

Oct. 30,11 Luke 18:1-8

ALWAYS \_\_\_\_\_ NEVER \_\_\_\_\_

Let's begin this morning hearing God's word of faith, hope and encouragement for God's people found in Luke 18:1-8:

### **The Parable of the Persistent Widow**

*<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'*

*<sup>4</sup> "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"*

*<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

What a great story of faith. How much faith do you have? When Christ returns will he find you as faithful as the widow? In tough times does God find you still trusting in him? Think about it. This widow who had no one else to help her does what she has to do to take care of her needs. She goes multiple times before a judge who could care less about her situation or even about her. Every time he heard her case he would dismiss it. Scripture doesn't say how often she appeared before him, or why she appeared before him, but the one thing we know he was never happy to see her in his courtroom. We read, "For some time he refused" her request for judgment. But she was very persistent. She was going to be in his court as often as she needed to be in order until she got justice. He wasn't sympathetic to her cause, in fact he could care less.

You know there are lots of people like that judge in this world. Whether we like it or not, not everyone cares about our situations. They have their own problems. Someone I know was trying to get her support situation straightened out who made phone calls to the state office that handles that but got little or no help. Finally she got an appointment so she went to their office and was very polite only to find that the woman who she had to talk with seemed to be having a very bad day. The official person was rude to the person who was seeking help and I think she said it was time for her lunch so hurry up or come back later. However this person also worked and took time off to try to get things fixed for the sake of her children. This official could care less. But that person was persistent, though her patience was running thin and wanted to tell her a few things but held back and was nice as she could be. In the long run, with not much help from the lady, she got what she came for and very nicely with a smile on her face thanked the lady for her help, left the office and let out her anger where no one could hear her. In the long run, she got heard and things were taken care of.

Look at Jesus' illustration this morning. It begins, *"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up."*

How many of you ever had thoughts of giving up on something or even on someone? Ever fall while learning to ride a bike, or learning to roller blade? My hats off this morning to the Cardinal's baseball team for winning the World Series. Hats off to them for not quitting when they were 10 games out and everyone said they were through. Hats off to them as they beat two tough teams to get into the series. Hats off to them that they were within one strike of going home, not once but twice and came back to win. Hats off to them because they never gave up, never quit believing they could. Yes, when some would have given up and gone home, many stayed to watch at least Pujos getting one last at bat in a Cardinal uniform. But they got a better gift, another game and then the World Series crown. Hats off

to the World Champs today from a Cub and Red Sox fan. That makes you believe it can happen.

The Apostle Paul knows a thing or two about not quitting. When they put him in jail he could have stopped witnessing about Jesus but instead shared his faith with every guard that he was chained to, and through every letter he wrote to churches not to quit when things got tough. He would tell them not to look down, not to look around for others, but look up and see God's hand working in their lives. Don't quit, for those who persevere to the end will find victory. If they had a last meal in those days I bet he would have requested that 5 or 6 of his guards would be his guests as he shared Jesus with them one last time to encourage them to keep on keeping on and not quit the race. And I bet he wanted someone new to walk with him those last steps in order for him to have one more chance to share the message of Jesus Christ. He never quit preaching about his love for Jesus and for salvation for those who would believe.

The point is this, always pray and never give up. Will you say that with me? Always pray and never give up. When I say 'ALWAYS' you say 'PRAY' When I say 'NEVER' you say 'GIVE UP.'

Isn't that what the lady did? It didn't matter if this mean judge didn't care or was not a believer in God. Her God was bigger than the situation. She was persistent. She learned to always-- PRAY and never-- GIVE UP.

Can you imagine the look on the judges face every time he called for the next case and whose face does he see but the widow's? By now they might have been on a first name basis. He could see she was pretty persistent. One reading of this Scripture states, "*A widow of that town came to him repeatedly....and he said to himself, 'she is wearing me out...'*" Another translation says "*She keeps bothering me.*"

She was wearing him out! Some moms and dads know exactly what that means. Watch in the stores and listen to young kids who keep after their moms and

dads to buy certain cereals or candy or this toy or that one. Sometimes it might work, other times no dice. Even teenagers are persistent. They want to stay out later, go to places maybe their parents don't feel comfortable for them to go. They want their license and then a car. You all know what I mean because many of you have been there either as a parent or that teenager.

Yes, we learn today to always-- PRAY and never-- GIVE UP for some day it might happen.

Just think what our world would be like if when Jesus died on the cross the disciples scattered and went home instead of gathering in the Upper Room. They would have missed the resurrection appearances of Jesus and been still wondering if he did. Just think where our faith would be if the early church stopped believing after some Christians were being persecuted and fed to the lions? Just think where we would be if the Wright brothers gave up on their dreams when those first airplanes failed. Just think where we would be if our country let those rocket failures keep us on the ground. And think of it. When we lost Challenger and the other shuttle it was a tragedy, but we didn't quit. When Apollo 13 had troubles and couldn't make it to the moon we didn't quit sending people. Quitting was not an option. We never gave up. Our country learned to always-- PRAY and never-- GIVE UP.

What do you think softened the judges heart to finally decide in favor of the widow's request? Was it because he realized she would never GIVE UP? Did his heart finally melt? Did her prayers help soften his hardened heart? Remember how God sent Moses to the Pharaoh and he was told that his heart would be hardened, yet continue to go to him asking for the release of his people from bondage? And as we know, every time Moses went before Pharaoh with a new plague his heart would soften for just a minute or two but by the time Moses left his presence he changed his mind. God told Moses to tell the people to always-- PRAY and never-- GIVE

UP. And one day it happened. Pharaoh's heart was softened by God and the people were set free.

