of unraveling didn't begin in March of 2020. Nor does it feel *new*, if we're being honest.

And yet, keeping faith *today* in light of our circumstances is certainly the point. That dark times are not *proof* that should lead to *unfaith*. It is the quintessential time for keeping faith. For showing boldness and inventiveness and persistence in pushing for what is most needed.

Persistence, not only in prayer, but in God's justice, is the only true response to tumultuous times.

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