

P.U.S.H. - Pray Until Something Happens

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Date: 09 October 2024

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[0 : 00] The Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read. The Gospel according to Luke, Luke chapter 18. I want us to look at the first few verses of that chapter this evening.

But if we just read again at verse 1. So Luke chapter 18 and verse 1. Well we read there, and Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

They ought always to pray and not lose heart. Last week I was given the dates for Kin Craig 3, 2025.

And to be honest, I can't wait, because I love camp. I love camp as an adult. As a child, I was homesick and I came home after one night.

I know you'll laugh at me. But as an adult, I love camp. And one of the things I love about camp, apart from getting to know the kids and having fun with them, is of course teaching them about Jesus.

[1 : 15] That is the great privilege of free church youth camps, teaching kids about Jesus. But on the first day of camp, when the kids arrive, we give them all bracelets. We give them acrostic bracelets in Kin Craig Kids 3.

And they have the letters, some of the kids here will know, the letters WWJD on them. And so anywhere and at any time throughout the week at camp, whether it's canoeing or in landmark or shopping or in the trampoline park, when one of the leaders shouts WWJD, all the boys are to respond by saying, what would Jesus do?

And then all the girls would follow with another acrostic, he would love first. So the first one, as you see there, I hope this is going to work tonight. WWJD, what would Jesus do?

That's what all the boys would shout. And then the girls would follow, HWLFF, he would love first.

You know, when I was converted over 20 years ago, there were lots of other acrostic bracelets.

There was one, and I put them all up because I find it easier to see something than to just hear it.

So I put this one up. There's maybe another one I saw 20 years ago. Frog, fully rely on God.

[2 : 32] Another one I've mentioned to you often, grace, God's riches at Christ's expense. Another one that's around, I'm sure you've seen it, faith, forsaking all I trust him.

That's what faith is, forsaking all I trust him. Another one when it comes to prayer, how do you pray? Pray, acts, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, acts. But the one we're thinking about this evening that I saw 20 years ago, push. Pray until something happens.

Push. Pray until something happens. Because that's what Jesus is telling us and teaching us from this parable. He says there in verse 1 that we are to pray and not to lose heart.

We're to pray and not give up. We're to pray, we're to push. We're to push, we're to pray until something happens. And so as this is out, back to prayer meeting Wednesday, and we're focusing upon the theme of prayer.

[3 : 42] I want us to look at this parable this evening under two headings. So this is the first eight verses. We're looking at it under two headings. The persistence of prayer and the perseverance of prayer.

The persistence of prayer and the perseverance of prayer. So first of all, the persistence of prayer. Look at verse 1. Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

He said in a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, give me justice against my adversary.

Now last Lord's Day, prior to and in preparation for our back to prayer meeting Wednesday, we spent the day thinking about prayer.

And in the morning we looked at Acts chapter 1, if you remember, where we saw the first prayer meeting. The first prayer meeting of the New Testament church after the ascension of Jesus.

[4 : 46] And from that we thought about, oh I'm doing the wrong thing again. We thought about the purpose of prayer. So the purpose of prayer as we saw, the purpose of prayer is to teach us dependence.

We are to depend upon the Lord. The purpose of prayer is not for God's good, but it's actually for our good. It's to teach us dependence upon the Lord.

Because far too often we think that we're in control of our own lives and we depend upon our own skills and we depend upon our own strength. Rather than depending upon the strength and spirit of the Lord.

We also thought about the priority of prayer. Because the prayer meeting ought to be a priority in a week. It was a priority for the first century church.

And it ought to be a priority for the 21st century church. It's not to be a secondary event. It's to be a significant event in our church's calendar. Because as we saw with the early church, they continuously committed themselves to prayer.

[5 : 53] They devoted and dedicated themselves to the regular routine of gathering together for the prayer meeting. So it's good to gather together for prayer.

Then in the evening we looked at 2 Chronicles chapter 7 and we were thinking about Solomon's prayer of dedication. And we noted there the petition of prayer and the power of prayer.

So our petitions, they are to be directed to God the Father in the name of God the Son by the Holy Spirit.

So it's to the Father in the name of the Son by the Holy Spirit. But as we were saying on Sunday night, our prayers don't have to be long prayers. Because the Lord's prayer, as the boys and girls reminded us in their questions, the Lord's prayer is a short prayer.

It's only 66 words long. And as we read later on in Luke 18, there down in verse 13, the publican's prayer was even shorter. It was only seven words.

[6 : 58] God be merciful to me, a sinner. And so our prayers were taught in the Bible. Our prayers can be short, short and spiritual prayers. Because as we saw with the power of prayer, the power of prayer is not dependent upon the extent of our prayer.

Or even the emotion of our prayer. Or even the eloquence of our prayer. The power of prayer is not based upon what comes from our head. The power of prayer is based upon what comes from our heart.

Because when we pray, we're to pray wholeheartedly. When we pray, we're to pray wholeheartedly. And so last Lord's Day, we saw the purpose, priority, petition and power.

But then we also considered, just as we were finishing, we thought about the precondition. The precondition of prayer. Because when the Lord calls his people to pray, he gives us the precondition of prayer.

And that's 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14. Where the Lord said to his people, he says to us. And it's amazing you've heard the call.

[8 : 08] If my people who are called by my name, humble themselves and pray. And seek my face and turn from their wicked ways. Then will I hear from heaven.

And will forgive their sin and heal their land. There's a precondition of prayer. Because we have a role in prayer. And we have a responsibility to be at the prayer meeting.

Not just as a one-off tonight. Because it's back to prayer meeting Wednesday. But to regularly and routinely gather together in prayer. To make it a priority in our week.

That's why we're considering now this evening. We're considering another P. The persistence of prayer. The persistence of prayer. So we've thought about the purpose, priority, petition, power, precondition.

And now the persistence of prayer. And Jesus tells us that we need to remember this. That's why Jesus tells us this parable. The parable of the widow and the unjust judge.

[9 : 11] Because as we read there. The widow and the unjust judge. They lived in a certain city.

They lived in the same city. It was probably a large city. But even though they lived in the same and certain.

This certain city. Their lives were completely different. Their lives were a complete contrast to one another. In fact the contrast you could say.

It couldn't be greater. Because on the one hand you have this. As Jesus says. You have this unjust judge. And so as a judge he would have been prosperous. And as a judge he would have been powerful.

So he's an unjust judge who is prosperous and powerful. Then on the other hand we're told that there was this widowed woman. She's a widowed woman who is poor.

She's the opposite to him. She's powerless. The unjust judge we're told. Jesus says he doesn't care what people think of him. This widowed woman.

[10:07] She just longs for somebody to care for her. The unjust judge we're told. He doesn't fear God. And he doesn't fear man. But this widowed woman. She fears for her life.

Which is why she goes to the unjust judge. In the first place. She goes to him because. Well she's a widowed woman. She's encountered and experienced sorrow.

In her life. Sorrow upon sorrow. She's lost her husband. She now can't work. She can't earn a living. She has no rights in society. And she's you could say a nobody in the city.

She's poor and powerless. She's a widowed woman. But she has one thing going for her. And this is what Jesus highlights. The one thing going for this woman.

This widowed woman. Is that she's persistent. She's persistent. She keeps coming to the unjust judge. Seeking justice. And you know I love that phrase there.

[11:08] That Jesus uses. It says there in verse 3. That she kept coming to him. She kept coming to him. She kept coming to him. She persisted.

She persisted. Which is why Jesus tells the parable. In the first place. So that we learn to persist in prayer. Jesus tells the parable.

So that we learn to persist. In prayer. But you know what we have to understand. From this parable. Is that it's not a parable of comparison. It's a parable of contrast.

It's not a parable of comparison. It's a parable of contrast. And what I mean by that. Is that in many of Jesus' parables. We often see that. God is often compared.

To the character in the parable. For example. We know the parable of the prodigal son. Where God is compared. To the caring and compassionate father.

[12:06] Who is lovingly looking. And longing. For his prodigal son. To come home. But here. God has been contrasted. It's not a comparison.

He's been contrasted. With the character in the parable. Because God is not an unjust judge. He's the opposite. God is not. Prosperous.

And so powerful. That he doesn't care about. The poor and powerless. Widowed woman. Who persistently prays in his ear. No. The opposite is true. And that's what we need to see in the parable.

The opposite is true. That's the point of the parable. Our heavenly father. Father. Is so caring. And he's so compassionate. Towards us.

He's so loving. And so loyal. That he's looking. And longing. To hear. From us. And the amazing thing is. He is more than willing.

[13:02] To provide for our needs. If we would. But only ask. If we would. Only. Ask. Ask. And that's the thing about this.

Wooded woman. Many would have thought. Well she could never ask. The judge. For anything. But that's what we're being taught here. The Lord is more than willing. To provide. If we would only ask.

And you know. What's really interesting. Is that Jesus has already. Taught us. And told us this. Earlier. Because if you go back to chapter 11. Of Luke's gospel. Jesus tells the story there.

Of the friend who comes. At midnight. And Jesus tells that. That parable there. You don't have to turn it. You can read it later on. When you get home. But in that parable. Jesus teaches us.

About persistence. The same message. Persisting in prayer. Where there's this. Friend who asks. Or this person. Who asks his friend. For three loaves of bread. And he keeps asking.

[13:58] Six conversations. He keeps. First. George said I can. No you're fine. So he keeps persisting. In prayer.

You've got to watch. What series about. Just never know. What's going to be said. Or happen. But you know. The amazing thing. What Jesus teaches us. Back there. In Luke 11. Is that when he's talking.

About the persistence. Of prayer. He goes on to. Apply the parable. And Jesus says. I tell you. Ask. And it shall be given. Seek.

And you will find. Knock. And it will be opened. To you. For everyone who asks. Says Jesus. They will receive. The one who seeks. Finds. And the one who knocks. It will be opened.

Because Jesus says. He goes on to say. In Luke 11. It's amazing. He says it. What father among you. If his son asks for a fish. Will give him a serpent. Or if he asks for an egg.

[14 : 55] You give him a scorpion. What father would ever do that. And then Jesus applies it. If you know how to give good gifts. To your children. Then how much more.

Will your heavenly father. Give to those. Who ask him. That's the point. And that's the point of the parable. How much more. Will your heavenly father. Give to those.

Who ask him. And so with that parable. In Luke 11. And this parable here. In Luke chapter 18.

Jesus is showing us. That we need to learn. The persistence.

Of prayer. We need to persist. In praying. To our heavenly father. Because he promises. That when we persist. In prayer. Something will happen. When we persist.

In prayer. Something. Will happen. That's why we need. To push. We need to pray. Until something happens. Pray until something happens.

[15 : 50] You know. Sometimes. We can think. That it's wrong. Sometimes we can get it. Into our mind. I do think. It's a lie from the devil. We can think.

That it's wrong. To keep praying. And keep asking. For the same things. And we think. That. If I keep asking. For this. Is that a lack of faith?

But the thing is. There's nowhere. In scripture. Where we're told. To stop. Persisting in prayer. In fact. Jesus is showing us. He's telling us. Not once. In Luke 11.

But twice here. Again. In Luke 18. He's telling us. That we need. To keep persisting. We need to keep. Persisting in prayer. We need to keep. Coming. To the Lord.

In prayer. I remember that. Even as an 18 year old. When I was seeking. The Lord. To become a Christian. I kept asking. And asking. And asking. And it came to the point.

[16 : 46] That I thought. Well. Do I stop asking? Or do I keep asking. Until he answers. We need to keep. Coming to the Lord. In prayer.

And you know. The greatest example. Of this. Is actually. Jesus himself. Jesus always practiced. What he preached. Because. You remember. Just before Jesus.

Went to the cross. He persistently. Prayed. In the garden. Of Gethsemane. His disciples. They couldn't. Persist in prayer. Because.

Jesus said. You can't even. Watch with me. One hour. They fell asleep. In prayer. Which is often. A problem. For all of us. But Jesus. He persisted.

In prayer. And he prayed. The same prayer. We're told. Not once. Not twice. But three times. He kept on. He kept on. Praying. Father.

[17 : 39] If it be possible. Let this cup. Pass from me. Father. If it be possible. Let this cup. Pass from me. Father. If it be possible. Let this cup.

Pass from me. Nevertheless. Jesus says. Not as I will. But as you will. You know. Jesus persisted. In prayer.

But he didn't get the answer. To the prayer. To his prayer. That he wanted. Jesus persisted. In prayer. But he didn't get the answer.

To his prayer. That he wanted. The cup didn't pass from him. Because as you know. He drank the cup. And he went to the cross.

And you know. That's often the hardest. Lesson to learn. About the persistence. Of prayer. God doesn't always. Answer our prayers. The way we want them.

[18 : 38] To be answered. He doesn't answer our prayers. The way we want them. To be answered. Because we want God. And we all do. We all want God. To say yes. To every request.

We make. But sometimes. God says wait. And sometimes. God says no. And when it's a no. As it always is.

With children. They don't like it. When the parent says no. We don't like it. When God says no. It's hard to take. Especially if we're persisting. In prayer.

