

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 20, 2019

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Luke 18:1-8

REFLECT: “That’s not fair!” Children instinctively know when something is unjust. For younger children, it is difficult to accept that we don’t always get what we want. As we get older, it’s even harder to accept that bad things happen, even to good people who try to do the right thing.

In today’s parable, the widow seeks justice. She is not asking the judge for a favor or special treatment. She simply wants what is right and fair! She continues to pester and bother him, even when he rebuffs her. The judge finally gives in—not because he has changed his heart or wants to do the right thing, but to make her go away and leave him alone.

Many interpret this story as encouragement to persist in prayer. That may be; in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, it is clear that we should pray without ceasing! But God also trusts us to use our gifts, and to take action. At times, we must advocate and fight for what is right! Sometimes, making a fuss is the best choice!

RESPOND: The widow had to fight to be heard, and it took many tries to get results. Today’s story reminds us that even small voices can stand up to power. In the Way of Love, we are called to learn. What are the needs of your community? Is there something you’d like to change? Plan a family meeting to brainstorm ways to serve others. Pray together, and look for Scripture that might guide you. You could build a little library, collect supplies for homeless neighbors, or make signs and march for justice in a protest. All the better if the project requires coming back again and again (just like the widow had to do!)

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: AMANDA WISCHKAEMPER



Amanda Wischkaemper is devoted to telling and hearing stories, building relationships, and finding reasons to laugh. She is a professional actor, dialect coach, theatre educator, and dog-person. In her 13th year of Episcopal Children’s Formation, she currently serves as Director of Children’s Ministry at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, alongside her Music Director husband (Mark), and turbo-toddler (Abby).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Genesis 32:22-31

REFLECT: Do you ever feel like you have wrestled with God? Have you ever wondered if it is really God who is pushing you to do something hard?

Jacob was struggling. He was afraid and unsure of what to do. We all know that feeling, and we all need to remember that God is there with us in our struggles. During his struggle, Jacob asks for God's blessing. That's really all God wants to hear. God blesses Jacob and sends him on his way a changed man. He is alive, has a new name, but he also has a limp! Struggle leaves us changed for better or worse, but we grow with every struggle that we work through with God.

RESPOND: Use play dough or pipe cleaners to think about a struggle you are going through. The problems that we work through bend us and twist us in many ways – one direction and then another. How does your pipe cleaner or play dough look after playing with it for a while? You really can't make it just as it was before. How will we look different when we get through with the next struggle? Pray as you go through the twists and turns. God is with you, ready to bless you at the end.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa Puccio is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 18:1-8

REFLECT: This reading is not about the need to bother God incessantly so our prayers will be answered. Rather, it is about God desiring to hear our prayers and to grant justice to all. But what does justice look like? It looks like this: all know that they are beloved children of God. It looks like respecting the honor and dignity of all. It looks like taking care of the poor, the vulnerable, and the outcast. It looks like, on a very basic level, opening our eyes and seeing those whom the world would rather not see.

RESPOND: In your daily lives, are there places you see injustice? In the cafeteria, are there people who sit alone? When you travel to school or work, do you see homeless people on the streets? Talk about the different injustices you see and make a plan to do one thing this week to participate with God in granting justice, even if it's just for a moment. It matters.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 18:1-8

REFLECT: My friend Kathy taught me to look for hearts in the world around me. She learned it when praying in her flower garden, after she pulled a petal from a rose. The heart-shaped petal sat perfectly in her palm, and it was as if God was speaking to her, “Trust me with all your cares Kathy, and I’ll show you over and over again my great love for you.” She passed the petal on to me and with it, the quest to not lose heart: to keep looking for God to show up in the difficult and the hard spaces of my life. Later, I found a heart on the concrete: two raindrops striking the same spot to leave a wet heart shape, which served as a reminder on the day my husband lost his job that God was for us and still is. God keeps appearing in the heart-shaped rocks found in nature that my youngest and I collect in our travels, a reminder of God’s wink to the two of us that while we may wander and wonder, God stays with us, always.

I used to be confounded when my mother, a woman of prayer, would say, “God will use what God will use.” It was her way of saying that God’s vessel of choice to accomplish God’s will may very well be through just or unjust judges, as in flower petal reminders or today’s Gospel. God will use what God will use.

RESPOND: Draw a heart on a sticky note and post it where you need a reminder not to lose heart. God isn’t finished with your story. Don’t give up. Keep praying, keep searching, and then start looking for the hearts in the world around you. God will use what God will use.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KARIANN LESSNER



KariAnn Lessner has led youth and children’s ministries in The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas for over twenty years. Currently the Minister for Children and Families at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, she loves serving as a summer camp session director at Camp Allen and is a frequent speaker to women’s groups throughout Texas. In addition, she produces the podcast “You Brew You,” where she sits down with folks to share what God is brewing in their lives in the hopes that each person is infused with grace and courage by the other’s faith. She enjoys spending time with her family, hammocking, reading, and sipping sun tea in the great outdoors.

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