

PERSISTENT IN PRAYER

LUKE 18:1-8

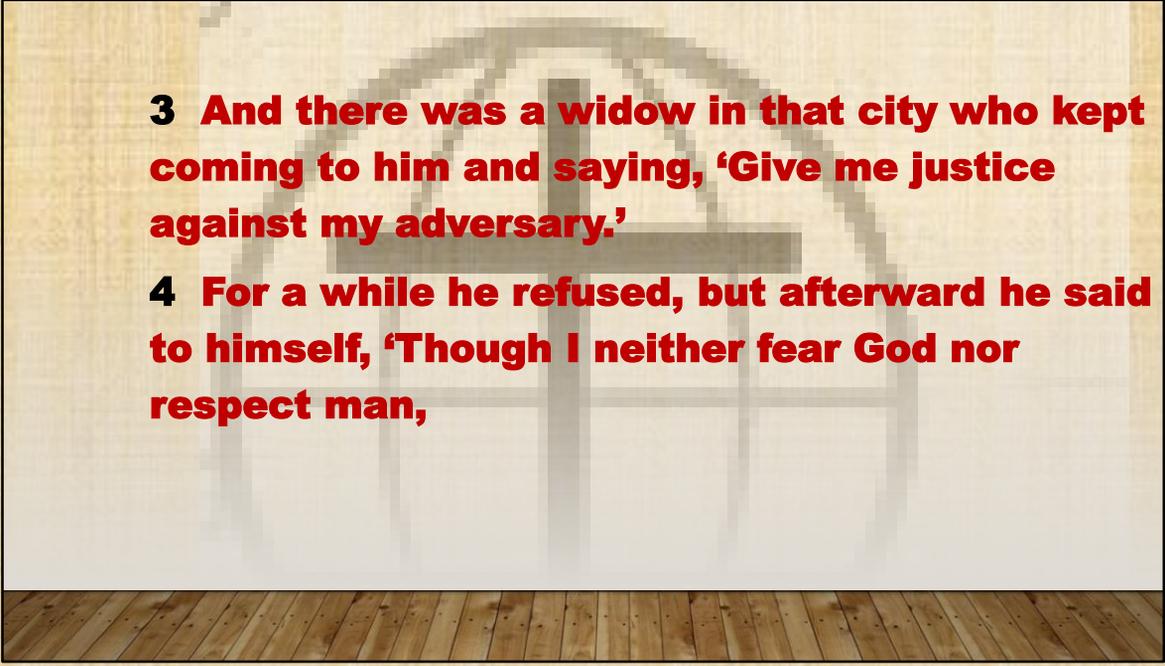
GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

OCTOBER 24, 2019

SCRIPTURE READING LUKE 18:1-8

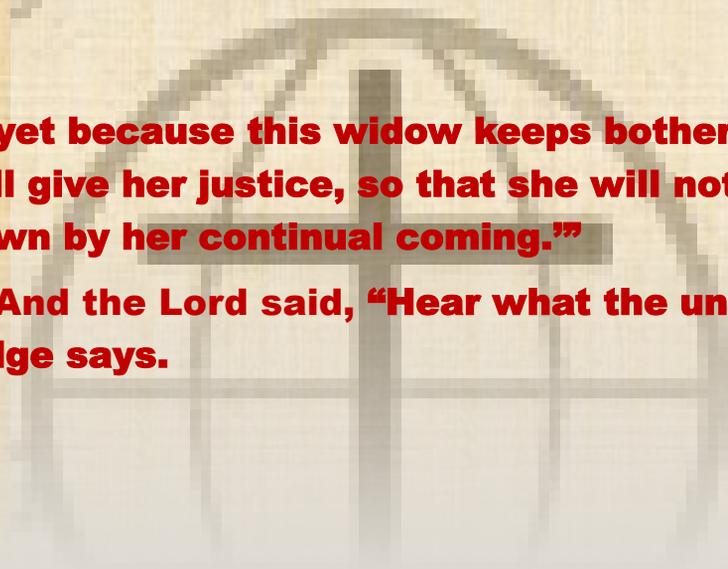
- **“1 ¶ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.**