Then you might think. Well murder. Why push? Why pray until something happens? Why pray until something happens? And then nothing happens? Because even when the answer is no.

Even when the answer is no. As hard. As heartbreaking. As it can be. And sometimes it's really hard to take. When we persist in prayer. Something does happen.

[19 : 43] Because the promise is that when we pray. God gives us first of all grace to help in our time of need. Whatever that need is. He always gives us grace to help.

But when the answer is no. And we persist in prayer. He conforms our will. To his will. To the point that we come to accept.

His will. As hard as it often is. And in many ways we come to acquiesce with his will. And we see. Although we don't see it fully sometimes.

In certain situations and circumstances. We see that he is working all things together. For good. To those who are the called. According to his purpose.

And it's not easy. But when we push. When we pray until something happens. Our prayer often changes. From my will be done.

[20 : 42] To yes Lord. Thy will be done. On earth. As it is. In heaven. And so we see the persistence. Of prayer.

And secondly. Lastly. And more briefly. The perseverance. There's one more. The perseverance. Of prayer. The perseverance of prayer. So the persistence. Of prayer.

And the perseverance. Of prayer. The perseverance of prayer. Look at verse four. For a while. The unjust judge refused.

But afterward. He said to himself. Though I neither fear God. Nor respect man. Yet because this widow. Keeps bothering me. I will give her justice. So that she will not beat me down.

By her continual coming. And the Lord said. Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God. Give justice to his elect. Who cry to him day and night.

[21 : 37] Will he delay long over them. I tell you. He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless. When the son of man comes. Will he find faith. On earth.

As you know. We were thinking earlier. About. Acrostics. And acrostic bracelets. From about. Twenty years ago. But there was an acrostic.

That came out. Of the reformation. Maybe four hundred years ago. And it was. The acrostic. Called. Tulip. I'm sure you've all seen it. Maybe you've heard of it before. Tulip.

So T is for. Total depravity. U is for. Unconditional election. L for. Limited atonement. I for irresistible grace. And P for perseverance. Of the saints.

And although he never came up with it. It was based upon the teaching. Of the French reformer. John. Calvin. But it's the P. Of perseverance. Of the saints. That Jesus reminds us.

[22 : 33] He reminds us here. In this parable. Because we're not only to persevere. As saints. Jesus is teaching us here. We're to persevere. In prayer.

That's why he told the parable. Because. We're to pray. As verse 1 tells us. We're to pray. And not lose heart. We're to pray. And not give up.

We're to persevere. In prayer. And Jesus says this. Because far too often. And we all do it. Far too often. We're prone.

To packing in prayer. First thing we want to stop. Is praying. We give up. Far too often. We lose heart. That's why Jesus says it.

Far too often. We lose sight. We lose sight. Of the purpose. The purpose of prayer. The priority of prayer. The petition of prayer. The power of prayer.

[23 : 28] The precondition of prayer. The persistence of prayer. And the perseverance of prayer. Far too often. We forget. To push. To pray. Until something happens. But Jesus wants us.

In this parable. To guard against. Growing weary. In prayer. He wants to guard against. Growing weary in prayer. Because. We all know. I don't need to tell you.

That it's not easy to pray. I don't need to tell any of the gentlemen. Who come to the prayer meeting. On a Wednesday night. It's not easy to be called on. To pray. In fact. As someone once said.

The devil is most active. When someone is on their knees. Do you think about that? The devil is most active. When you start engaging.

In prayer. It's not easy. To pray. It's not easy to. Come to the prayer meeting. After a busy day at work. Or a busy day at home. Or a busy day in school. It's not easy to come.

[24 : 27] It's not easy to focus. When you feel absolutely knackered. And if we're honest. Sometimes prayer. And the prayer meeting. It's the last thing we want to do.

But that's why Jesus told this parable about prayer. That we are not to lose heart. We're not to lose heart. Because prayer is actually a labour of love.

Prayer is a labour of love. And I stress the word labour. Because it's the word Jesus stresses in this parable. He says it in verse 5.

Yet because of this widow. This widow keeps bothering me. I will give her justice. So that she will not beat me down. By her continual coming.

The word there. Bothering. In verse 5. This widow keeps bothering me. The word bothering is literally the word labour. Or working.

[25 : 27] Or toiling. And Jesus says that's how you're to pray. It's not easy. It's not easy. But you're to labour in prayer.

You're to work at prayer. You're to toil in prayer. You're to persist in prayer. You're to persevere in prayer. You're to keep on praying.

And not lose heart. I don't know if you've ever heard of the man George Muller. George Muller. And with this I'll conclude this evening. In the 19th century George Muller. He was the founder of a Christian orphanage. It was called Ashley Down Orphanage. It was outside or near Bristol. And throughout his life. George Muller he helped. I looked it up. 10,024 orphans. He established 117 Christian schools.

[26 : 27] And he provided education for 120,000 children. But the amazing thing is George Muller. He's not remembered for all his achievements.

George Muller is often remembered for being a man of prayer. He was a man of prayer. George Muller prayed about absolutely everything. He prayed for every provision that the orphanage needed.

There's all these amazing stories about George Muller. About praying for the children's food. Praying for their drink. I think there's a story where they need milk for the children.

And one day a knock on the door. And there is a man standing outside with two huge things of milk for the children. So George Muller, he prayed for everything. Prayed for their food, their drink, their clothing, their heating, their education.

He was a man of prayer. But George Muller also knew the importance of persevering in prayer. Not just persisting, but also persevering. When he was young, probably in his, maybe, we'll say 30s.

[27 : 33] George Muller, he began to pray for two of his friends. So he had two friends who were unconverted that he prayed for. And he prayed that they would be converted. That they'd come to know Jesus Christ as their saviour.

And George Muller, he committed himself to faithfully praying for these two friends every day. And he prayed for them every day for 60 years.

One of the men was converted just before George Muller died at the age of 92. George Muller died at 92. The other man, the other friend, he was converted after he died at the age of 92.

He didn't live to see it. But he prayed for these two friends faithfully. He persevered throughout his whole life praying for these two friends.

And you know, it ought to be an encouragement to us, like Jesus is saying here, to always pray and not lose heart. And to pray and not lose heart, especially if after many years, you're still praying for your unconverted spouse.

[28 : 44] Or you're praying for your prodigal children that you want to come home. Or you're praying for your friends. Friends that you know and you love. Friends that you've known for many years.

Neighbours that you live beside. And you've lived beside them for generations. What colleagues that you see every single day of life, you're praying for them. But we ought to keep praying, says Jesus.

And not lose heart. We ought always to pray and not lose heart. Jesus says, don't lose sight of what prayer is. Don't lose sight of the purpose of prayer.

Don't lose sight of the priority of prayer. Don't lose sight of the power of prayer. Don't lose sight of the precondition of prayer. Or the persistence of prayer. Or even the perseverance of prayer.

Instead, says Jesus. Last one. He just says to us. Push. Push. Pray until something happens.

[29 : 44] Pray until something happens. That's what we're to do. We ought always to pray. And not lose heart. So push.

Pray until something happens. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we give thanks this evening for reminding us of the privilege it is to call upon thy name. To know that we are able to address the God of heaven. The God who upholds this whole universe. By the word of his power. And to know that we are able to come before thee and say, Abba, Father. To address our Father which art in heaven. And to bring every problem in our lives. Every petition that weighs us down. Every burden, Lord.

And all the baggage that we often carry around. And yet to bring it all to this. This wonderful throne of grace. And to know that the Lord of God who provides for us grace to help.

[30 : 48] In our time of need. Help us not to lose heart. Even, Lord, as we pray for those in our homes. Those in our families. Those whom we love.

And those whom we long. To come to a saving knowledge of the truth. We pray, O Lord, for our friends. For our neighbours. Our work colleagues. For those, Lord, in our congregation.

For our children. And even our grandchildren. And great-grandchildren. That even the generation that is still yet unborn. That they too would praise and magnify the Lord. All that is our longing.

And help us then, we pray, to keep praying. To keep persevering. To keep persisting. To keep asking and seeking and knocking. Knowing, Lord, that the promise remains true.

That for everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks will find. And to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. So, Lord, open to us these doors, we pray.

[31 : 45] In thine own perfect timing. And in accordance with thy will. For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for his sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 116. Psalm 116. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse Mark 6.

why do you love him? why do you love the Lord? because he listens to you that's what the psalmist says you love him because he listens and isn't it amazing that he does listen I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here I while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear so from the beginning down to the verse Mark 6 we'll stand and sing if you're able to God's praise I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here I while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear of death the courts and sorrows did a heart become a shrine the pains of hell to hold on me

I grip and trouble find upon the name of God the Lord and did I call and say till ever thou my soul O Lord I do thee humbly pray God merciful and righteous ye gracious sister Lord God save me I was brought low He let me help afford the grace of the Lord the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen