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22nd Sunday after Pentecost
20 October 2013
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Gen 32.22-30; Lk 18.1-8

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

To what shall you compare your God?
Is your God stronger than a tornado?
Or firmer than a mountain?
More awesome than the ocean or the best of creation?
What is your God like?
How do you compare the incomparable?

Our first thought is to think of the very best and say He's better.
Or the strongest and He is stronger yet!

That's how we think of our God: as big, powerful, mighty, strong.
Our God is an awesome God!

But that's not the way Jesus does it.
When He looks for a way to compare God He pulls out the unjust judge—
who neither feared God nor respected man!

Why?
Because we're much more likely to relate to an unjust judge than the most powerful.
We can imagine things that are awesome, but we rarely meet anyone quite like it.
Instead, we all know someone like this unjust judge.
In fact, we're a lot like him, too.

How often does a mother give in to her child's constant nagging?
How often does a husband give what his wife wants without any care for her at all?
And how often does the pastor decide: this isn't worth the fight?

We know what it's like to give in—to buckle under pressure, to decide it's not worth the effort.

Jesus says, "*Hear what the unrighteous judge says.*
And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night?" (Lk 18:6)

The judge has no sympathy, no love of God, no care for the neighbor.
He's a worthless person, and a strict judge.
And yet, even he will fold under the demands of an old, incessant widow.

How much more will your God and Lord give you what you desire?
But you're not even half of this widow!

That's the point of today's Gospel—at least, that's the Law for today:
you've got a God so willing to give and bless and give some more,
but you won't even open your mouth to whisper a prayer at all!

There's no time in the day.
 I'll do it later.
 He doesn't even care.
 He already knows, what's the point?
 I don't know how.
 It's too much work.

Any more excuses to add to the list?
 Why won't you pray?
 And when you pray, why do you think you've done something great?
 Why's it always about you?

Repent!

Be like this widow in today's Gospel, or Jacob, from the OT.

When you want something from God, don't let go of Him until He gives it to you.
 Jacob wrestled a man by the Jabbok until the break of day.
 That man was God in the flesh.
 Technically, we call him the *pre-incarnate Christ*—
 that is, the second person of the Trinity before taking flesh of the Virgin Mary.

Jacob didn't let go of the God-man until He blessed him. (Gen 32:26)
 Maybe he had God in a headlock—I don't know.
 What I do know is that he held God to His promise.
 He knew what God was like and wouldn't let Him be otherwise.

Same with the widow.
 The unjust judge says, "*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.*" (Lk 18:4-5)

Her demands were jabs to the jaws.
 If the judge didn't give in, he'd have a black-eye!

Look at the fervency of their prayers!
 How adamant their demands for justice and mercy!
 Then look at how often you neglect your prayers, your devotions as a family.

Repent.

For your Lord isn't the unjust judge—but like him: answering the prayers of the faithful.
 He's the God who gives.
 And He won't be thought of otherwise.

He desires to bless you, to give you the kingdom, to feed and nourish and unite Himself to you!

At your Baptism He put His name on you.
He gave His name so that you would *call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.*

More than that, He's given you the words to pray in the *Lord's Prayer*.
He's given you *Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (Col 3:19).
And He's brought you into the Church, whose life is constant prayer.

You need this.
You need this Church.
Because you need Jesus.

If we're honest, none of us is like this widow or Jacob.
Our worship and prayers have faltered.
We've all told someone we'd pray for them and promptly forgot all about it.
We've day-dreamed through Church,
 been too busy or tired to get the kids to pray at night,
 we've been rushed to finish the meal.

Our prayers are far from perfect—
 even when we do pray, we're self-centered and hardly persistent.

But Jesus—*He* is our intercessor.
He never stops asking the Father for you.
His pursuit is relentless—
 He didn't stop even in the courts of Pilate,
 or with the nails and mocking and hatred.
Death itself couldn't separate Jesus' prayers from the Father.
And even now, risen and ascended,
 our Lord Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father praying *for you*.

He wrestled God for justice even to the close of the day.
And while His hip was put out of joint by the cross, He held on all the tighter.
And was blessed.

He presented His demands before the Father's face, begging for justice, the forgiveness of sin—
 until finally the Father caved in.

Jesus prays relentlessly *for you*.
That's why God gives us all things, *even without our prayer* (as the Catechism says),
 and yet we pray that He would give us all these things, that His name be glorified in us.

So let us always pray and not lose heart—for you are in Christ, and in Him is every blessing.
In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit