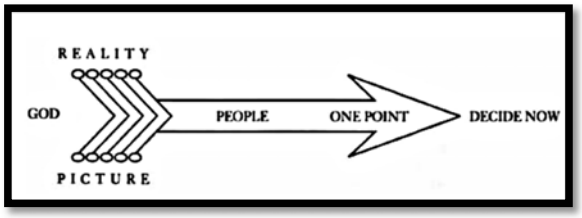
Chutzpah – parables in Luke 11 & 18

1. Introduction

a. As we saw last time parables are a story or mini drama that uses familiar pictures to make a particular point. The purpose of the parable is to enable us to engage with and relate to kingdom truths in a way that awakens our senses and our emotions. Having done this the story then confronts us with an unexpected conflict or action and leads us to a point where we are called to respond with a decision or an application to our lives.

i Opening statement.
ii Introduction of the cast.
iii Plot of the story.
iv Conflict.
v Conflict resolution.
vi Call to decision



b. As we now begin to look at the parables of Jesus we want to be drawn into the story and connect with God. To gain insight into His character and His ways and to respond in a way that brings us into agreement with His desires.

2. Contrast parables

a. We are going to begin by looking at two partner parables. These parables are very closely related to one another, not only in the word-pictures that they use in humorous mini-dramas but also in the one major theme that emerges from the plots of both stories. Jesus often used dual parables to drive home a point.

b. In the earliest sources of the Gospel record, strong evidence supports the use of partner illustrations that reinforce each other in parallel sayings and parables. As we look at the parables we will look at these partner parables e.g. the "lost" parables, the "master" parables. Today we are looking at what I call the "persistent prayer" parables.

c. The problem with prayer is God. The great barrier many face during prayer is not the words or the liturgy but rather the way one understands the nature of God. In order to challenge one's concept of God, Jesus employed humorous story parables to make his listeners redefine their view of God's character.

d. The two parables we are considering are contrast-parables. The exaggerated behaviour of the person who refused to help a friend in need and the judge who did not care about a helpless widow is reversed in the character of God. The exaggerated role reversal of the parables employs the Jewish principle of the light and the weighty (*kal vechomer*).

i On the light (*kal*) side, if a person will respond to the persistent demands of a friend or if a corrupt judge will be moved to act on behalf of a widow only because of her constant annoying complaints,

then how much more

ii on the weighty (*chomer*) side will God answer the prayers of his people?

e. The rabbis in the early tannaitic literature customarily used this principle of interpretation by saying *al achat kamah vekamah* (ובמה במה אחת צל), *"how much more,"* at the transition point between the light side of the argument and the weighty. The cartoonlike images of the

friend and the judge may be known in human behaviour, but it is absurd to suggest that God would behave in such a manner. The Lord is merciful and full of grace. God is the opposite of a bad friend or a corrupt judge.

f. Jesus is teaching about prayer by illustrating the divine character. God is a good friend. He is a righteous judge. As a friend he is trustworthy and as a judge he is fair. God is unlike human beings, who in their weaknesses are consumed by their self-interests and show little concern for other people.

g. By giving a comical characterisation of what God is not like, Jesus teaches his listeners what God is like. God is one's good and trusted friend. He is a righteous and conscientious judge who helps those who are in need. Thus the parables deal with the core of the problem of prayer. They describe the divine nature by opposites.

3. The friend at midnight

Opening context - hospitality

a. When visiting Lebanon one of the things you quickly realise about the middle east is the high value placed on hospitality. Everyone's home is open to whoever should visit and you will immediately be offered refreshments. Their hospitality is their way of honouring their guest in a culture that is based on honour and shame. In the Middle East, hospitality is more than the courteous thing to do; it is an important obligation. To neglect hospitality to a guest is unthinkable. This is the background of Jesus' Parable of the Friend at Midnight (11:5-8).

Luke 11:5-8 *And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, **6** for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; **7** and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? **8** I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence[c] he will rise and give him whatever he needs.*

b. As in any family in the middle east Jesus was raised in a culture where hospitality was a high value. The Jewish people from Abraham on down honoured their guests:

   i Abraham prepared a meal for his three (angel) visitors (Genesis 18:3-8).

   ii Lot perceived his obligation towards his (angel) guests was even greater than his responsibility for the welfare of his own daughters (Genesis 19:2-8).

   iii Laban, Jethro, Samuel, David, the Shunamite woman, and others offered hospitality.

c. With such a high value and no corner convenience stores you can imagine the acute sense of anxiety of the man whose friend arrives for a visit about midnight. The man inside the house had obligations to his neighbour, who was in turn obliged to provide a meal for his unexpected guest. The visitor travelling through the area would expect traditional hospitality. His friend, moreover could rely on other people in his village to assist him in fulfilling his obligation as a host. In many ways the visitor is considered a guest of the whole village.