2 He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.



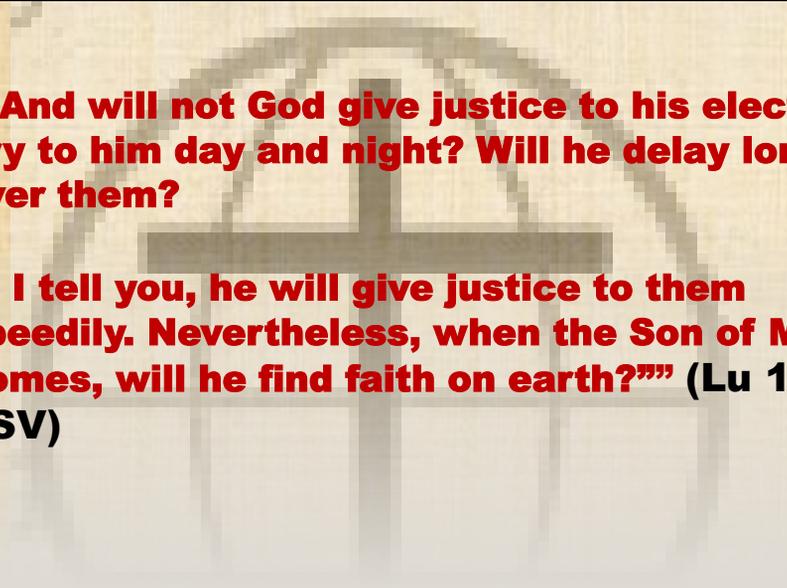
3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man,



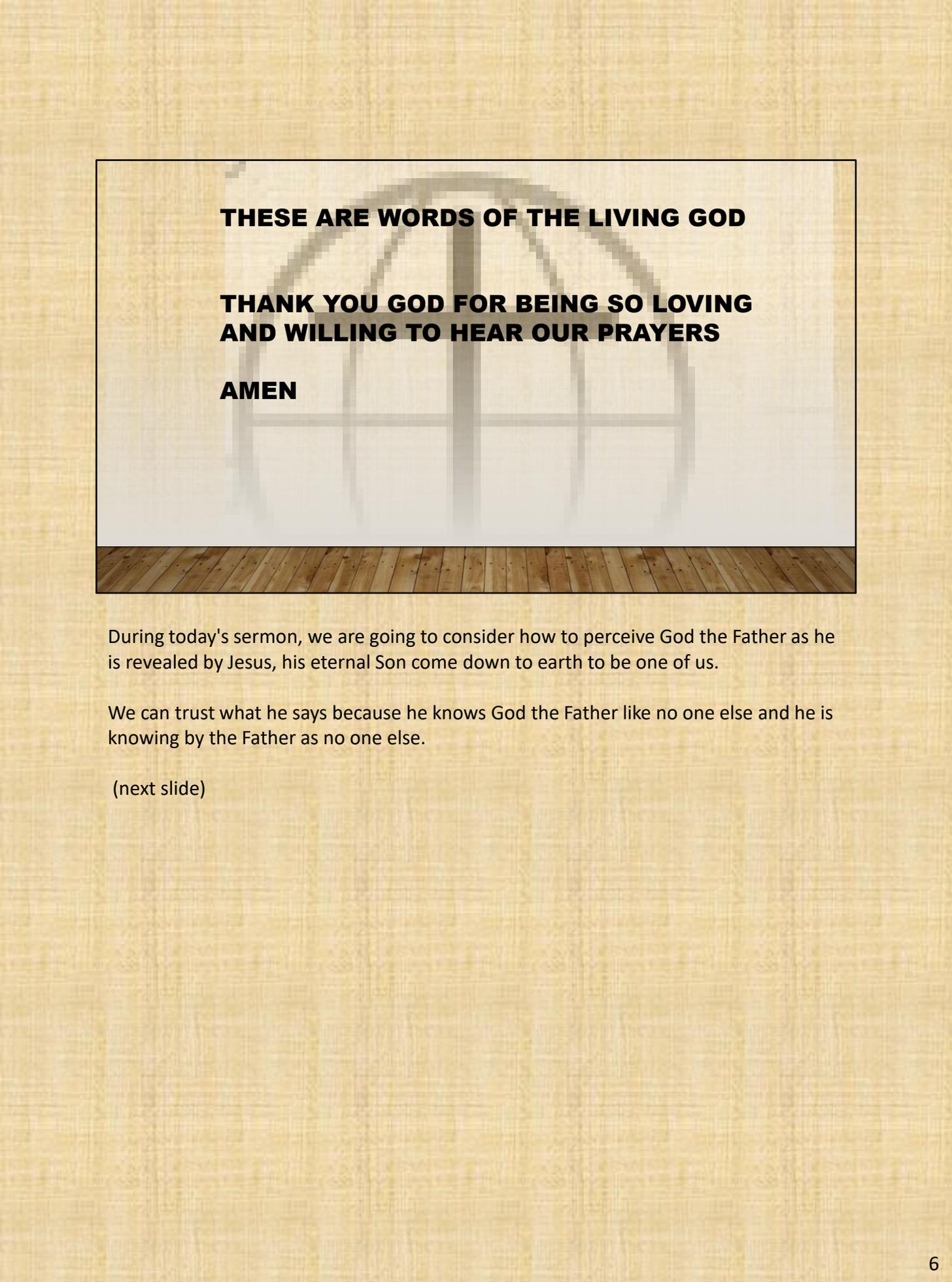
5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.”