Remember that mine accident in Chile where 33 miners were thought lost? They had no way of communicating with them or reach them. The longer it took to find them the more fear they had that the trapped men were dead. They worked for days, for weeks trying to get to them hoping they could find maybe one or two still alive. They got the best engineers to figure what they could do. Some things failed. Meanwhile those families kept vigil outside the mine praying, hoping, at least one of them, maybe their loved one would make it. Days and weeks went by and some lost hope but many didn't quit believing they would find them. Finally one day they broke through to where they were and found out they were okay. Then a note came topside and all 33 miners were fine and looking forward to being rescued. There were shouts of joy and prayers of thanksgiving to know they were alive. But they still hadn't seen them until a camera was lowered and the whole world got a glimpse of each man who was happy and I think they were singing praises because soon they would be going home. Rescue finally took place, and as we say in baseball, "there was joy in Mudville." Later there was a correction of how many miners were there. One man reported there was 34, for Jimmy Sanchez wrote a note to those rescue works that "God never left them." He was the '34<sup>th</sup> miner. Praise the Lord they kept on praying and they never—gave up.

Years ago a man by the name of Theodor Geisel had the gift of writing. In college he did writing for the school's newspaper. His mother often read to him and his siblings rhymes and Ted credits her for his desire to write kids books. His first children's book was filled with his memories of his home in Springfield MA. His life went on and he wrote articles for magazines and all that, but he wanted to publish his works, his books. He took his first book about his hometown to publisher after publisher only to have them turn him away. He kept on trying though and wouldn't quit. 26 times he heard the same thing, "No!" Rejection was hard,

How would you have felt if 26 times you were rejected? Hopeless perhaps? Discouraged? Perhaps to say the least. Maybe even give up and toss your works into the fireplace? But Ted gave it one more shot and on the 27<sup>th</sup> time of going to a publisher his book, *“And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street”* was accepted to be published by Vanguard Press. You might not know him by Theodor Geisel, nor you may not know his first book, but you do know this author of many children’s books and even movies that come from his books. Let me read just a few pages from one of his books.....**READ.**

His last book was *“Oh, the places you’ll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won.”* And how many of you have read to your kids or grandkids *“The Cat in the Hat”* or the Christmas classic, *“How The Grinch Stole Christmas.”* That author who never quit after being rejected 26 times for his first book to be published was none other than Ted Geisel, known by all of us as Dr. Seuss. Just imagine if Ted didn’t go to that 27<sup>th</sup> publisher. But he never gave up!

Hear this story too about a little boy that was 3 years old who went into his father’s work area and had a tragic accident. His father worked with leather and made horse harnesses and other goods using sharp leather working tools to cut and punch holes in the leather. One of them had a wooden handle and a sharp point called an ‘awl.’ It’s was used to put small holes in the leather like an ice pick. One day his 3 year old son wandered into the shop and was playing with one of his father’s awls and it slipped out of his hand and somehow poked him in the eye. At first this didn’t seem like a serious accident until it became infected and that infection spread to both eyes resulting in loss of sight in both eyes. As time passed Louis learned to adapt and to lead a somewhat normal life without his sight. Having heard of a school in Paris France that helped sightless students, at the age of ten he left for that school to gain the education he desired. He found they had books for the blind and he read 14 of them. They were constructed of large raised letters which

resulted in them being very large and bulky and heavy and very expensive. Reading these books was time consuming and a tedious process. He knew there had to be a better, less expensive way to help those who were blind to be able to read. Years later a French Army Captain spoke at the institute about his invention called “Night Writing” of an alphabet code that the French army was using. The code was made up of small dashes and dots, raised off the paper and read by running their fingers over them. This fascinated Louis and one day at home in his father’s shop where he had his accident, he took that same dull awl that caused his blindness and punched out sentences on a paper that could quickly be read with fingers using the system he had learned and perfected. That is how Louis Braille invented the Braille system that has led to a Braille writer that has helped so many blind or near blind students to read and to communicate. Our daughter Karen teaches the visibly handicapped children to use a Braille writer to write and for them to read by. You see those raised dots in elevators and other places so that if a blind person needs to find a floor they don’t have to ask someone, they can reach out with their fingers and read for themselves. Yes, out of a tragedy came triumph.

Isn’t it amazing what can be done if you don’t quit? Louis had a goal to help others get an education. He never quit until one day he created a system that helps million and millions today. Let us be reminded...always-- PRAY. Never-- GIVE UP!

Jesus ended his story about the widow who kept after the judge till she got justice with these words to his disciples, and in fact to us here this morning: *“And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night?”*

So when you think no one cares. When you think you are unloved. When the pressures of life seem to be unbearable remember the story of the lady who never gave up and was persistent to get the justice she deserved. Or remember the story of Louis Braille who wouldn’t let his blindness defeat his will to get an education and

help others who were blind to be able to “see” what others might see through the written word. Remember not to quit even if you find multitude rejections like Dr. Seuss did. Who knows maybe the next time will be one. Remember Paul’s persistent to share God’s message of grace and love with the whole world. If your future looks bleak, and you struggle, or you feel rejection after rejection, and things don’t go as planned remember always--- PRAY and never--- GIVE UP!