The characters and plot - Friendship

d. So the man goes to his neighbour's house and calls to his neighbour inside, probably waking him, and appeals to him as a friend. Friendship is one of the important elements of this parable. Notice that the word "friend" is used four times in these few verses:

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, [6] for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'……. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

e. Jesus point is this: As strong as the bond of friendship is, it isn't strong enough to get the man out of his bed in the middle of the night.

The conflict - Denial

f. The typical poor Israelite family lived in a one-room house. And in many poorer homes, the house also served as a part-time stable for the family's few sheep, goats, and chickens. All family members would sleep in the same room, sometimes on a raised platform, perhaps 18 inches higher than the floor of the rest of the house, so the family could eat and sleep without constant intrusions by their animals. Family members usually slept with their clothes on, covering themselves with the cloaks they had worn during the day. They would bed down side-by-side on straw mats rolled out at night.

g. The door was locked, too. Since the door was locked, the friend couldn't just let himself in and get the bread he needed. The father would have to get up quietly from the sleeping area, find the bread in the food storage area, and cross the area where the animals were near the door, unlock the door, and give the bread to his neighbour. There would be no way to keep the whole household from waking up. As strong as his friendship with the man is, it isn't strong enough for him to wake up his whole family

Conflict resolution - boldness

h. But the man's "boldness" tips the scale in Jesus' parable. The Greek word is the noun *anaideia*, "persistence, impudence," or literally, "shamelessness". This persistence, or even, impertinence, is captured in the Hebrew word "*Chutzpa"* which means supreme self-confidence. The Jewish people are so famous for their *chutzpa* that the word has transitioned into modern language to describe someone who has the cheek or the guts to stand up for what they believe is rightfully theirs.

i. The *chutzpah* displayed in this parable demonstrates its great value as a characteristic to be esteemed and employed for the benefit of others. We see this in Moses when he pleads with God to forgive the people when they made the golden calf.

Exodus 32:11-12 *And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. [10] Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you." But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? [12] Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.*

j. Moses' love for the people constrained him to implore God on their behalf. He demonstrates extreme boldness in prayer and God responds. We see Jesus' positive response to similar boldness in the gospels. On several occasions Jesus responds to someone who displays strong willed determination by saying, *"Your faith has saved you."*

k. Consider the friends who made a hole in the roof to lower down their friend, the woman who pressed through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus' garment or the woman who

broke into Simeon's house with a bottle of ointment to pour over Jesus' feet. In each case their *chutzpa* is equated with faith.

l. The point of the parable, of course, is the importance of persistence, of never giving up. But Jesus' expression, "because of the man's shamelessness" is remarkable. The friend has no sense of decency of waiting until morning, of not disturbing his sleeping neighbour. He goes at midnight and knocks -- for some bread! And he shamelessly keeps on knocking until his neighbour gets up and shoves bread at him just to shut him up. Shamelessness! Brashness! Boldness! Chutzpah! That's what the parable illustrates.

m. By this time, Jesus' hearers are chuckling. The picture Jesus has painted has them imagining the man outside pounding, and the neighbour inside stumbling over children and chickens in order to get bread to the door as fast as he can. It is a humorous story. But now Jesus makes the point.

Call to action – ask, seek, knock

Luke 11:11-13 *What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent;* ***12*** *or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?* ***13*** *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

n. Jesus gives us three word pairs that have to do with prayer. In each pair first is the action, the second is the result. The first word in each pair is in the Greek present tense that can carry the idea of "Do this (and keep on doing it)." The second word in each pair is in the future tense, the expectation, the promise.

   i "*Ask and it will be given to you*."

   ii "*Seek and you will find*."

   iii *Knock and the door will be opened to you*."

o. These three word pairs are not designed to express something different? They are an example of Hebrew *synonymous parallelism*. Each reinforces the other in the ways we are encouraged to think of our seeking from God - of petitions (ask), of finding what eludes us (seek), and of obtaining an audience with the person inside (opened). Each of these three statements are ways of talking about prayer without ceasing. We are to pray "shamelessly," if you will. In season and out of season, not flagging in our prayers until we receive the promise, or until God answers or directs us to pray differently.