6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says.



7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lu 18:1-8 ESV)



THESE ARE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD

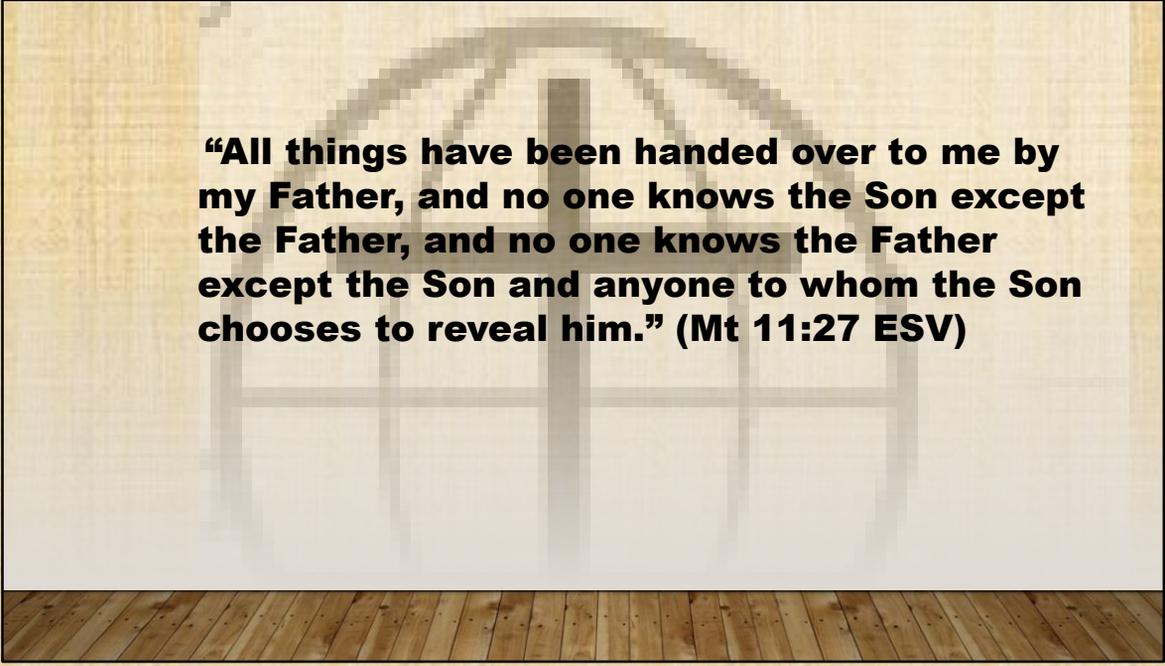
**THANK YOU GOD FOR BEING SO LOVING
AND WILLING TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS**

AMEN

During today's sermon, we are going to consider how to perceive God the Father as he is revealed by Jesus, his eternal Son come down to earth to be one of us.

We can trust what he says because he knows God the Father like no one else and he is knowing by the Father as no one else.

(next slide)



“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (Mt 11:27 ESV)

The point is that we can completely trust what Jesus says in his parables.

As God's people, one thing we need to appreciate is that we have been given the gracious gift of entering God's kingdom, a kingdom which is very different from the kingdom of this world.

The kingdom of God is not limited to geography. It is a spiritual kingdom which we can only enter through faith in Jesus.

**“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”” (Mt
4:17 ESV)**

**““The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has
anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He
has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and
recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty
those who are oppressed,” (Lu 4:18 ESV)**

**“and that repentance and forgiveness of sins
should be proclaimed in his name (Jesus’) to all
nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Lu 24:47 ESV)**

Jesus' kingdom was not like the popular expectation. He used the phrase "kingdom of God" with a different meaning. His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). It was not like the kingdoms of this world. It was the kingdom of God, a supernatural kingdom. It was invisible to most people (John 3:3)—it could not be understood or experienced without the Holy Spirit (verse 6). God is Spirit, and the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. (From: The Gospel: From the Bible to the World Today – GCI p. 5)

Gospel Statistics

What is the most common way to describe the good news? Here's how the word is most often used in the Bible:

- good news of Jesus Christ – 15 times
- good news of God – 9 times
- good news of the kingdom – 7 times
- my gospel, our gospel – 6 times
- the gospel of peace – 2 times
- good news of God's grace – 1 time
- good news of the glory of Christ – 1 time
- gospel of your salvation – 1 time

The Bible does not require any particular label for the message of Jesus and the message of the church. We can convey the meaning without insisting on any particular word.

From: The Gospel: From the Bible to the World Today -GCI

In the kingdom of God, we are always to pray. We are not to lose heart. In other words, even when things may get difficult, we are not to give up on prayer.

If we look of the context of chapter 18, in chapter 17, Jesus spoke to his disciples and said to them, **“Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!**

He then talks about unworthy servants.

We then have the cleansing on the 10 lepers. Of the 10 lepers where only one came back, **‘praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.’**

He then spoke to the Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom of God and how the Son of God would return at the most unexpected time.

In chapter 18, he prefaced the parable that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Why is that?

Because God is very different from any judges and people in authority in this world.

To make the point, Jesus begins by telling the story of the relationship between an unjust judge and a widow. She was having trouble with an adversary. He then concludes by showing how much God is different.

The point is, we are to accept God the Father as revealed by Jesus Christ.

Let us now consider how God is different from any judges of this world.

**I. THE WIDOW WAS
PLEADING WITH A
HUMAN JUDGE;
WE PRAY TO OUR
HEAVENLY
FATHER**



There's an old saying, "The wheel that squeaks gets the grease".

In human affairs, that is often the case, is it not? There is even a modality of doing so called "to make appeal"

Jesus said that the judge neither feared God nor respected man. In other words, the judge portrayed in this parable was arrogant. He did not respect the dignity of those before him.

Widows living during the time Jesus came to earth were in a very precarious state. They were often oppressed and defenseless.

God the Father is certainly unlike the unjust judge. He longs to hear from us. Human beings are precious in his eyes because we are created in his image.

They are loved so much that God has decided before our creation that Jesus would empty himself of his divinity and become one of us. He entered our alienation from God to restore our relationship with him.

"4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." (1Ti 2:4-6 ESV).

God is completely for us. There is no selfishness in him. We see it clearly in the Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we approach God, we can do it with confidence knowing that he cares for us so very deeply. God is very mindful of men.

Psalm 8 certainly testifies to this get great truths. This is what King David wrote:

“1 ¶ ‘TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.’ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

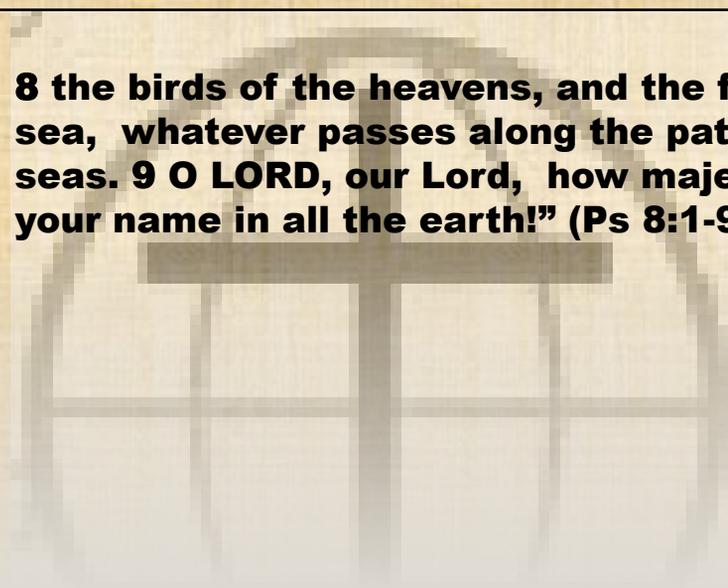
2 Out of the mouth of babes and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

3 ¶ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

**4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?**

**5 Yet you have made him a little lower than
the heavenly beings and crowned him with
glory and honor. 6 You have given him
dominion over the works of your hands; you
have put all things under his feet,**

**7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of
the field,**



8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Ps 8:1-9 ESV)

This Psalm is pointing to Jesus. It also shows us the importance of men and women in God's eyes.

There is no doubt, as insignificant as we are in this whole vast universe, physically speaking, we are not insignificant in God's eyes!

We are not to give up praying!

**II. THE JUDGE
CARED ONLY FOR
HIMSELF;THE
FATHER LOVES THE
WHOLE WORLD.**



I remember one time I asked my father to borrow his car. I had or I was hoping to have a date for that night. I was young, still thinking that I was invincible. It was a winter's night and it was snowing. My father initially said no.

When I look back at this event, he had the right answer. However, I pestered him so much that he gave in. When he gave in, I realized that I had broken him down. He agreed that I could have the car to go out. Since I realized, in my heart, that he did not really want to lend me the car, even when he said yes, I did not take it. My reaction was not perfect. I reacted in respect to my father but also out of stubbornness.

I know I have made the same mistake as my father did with my children. Sometimes I gave in when I shouldn't have.

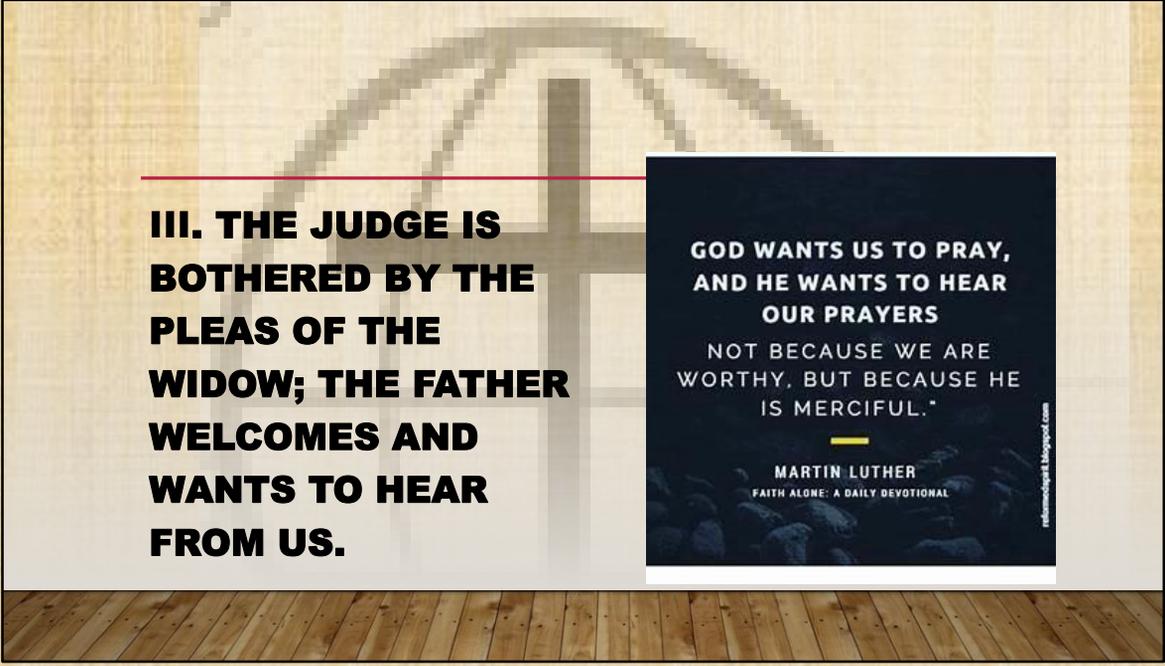
God is not like a human father; he always acts out of pure love. The judge in the parable granted the widow's wishes out of his selfishness to stop the pestering and the annoyance.

God's answers are always rooted in his perfect love. At times, sometimes he answers our prayers with a "no". He knows what is best for us and for the people we are praying

for. God doesn't play favourites.

Jesus is our high priest. He is our mediator. When he brings our prayers to the Father, they are purified and answered in God's perfect will. As we pray, we need to realize that the mind of the Father, the mind of the Son and the mind of the Holy Spirit is the same because they are one God in three distinct persons.

When we come to God, we trust him in his perfect will. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on the earth as it is in heaven."** **(Matthew 6:10).** In our brokenness, we acknowledge that God knows best, because we don't! His thoughts are so much superior to ours.



III. THE JUDGE IS BOTHERED BY THE PLEAS OF THE WIDOW; THE FATHER WELCOMES AND WANTS TO HEAR FROM US.

**GOD WANTS US TO PRAY,
AND HE WANTS TO HEAR
OUR PRAYERS**
NOT BECAUSE WE ARE
WORTHY, BUT BECAUSE HE
IS MERCIFUL."

MARTIN LUTHER
FAITH ALONE: A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

As human beings, it's difficult for us to hear other people's problems. After a while, it can wear us down. In fact, it is most enjoyable when we speak to someone who is doing well. If he or she is not doing well, we often do not know how to react. We may change the subject. We may feel very uncomfortable and at lost for words when many times, we simply need to begin by lovingly listening.

The unjust judge dealt with the widow who was persistent by caving in. He did it out of selfishness. He became tired of her persistence. He wanted her to go away.

On the other side of the coin, it is often difficult for us to be transparent with others. We need time to build trust.

We present our best self. It takes quite a bit of buildup confidence to open up to others. Many people end up feeling very lonely as a result.

In our society, people often seek professionals who are trained to listen, to avoid judgment and condemnation. Clients have the hope that they will be accepted warmly as they struggle through issues. Although, we can help one another as human beings, the ultimate answers to life can only be found in God.

With God, we do not have to fear. We can be completely transparent with him because he knows us completely and he still loves us. David said, **“3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.”** (Ps 139:3-4 ESV).

God is well aware that we are broken vessels.

We can approach God’s throne confidently with our prayers of thanksgiving, our prayers of praise in our prayers of burdens for ourselves and others.

God does not burn out. He never suffers from “compassion fatigue”. He does not avoid us because we have challenges or because we are fighting temptations or sins of some kind.

His desire is to hear us and to transform us in the likeness of the man Jesus, which is a good thing. He will change us and does change us by given us a brand new life, a brand new heart as we believe him!

In other words, God wants to be in relationship with us. We come to him in prayer knowing that he is ‘a safe and loving Father’.

**IV. THE JUDGE CAN
BE INFLUENCED BY
OUTSIDE FORCES
SUCH AS "NAGGING";
THE FATHER IS TRUE
TO WHO HE IS AS A
GOD OF LOVE.**



NOTHING
can separate us from
the love of God in Christ Jesus!
-Romans 8:38-39

As human beings, we can be quite fickle. Our love tends to be conditional. Too often, in human relationships, love is quid pro quo or contractual. If you give me something I'll give something back

"I will love you if." Love between people too often turns into disappointments, hurts which can lead to distancing, condescension, hatred and bitterness.

Marriages and families too often break up over such issues.

However, this is not so we God. God is love and he will not be influenced by outside forces.

Nothing we can do will change his character or his mind toward us. God's love is covenantal. This means that God's love out of his character and not out of a need for anything in return. God is completely giving and outgoing in his love.

God has a wrath. He has anger over sin and what it does to us. But it is not part of his fundamental character. His wrath is rooted in his love.

In the perfection of God's kingdom, when Jesus returns, when sin will be done away completely and evil will be no more, God will not express loving wrath because you will not need to. Jesus will reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1Cor. 15:25-26)

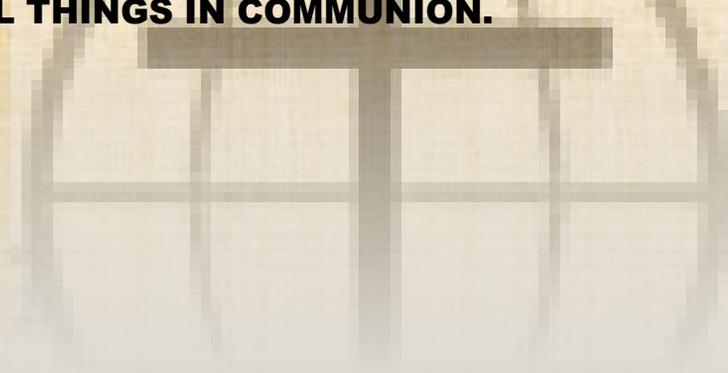
God the Father corrects us but it is always out of love.

Heb. 12:5, 11-14 (ESV)

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.”

“11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,

V. THE JUDGE "SAID TO HIMSELF" IN DETERMINING HOW HE WOULD PROCEED WITH THE WIDOW; THE FATHER NEVER TALKS TO HIMSELF; FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT SHARE ALL THINGS IN COMMUNION.



The whole God is involved in our prayers. When we pray, we participate in the ongoing eternal relationship of the triune God. The Father receives our prayers in and through Jesus who is the mediator between God and man. Jesus is both God and man in his person. Because we do not know what to pray, the Holy Spirit intervenes for us.

"26 ¶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Ro 8:26-27 ESV).

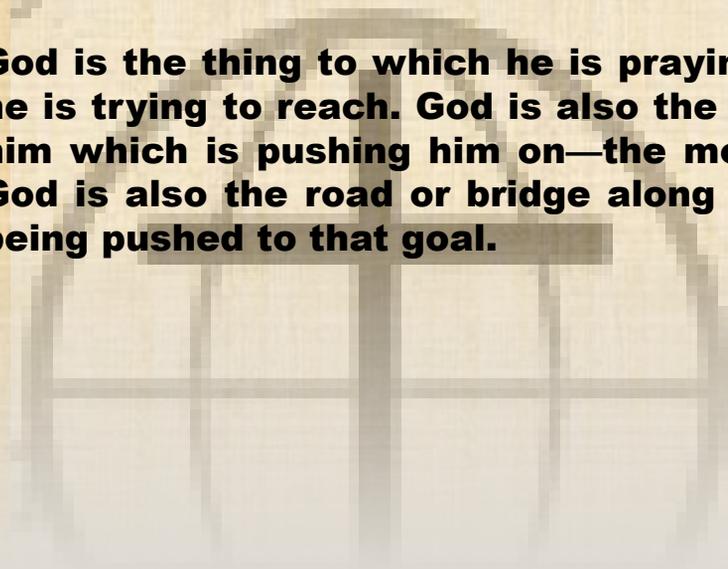
The whole God is involved in our prayers.

In Mere Christianity, the following is what CS Lewis said, "

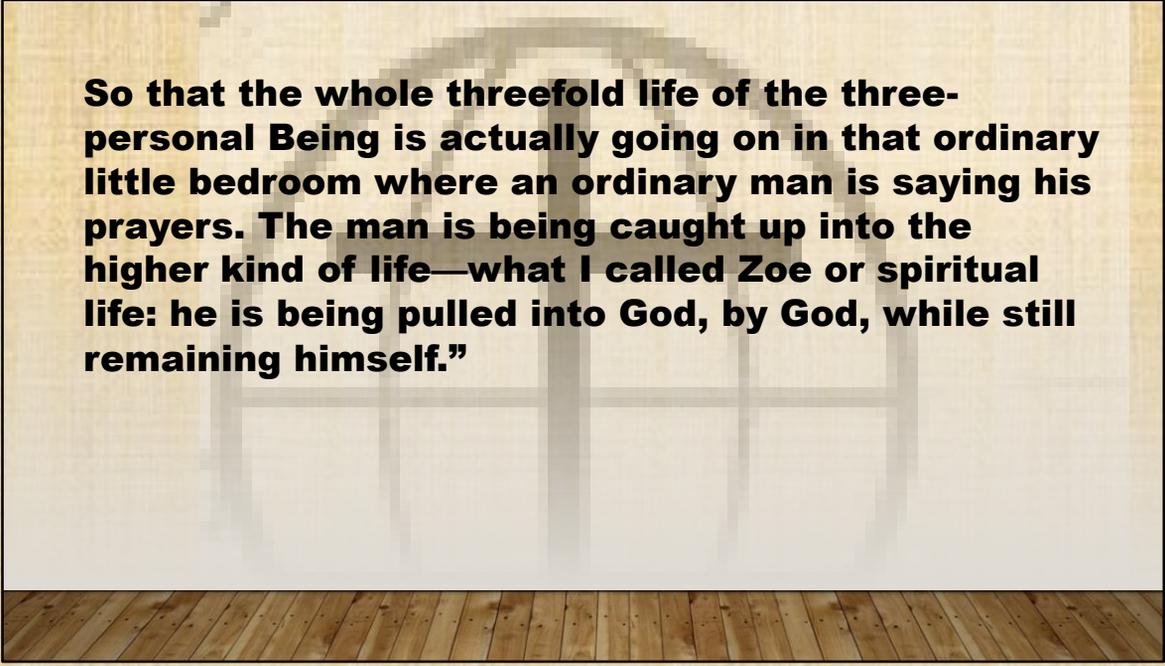
From Mere Christianity by CS Lewis P. 79)

You may ask, "If we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?" Well, there isn't any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time —tonight, if you like.

What I mean is this. An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening.



God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal.



So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers. The man is being caught up into the higher kind of life—what I called Zoe or spiritual life: he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself.”

How encouraging that God is such a loving God, so approachable, so turned towards us desiring a life-giving relationship with us!

How encouraging that we can come before his throne with assurance!

How comforting that we are called his beloved. He will never turn us away!

How uplifting it is that God receives our inadequate prayers perfectly in himself!

How encouraging to know that God lives in us and we live in him!

How thankful can we be to have been revealed such a precious knowledge as we have been given the privilege of entering his kingdom!!

Let us always turn to him in confidence for all things!

Let us pray