

To Speak in Parables

Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them

The Parable of the Unjust Judge

For Openers:

- ◇ Describe an encounter with the law that you have had.
- ◇ Do you think that justice was reached in the O.J. Simpson trial? Will it be reached in the Enron business?
- ◇ When have you prayed most fervently?

For Your Information:

- ◇ Read the following passages to get a sense of the context in which Jesus' parable would have been heard. Especially note in these passages what characteristics good judges are to have.

Leviticus 19.15 You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.

Deuteronomy 1.16-17 I [Moses] charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. 17 You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's."

2 Chronicles 19.6-7 Jehoshaphat said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you judge not on behalf of human beings but on the Lord's behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. 7 Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes."

Psalms 7.11 God is a righteous judge.

Psalms 68.5 Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.

Deuteronomy 10.17-18 For the LORD your God is ... not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who executes justice for the orphan and the widow.

Zechariah 7.9-10 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; 10 do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

- ◇ Read the Parable of the Unjust Judge in Luke 18.1-8.

Luke 18.1-8

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 certain judge who neither feared God nor had respect for anyone. ³ In that city there was a widow and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' ⁴ For a while he did not wish to; but after these [appeals] he said to himself, 'Even if I do not fear God and have no respect for anyone, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps causing me trouble, 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?"

Regarding widows (from B. B. Scott, *Hear Then...*, p. 180): According to the customs of the day, a marriage contract stated a husband's obligations to his wife, and on his death she had a right to be supported out of his estate as specified in the contract. The widow had no legal right to inherit. Normally a husband's estate would take care of a widow's needs. But the normal condition was by no means universal. Many widows and their children were left destitute. So common was this state of affairs that "widow" came to mean not simply a woman whose husband was dead but also one who had no means of financial support and thus needed special protection.

For Your Consideration:

- 1) Even knowing how the judge is characterized in verse 2, why does he not help the widow?
- 2) How else might have you expected this story to end? To put it another way, how else could you have composed the judge's speech to himself in verses 4-5 and still maintained the point that persistent prayer will be rewarded?
- 3) Did the widow have a just cause against her opponent? Does it make any difference to the judge? Does it make any difference to you?
- 4) What are the similarities and differences between Jesus' parable and the passage from Sirach 35:13-22 printed in the right margin?
- 5) An interpretation to the parable is given in verses 1 and 6-8. Is this the only valid interpretation possible?
- 6) According to this interpretation, how are we to pray? Whose prayer is answered? How will God answer prayer?
- 7) Discuss this parable in terms of what it says about the Kingdom of God.
- 8) In the parable in verses 3 and 5, the widow's "coming" to the judge is emphasized. In verse 8, the same word for "coming" is used to describe the Son of Man's action. How might the widow and the Son of Man be alike?
- 9) Think about this: When Judgment Day comes, do you want God to be a 'just' judge or an 'unjust' judge with regard to your case?

For Later:

- ◇ Read—and try to memorize—Romans 5:8. How is this verse similar to the parable?
- ◇ Pray for something that you believe to be God's will but that you also think will never be able to happen in this world!

Sirach 35:13-22*

¹³ For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold. ¹⁴ Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; ¹⁵ and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality. ¹⁶ He will not show partiality to the poor; but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. ¹⁷ He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. ¹⁸ Do not let the tears of the widow run down her cheek ¹⁹ as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall? ²⁰ The one whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. ²¹ The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and it will not rest until it reaches its goal; it will not desist until the Most High responds ²² and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment.

**Sirach is a book in the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha consists of those books which were included in the ancient Greek versions of our Old Testament but were not in the Hebrew. Roman Catholics regard the Apocrypha as Scripture on the same level as the rest of the Bible. Protestants regard these books as important and informative but not canonical.*