4. The Persistent Widow

Opening context - justice

Luke 18:1 8- *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 afterwards 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?"*

a. Luke reveals the point of the parable in advance: "that they should always pray and not give up". The word translated "always" is Greek *pantote*, "always, at all times." The word "prayer" is the common Greek word *proscheuomai*, "to petition a deity, pray." Jesus is teaching continual prayer, again and again, rather than continuous, non-stop prayer. To "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:3) is to pray repeatedly, time and again.

b. I've heard Bible teachers say that once you've asked God for something that it displays lack of faith to ask for it again, since you ought to believe you already have received it. But Jesus teaches clearly that we are to continue to pray until we receive the answer. That continued prayer is not a sign of little faith, but of persistent faith.

c. The danger is that we get discouraged and quit praying. The word translated "lose heart" is Greek *enkakeō*, "to lose one's motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity, lose enthusiasm, be discouraged." Jesus is saying keep praying and don't give up.

The characters and the conflict

d. This parable presents two very different characters, a judge and a widow, who are in conflict over the widow's demand for justice.

e. The phrase "feared God" refers to piety, faith in God, and recognition that God will judge the sons of men. The judge had no regard for God's justice. The word "respected" is Greek *entrepō*, "to show deference to a person, have regard for, respect,'" in this context "who showed deference to no human." The judge is not a man-pleaser. Neither does he respect the special needs of the poor and oppressed. He is independent or thinks he is. He isn't overly concerned about public opinion.

f. He was concerned with himself, his own opinions, his own comfort, his own income. In verse 6, Jesus calls him unjust. The judge was arrogant, self-absorbed, and unjust, a powerful man facing down one of the weakest members of society, a widow.

g. Widows had a difficult place in in first century Israel. Normally, the wife of a deceased husband had no legal right to inherit her husband's estate, so when her husband died, she couldn't take for granted living in his house on his land. If her deceased husband had no children, the estate reverted to her husband's male relatives on his father's side, his brothers, his father's brothers, and then the nearest family kinsman.

h. If she had grown children things would be easier; they would take care of her. But a widow with small children might well have to contend for property rights with her in-laws, and if they didn't happen to like her, things could be difficult.

i. We don't know how the widow was being cheated, but her judge was on her opponent's side. She didn't have money for lawyers and was probably at her wits end. But there is one thing we know about her, she was persistent.

j. The phrase "kept coming" indicates repeated or continued action in the past. She hadn't come just once, but many times. She didn't take "no" for an answer. Instead, every time court was in session, here would be the widow demanding the justice to which she was entitled.

Conflict resolution

k. Finally, out of pure expediency—not out of a conversion to the legitimacy of justice—the judge gave her some attention. The Greek word for "she will wear me out" is *bypopiazo,* a word used for boxing. It has the meaning of giving someone a black eye! This implies that the judge would be injured in some way – either physically or maybe his honour would be brought into question. Whatever, the fear of things getting out of hand results in him conceding to her demands.

Call to action

l. This parable talks about the unjust judge as a contrast with God. In making this point, Jesus says*: "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily" (vv. 7–8)*. The phrase "day and night" emphasises the consistent, persistent cry.

m. The God we serve is a God who vindicates and avenges His people. We know that when we are wronged or exploited, we may not seek vengeance. Vengeance is not on the agenda for the Christian. So does God say that vengeance itself is a bad thing? No. He says, *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19)*. Our God is an avenging God. He will right every wrong that His people have experienced. Our responsibility is to be persistent in prayer and not give up.

5. Conclusion

a. When these two parables of Jesus are studied together we see faith is defined as tenacious persistence. The person commits all of his or her needs to God in true faith. Instead of seeing *chutzpa* as something negative Jesus shows us that God considers it as positive. It demonstrates our faith.

b. Prayer with expectant faith in the nature of God may be expressed with bold persistence and brazen tenacity. Knowing who God is and recognising our place in the divine scheme of creation will build a solid life of prayer with perseverance even in the greatest hardship. Hence Jesus' final statement here: "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

c. When Jesus returns will He find people who are still believing God is good even though the entire world has turned evil? Will Jesus find elect on the earth who will give themselves to crying out day and night, even in the midst of the most intense pressure ever known to humanity? Will Jesus find faith in the heart of His people—that God will avenge them—that God is just—that there is no fault in the judgments of God.

d. As those living in these present days as we await the return of our King this is a call to perseverance in the midst of rising evil on planet earth. This is a call to not grow weary in prayer. This is a call to remain steadfast until the Son of Man comes.

e. As we gather week by week in our little prayer room so we persevere in prayer. It often seems weak, it often feels repetitive and there are times we can feel like giving up. But both these parables show us the high value God places upon our persistent prayers because they are evidence of our faith in his goodness and faithfulness. If a poor widow and a simple friend could persevere then surely we, the sons of our Father in Heaven empowered by the Holy Spirit can pray and not give up!

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