

*Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. 2He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. 3In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' 4For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, 5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"* 6And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? 8I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

From the outside there is nothing remarkable about that building. Like so many others on the block there had been a business on the ground floor, offices above, living quarters as well. But in the early 1940's the Frank family and four other Jews were hidden in a secret annex in the back of the house until the day they were betrayed to the Nazis and taken to concentration camps. Anne Frank, her sister and her mother were victims of the death camps, her father, Otto survived. As Sue and I walked through the rooms where the young girl, Anne Frank lived and wrote, I found myself imagining a different outcome for her than death at the hands of the Nazis. In a world where there is justice she would be living still – one of God's chosen people celebrating the gift of life and love. Would she be a grandmother by now, a great-grandmother? But in those days justice was perverted – cries to God for help so often seemed to fall on deaf ears.

We have all heard the names of places where it has happened since – Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, North Korea, China, Gaza, the list goes on and on. How many millions have cried out to heaven for justice? How many millions have been crushed by oppressors? Is it any wonder our Lord Jesus asked the question, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

When Luke wrote this sentence in the gospel by his name the followers of Jesus had suffered in many places. Christians in Rome had been slaughtered during the persecution by the Emperor Nero after Rome burned. Those who lived in Jerusalem had seen the temple of God destroyed by the Roman army less than forty years after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. So many had believed that when the Messiah came the lion would lie down with the lamb, swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, nation would not lift of sword against

nation, neither would they learn war anymore. Had not the angels sang of peace on earth when Jesus was born? But following Jesus' plea that he would not have to drink the cup of suffering soldiers came to arrest him, to mock him, to nail him to the cross. Not even for the Messiah, the Son of God, was there earthly justice.

Jesus told a parable about the need to pray always and not to lose heart. There was a judge, a bad guy who had no regard for God and no regard for people. A widow came to him asking for justice. In those days widows could not hold property – she came to the judge as one without power or wealth or rights. Yet because of her persistence that no good judge granted her petition. If a no-good judge would do something like that will not God give justice to his chosen ones who cry to God day and night? Jesus answered his own question in this way: “I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.”

But in this world so full of injustice will we all give up on God first? When the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?

Jesus asks that question of you, of me. Will we keep on praying for justice – praying that the bullies will not be oppressing those with little power? As I was working on this sermon I thought, “We have an election in a few weeks and I have not been praying about it. I have been complaining about politicians that seek their own advantage rather than seeking justice for the oppressed. I have been complaining about how those who have much want to use the government to increase their power and wealth. I have been complaining about those who want a free ride in life – seeking government handouts to support their life of leisure. I have been complaining about those who think that violence will bring peace. But I have not been praying for justice. Have you?

Who are the Anne Franks in our world today? Palestinian Lutheran Christians in Bethlehem – under attack from the Palestinian Muslims – under attack from the Israeli government? Children in Tanzania - too poor to have a net to sleep under, a net that would protect them from mosquitoes that carry deadly malaria? Children who are being sexually abused by clergy?

What does justice look like? Courts where those who can hire expensive lawyers do not have an advantage over those who cannot. Every person treated with dignity and respect by those in power. Everyone playing by the same rules.

Join me in praying for justice in the coming election. Pray that God will raise-up elected officials who will serve the nation and not just special interests. Pray that our nation will seek justice in all our doings in the world. Pray for justice for those who cry out to God day and night.

Keep trusting in God's power to bring justice. Amen.