

FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“FAITH THAT DOESN’T QUIT”

Scripture Lesson: Luke 18: 1-8

*This sermon was preached by The Rev. Dr. L. Holton Siegling, Jr. on Sunday, October 19, 2025
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

Luke 18: 1-8

The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge

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

Faith That Doesn’t Quit

Leader: The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

What brings us to worship today? Is it a longing to praise the living God? Is it the rhythm of gathering here week after week, as natural as breathing? Are we here to pray for our children and friends, asking God to bless them and guide them? Or maybe our hearts are full of gratitude, and we cannot help but be here, expressing to God our thanksgiving for the blessings in our lives.

But maybe not. Maybe today our hearts feel heavy, carrying more questions than answers, more struggle than peace, more doubt than faith. Maybe we are here simply because, deep down, we know this is where we need to be. Whatever brings us here, one truth holds us all together: we come here today because God first came to us.

We are here because the Word made flesh, the Son of God, lived, died, and rose again. If it were not for Christ’s atoning work on the cross, not a single one of us would be in this sacred place. We are here because God sought us out and persisted with us. We who gather in this sanctuary as followers of Jesus Christ know that, at some point, God called our names.

Maybe it was through a parent or grandparent, maybe through Scripture or a hymn, maybe in silence or in sorrow. We may not be able to tell how God first moved in our hearts, but we do know this: at some point, God called, and we answered. And that is grace.

One of the most important things we can know about grace is that it is persistent. It is, as John Calvin said, irresistible, because God’s love does not grow weary and does not give up. God is like a shepherd who

leaves the ninety-nine to find the one who is lost. God is like the woman who lights a lamp and sweeps the whole house until she finds her missing coin. God is like the father who sees his prodigal son coming down the road and runs to meet him. God's love is wonderfully, relentlessly, and overwhelmingly persistent.

We witness such persistence in this morning's Old Testament lesson. The boy Samuel lies down to sleep in the temple. He is still young and still learning the ways of faith when he hears a voice calling his name. Three times he thinks it is Eli, his mentor. Three times Samuel gets up and runs to him, saying, "Here I am." Eli eventually realizes what is happening and tells Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if you hear the voice again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

Fortunately, the Lord calls Samuel a fourth time. Samuel listens, and everything changes. Samuel's story is a story about calling, but it is also a story about grace. God does not stop after the first try. God keeps calling, and Samuel learns to listen. In so many ways, that is the story of our lives too. God's grace keeps showing up, not because we are quick learners, but because God is patient and faithful.

Have we ever considered that this same divine persistence is what stirs us during stewardship season? Each year, we listen again to biblical imperatives that speak to the importance of giving from the substance of our lives. We pray, "God, how would you have me respond this year? How can I use what you have given me, my time, my talents, and my treasure, in service to you?" Stewardship is about listening for God's call and responding with gratitude to the only one who never stops loving, never stops giving, and never stops calling.

A similar message is found in our New Testament lesson. Jesus tells a parable about a widow, a woman with no power or position, pleading for justice before a judge who neither fears God nor respects people. Again and again the woman comes, saying, "Grant me justice," and again and again the judge refuses. But she does not give up. Eventually, the judge relents, not because he becomes just or compassionate, but because he grows tired. The woman wears him down.

Jesus is not saying that God is like that unjust judge. He is saying the opposite. If even an unjust judge can be moved by persistence, how much more will God, who loves justice and who sent his Son for our salvation, hear the prayers of those he loves?

There is something deeply instructive here for those of us trying to live out our faith in gratitude. We do not know exactly what each other's journeys of faith look like, and we do not know exactly how each other's prayers sound, but God does. God knows our prayers even before the words are on our tongues. Prayer is not about alerting God to our needs. Prayer is about developing in us a persistent faith that keeps coming to God, keeps asking, seeking, and knocking, and keeps being honest about what is on our hearts and minds.

The reason we can be persistent at all is because God was first persistent with us. Our New Testament lesson reminds us that God, who is rich in mercy, reshapes us every time we come to him in prayer. We are learning about God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Some of these lessons cannot be learned any other way.

And so we pray again and again. That same faithful posture is also an aspect of stewardship, because stewardship is an act of prayer. Each pledge we make is not about meeting a budget or keeping the lights on. Stewardship is about bearing witness to the God of all creation who has been wonderfully and persistently generous to us, first and foremost through grace.

God does not grow weary of forgiving us. But that does not mean we neglect God's commands or withhold our joyful response. The Apostle Paul asks, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul is not telling us to sin recklessly, nor is he telling us to pretend sin does not exist. Rather, he reminds us that our obedience flows not from fear or obligation, but from love and gratitude.

Like a parent who asks a child to clean their room, God desires our lives to be in order, not because we are afraid, but because we belong to him. We are already in the household of God. Our response is rooted in love.

God does not grow weary in loving us, even when we grow weary. There are times when our prayers feel unanswered, or our giving feels unnoticed, and we wonder whether our faithful response really makes a difference. It does. What matters most is the attitude of our hearts.

The cross and the empty tomb stand as eternal testimony that God does not give up on his people. Even when we falter, God remains steadfast. Even when we hold back, God continues to pour out blessings. Our faithful response, whether through giving, serving, or praying, is meant to live in harmony with God's divine persistence.

In a world exhausted by conflict and division, what we need most is not another argument, campaign, or social media post. What we need are persistent people of hope: people who keep praying, keep loving, and keep giving. That is what the church is called to be, a community whose faithful persistence bears witness to God's unrelenting grace.

Friends, stewardship is not about what the church wants from us. It is about what God wants for us. God wants us to experience the joy of living generously, the freedom of trusting him fully, and the peace that comes from placing our treasure and our hearts in his hands.

When God calls our name, in this season or any season of life, and when we hear that quiet nudge of the Spirit inviting us to listen and respond, let us remember Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Let us also remember the widow who kept knocking.

For the same God who called Samuel, who heard the widow's cry, and who raised Jesus from the dead, is calling to us. He calls us to faith, to gratitude, and to persistent love. So let us keep listening, keep praying, and keep giving.

May our persistence be an expression of our praise, a faith that does not quit, and a living testimony to the God whose grace never gives up.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.