



## ORDINARY 29C

A complete Sunday service ready to use  
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

**Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C**  
19th October 2025



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR**

**544 STF – As the deer pants for the water**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR**

**51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father**

Readings: Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

**Hymn:**

**436 STF – What shall I do my God to love? OR**

**463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**662 STF – Have you hear God's voice; has your heart been stirred? OR**

**254 STF – Seek ye first the Kingdom of God**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR**

**503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

**Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).**

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## **Call to worship**

Lord of light,  
From the rising of the sun, to the setting of the moon,  
From the first to the last breath,  
From the beginning to the end of our earthly lives,  
We know we are surrounded by your love.  
Help us to see that love at work in the world this week,  
And play our part in bringing it closer, we pray.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR

544 STF – As the deer pants for the water

## **Opening Prayers**

Loving God,  
As we come to worship this day, we bring before you all that we are grateful for.

There is so much around us that fills our hearts with daily joy.

Though we do not always notice it or remark on its presence,  
we are thankful and we give you praise.

As we come to worship this day, we also bring before you all that has caused us to  
stumble.

There is much around us that trips and tempts, that gets in the way of wholeness and love.

Though we are sometimes oblivious to our missteps and numb to our own oversights,  
we ask for forgiveness and seek your help.

As we come to worship this day, we bring all of who we are – on the outside and on the  
inside.

There is so much within and surrounding us that we offer up to you now.

Though we are imperfect and ever-learning, we offer ourselves fully to you – our hopes,  
our fears, our joys and our doubts.

May this time of worship draw us closer to your love, renew our spirits and guide us in your  
way.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

## All Age Talk

*[Have a member of the congregation willing to try and interrupt the speaker throughout the talk, with the speaker getting increasingly dismissive and frustrated. You'll need to prep this in advance!]*

Today we get to talk a little about a parable that Jesus shared! Now Jesus had a few parables as we know, and many sound similar in name, but are very different. Such as:

- Lost Coin and Lost Sheep
- Parable of the Sower, The Seed, and the Mustard Seed
- The Budding Fig Tree and the Barren Fig Tree
- The Workers, The Husbandmen and The Builders

But today we're going to talk about a judge and a widow. But not the widow who lost a coin, but one who was persistent! But this parable isn't to be confused with two friends who live next door to one another either! Now, the Judge in this parable is sometimes known as the Unjust Judge, a person whose job is to make sure that justice is delivered in a fair way. Let's hear a bit of this parable:

*(Read the passage below, presented in the Message version)*

Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, "There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: 'My rights are being violated. Protect me!'

"He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, 'I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won't quit badgering me, I'd better do something and see that she gets justice, otherwise I'm going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.'"

Now this Judge doesn't sound like a good judge in any way at all, does he? Let us imagine for a moment that this has been perhaps going on daily for a few months. The widow being persistent, spending each day walking through the streets from her house to the courthouse, waiting for the judge, and then asking the judge the same question every day: "My rights are being violated, protect me!"

This Judge ignoring her isn't just them not doing their job, but its really unfair, isn't it? All this women wants is to be treated fairly, and for justice to be fair to everyone, including her. And the judge would be the one who enables that to happen.

Who would do something like that? Who would want to be like the judge?!

*(At this point finally acknowledge the person trying to get the speaker's attention, in a very overly dramatic and defeated way! Have the person trying to get your attention hand you a folded piece of paper, saying it has the prayer for this talk on it and you left it on a table! Thank them and apologise for ignoring them!)*

How many times in our lives are we like the Judge: too busy and focused on other things to do what is right, honest, and even recognising the people around us like God does? And how often are we like the widow: we keep going on, persisting, on having someone,

anyone, do something to enable justice to happen? How often do we do the right thing, but not for the right reason?

Let us pray.

God of Justice.

Help us all to be like the widow; seeking justice and keep going until something happens. Help us to be like the judge; helping when we have the ability to do so. May we know the difference, and have the confidence to push for a fairer world that all live in.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father

**Readings:** Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

### **Hymn:**

436 STF – What shall I do my God to love? OR

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past

### **Reflections on the readings**

The persistent widow and the unjust judge.

To me it is a parable so familiar that it has almost taken on a life of its own away from this passage of Luke's gospel. The persistent widow is a character from the Bible who is held up as our example for a good and healthy prayer life. I don't know about you, but I have a deep sense that she lives in me as part of the narrative of what makes a Christian.

This is a beautiful part of being from a Christian tradition that values scripture so highly. Bits of scripture live with us – or to paraphrase Deuteronomy 6, this is a piece of scripture that we impress upon our children, that we speak about as we sit at home and as we walk along the road, as we lie down and as we get up. We have tied the persistent widow as a symbol on our hands and our foreheads; written her into the doorframe on our houses and onto our gates.

And there's very good reason for this; prayer is central to our life with God. Prayer is part of what it means to be God's people, constantly in dialogue with God. God's people have always taken their grieving, their complaining, their confessing, their hoping, their seeking – all of life – to God. Prayer is a constant dialogue with God about what we desire.

I once heard a Catholic priest talking about what it means to be a person of faith. The rituals and sacraments of his faith like prayer and mass, he described not as part of his *doing* but part of his *being*; allowing him to be the person of faith who could go out into the world and do what God calls him to do. Prayer is much like that for us; it is part of our

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Annan-Hood

being as Christians. The persistent widow is known to us; she lives with us as a metaphor for that.

But sometimes when we think we know exactly what Jesus was saying about something, and take it off the page as a two-dimensional metaphor, it can lose its nuance. The persistent widow isn't just about prayer. It is also about justice.

Notice: the judge in the story is unjust. He isn't seeking the good of the widow, he just grants her request for an easy life. The judge isn't a metaphor for God – not at all! As Jesus says, *if even this unjust judge gives justice in the end, how much more will God – who is good, merciful, and just – hear the cries of his people?*

This isn't just a parable about prayer, it is also a parable about the goodness and mercy and justice of God.

Tom Wright puts it like this:

*“The point of the parable is then to say: if even a rotten judge like that can be persuaded to do the right thing by someone who pesters him day and night until it happens, then of course God, who is Justice in person, and who cares passionately about people, will vindicate them, will see that justice is done.”*

This is a narrative of a small, marginalised voice crying out against oppression and injustice persistently enough that change happens. That's a story that we see played out in our own world again and again.

Maybe we see it in asylum seekers fleeing danger and seeking sanctuary after treacherous journeys only to wait years and years for refugee status.

Maybe we see it in the young people who fight for climate justice, calling for an end to the destruction being wrought on creation.

Maybe we see it in the disability activists who continue to speak out against the violent policies enacted against disabled people by successive governments.

Like the persistent widow, their petitions speak against injustice unrelentingly.

But where is God in this? The parable makes a sharp contrast between the judge and God: the judge is indifferent, but God cares deeply for us – even the hairs on our head are numbered.

Here's the tension: here's the nuance of the parable of the persistent widow that we live with day-by-day:

We know that God is a God of justice. It is right at the beginning of the Bible in Creation – God creates a *good* creation, and blesses it. God by God's very nature is *good* and promises justice and flourishing and life in all its fullness; personified in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But, despite centuries of persistent prayer from God's people for justice – we look around and see a world in which people are persecuted; where those fleeing persecution are scapegoated; where climate change takes hold all around us and humanity continues to burn fossil fuels with disregard; where Disabled people are hit hardest by the cruelty of austerity.

We live in a world of deep injustice, where prayers often seem unanswered.

So what does the parable of the persistent widow say to us as we live in this world of injustice?

Perhaps it is a persistence, not only in prayer, but in hope.

Perhaps it looks like refusing to give up hope in the justice of God's kingdom in the face of hopelessness.

Perhaps it looks like continuing to pray, to wrestle, to cry out, and to long for the day when God's justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The parable of the persistent widow isn't an easy one. It isn't Jesus saying that if we pray X number of times, God will relent and give us what we want.

But then, Jesus doesn't promise us easy answers.

His parables are mostly fairly opaque, or open to multiple interpretations. They are complex, difficult, sometimes frustrating stories that force us to wrestle with God, with scripture – perhaps even with ourselves, and with our place in the world.

And perhaps that's something else we need to be persistent with; with wrestling. Perhaps wrestling is part of discipleship, part of what being a Christian is. Not to settle for easy answers but to wrestle with hard truths.

The parable ends with a question from Jesus; "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?". It is a challenge for us - do we continue to be a people of faith? A people who persist in prayer. Persist in seeking justice. Persist in hope. Persist with wrestling with the world as it is and the world as we want it to be. Are we a people who still can draw close to God and join in God's plan for people and for planet even when it doesn't seem to make sense? To persist in faithfulness feels, perhaps, like the greatest challenge of all.

Where do you find your hope? What is your faith rooted in?

For me it is in Revelation 21, in the promise of a new heaven and a new earth:

*"God's dwelling place [will be] among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"*

Until then, we persist.

Amen.

Questions for discussion or reflection:

- 1) What is it that you persistently ask for in prayer? Why do you persist?
- 2) Where do you find hope in the face of injustice?
- 3) What do you think it means to wrestle with scripture?<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

662 STF – Have you hear God's voice; has your heart been stirred? OR

254 STF – Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

### **Prayers of intercession**

*Call and response:*

Call: Lord in your mercy

Response: Hear our prayer

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

God of love and longing, we pray to you, knowing that many of our prayers are answered now, that some may be answered tomorrow, and that some we may keep praying all our lives. Strengthen us to continue in prayer, to cry out in prayer and indeed for a world that reflects your goodness.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of restoration and revelation, where we experience sadness or pain in our own lives, we pray that you might bring joy and a release from suffering.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of lightness and living, for those we love who live alongside us, we pray that you might unburden the burdened and release those who are trapped.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of togetherness and tenderness, in our communities, we pray for those who are lonely, marginalised, or told they are of little worth. May they feel your love, and may we be part of showing it to them.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of justice and mercy, we look around our country, the nations, and the world, and see starvation, suffering, war, and needless pain. We pray for world leaders to act with justice, and for those who suffer under their decisions. We pray for your relief and justice to come, even in the face of human cruelty.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who created the heavens and the earth, we ask for your forgiveness for the way we are treating the planet; for climate change, for the loss of species and livelihoods, we ask for a miracle, for the tide to turn and for a new care for creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Ever-present God, we ask that you move among us and give us resilience to persist in our prayer, to fight for justice, and to hold hope that your justice will one day roll down like a mighty river.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

### **We will now take up the offering.**

God, your call on our lives is clear – to be people of peace, sharers of love, seekers after justice,

Help us to use these gifts, and the gifts here in this room,

To help bring that vision of your kingdom about, here in this community,

Today and everyday,

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Lucy Zwolinska

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker



**Hymn:**

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

**Blessing**

Until we stand in glory, before the throne of God,

Until we cast our crowns before him,

Lost in wonder love and praise,

There is much work to do to bring the Kingdom of heaven closer, here on earth.

May you have the courage to play your part in that today,

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker