



## **Living in God's Amazing Grace**

Synod Assembly  
10-11 June 2006

Mark Vitalis Hoffman  
LTSG

**Southwestern Minnesota Synod**

*of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America*

To Speak in Parables  
Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

Parables function as metaphors  
challenging or inviting the audience  
into a new or deeper experience of  
God's dominion, a dominion  
identified with those who are the  
**LAST LOST LEAST LITTLE  
LIFELESS**

To Speak in Parables  
Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

## **The Parables of Jesus**

- Keep in mind the context
- Parables are to be experienced
- Expect to be surprised
- We can expect a consistency in Jesus' message related to the dominion of God and how it is experienced in surprising, even scandalous, but always grace-filled ways

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  
Luke 18.1-9

Mark Vitalis Hoffman  
[www.CrossMarks.com](http://www.CrossMarks.com)

## **On 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.

## **On Widows**

*Psalm 68.5*

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

### On Judges:

*Zechariah 7.9-10*

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

*Deuteronomy 10.17-18*

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

### On Widows and Judges

Sirach 35:13-22

The Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality. <sup>16</sup> He will not show partiality to the poor; but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. <sup>17</sup> He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. <sup>18</sup> Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek <sup>19</sup> as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall? <sup>20</sup> The one whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. <sup>21</sup> 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 <sup>22</sup> and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment.

### On Widows and Judges:

- **Widows** are among the marginalized to whom God does and humans should give special attention
- **Judges** are to be righteous and impartial, especially giving heed to the marginalized, because they judge on God's behalf

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

*What are your assumptions about this judge?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

*Now what do you think about this judge?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

<sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow ...

*What are your assumptions about this widow?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

<sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying,

*'Grant me justice against my opponent.'*

*ekDIKew*

*antiDIKos*

*Does the widow have a just case? Who is the opponent?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

<sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying,

*'Grant me justice against my opponent.'*

<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused;

*Why does the judge refuse?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

<sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying,

*'Grant me justice against my opponent.'*

<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself,

*'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,*

*<sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'*

*upôpiazô*

*Why does the judge finally "grant her justice"?*

### Luke 18.2-5

<sup>2</sup> In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

<sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying,

*'Grant me justice against my opponent.'*

<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself,

*'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,*

*<sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'*

*Where is the focus of this parable?*

### Luke 18.1-8a

<sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge (*ho kritês tês aDIKias*) says.

<sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

*Who is the 'God figure' ?  
How does the parable make sense?*

### Luke 18.2-5

*If an unjust judge ultimately grants justice...*

*What does that say about God? It says that God is willing to be perceived as a bad God—and for no better reason than that he wants to get the problems of a worldful of losing winners off his back. It says he is willing—while they are still mired in their futile pursuit of the spiritual buck, the moral buck, the intellectual buck, the physical buck, or the plain ordinary buck—to just shut up about whatever is wrong with them and get the hassle over with. It says in fact what Paul said in Rom. 5:8: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." ... God simply .. wants to get the wet blankets off his back and let the party begin.*

*Robert Farrar Capon, Kingdom, Judgment, Grace, p 332*

## Luke 18.2-5

What did the widow DO to win her case?

On Judgment Day, do you want God to be a 'just' or 'unjust' judge with regard to your case?

## Luke 18.1-8

Parable (vv. 2-5)	Allegorical Correlation (Frame: vv. 1, 6-8)
1a. A widow seeking justice (v. 3)	1b. The elect waiting for vindication (vv. 7, 8)
2a. A judge refusing to give vindication (v. 4)	2b. Implied adversity to the elect (vv. 1, 7, 8)
3a. Perseverance of the widow (vv. 3-5)	3b. Perseverance of the elect in prayer, and an imperative not to lose heart (vv. 1, 7)
4a. The widow's pleas (v. 3)	4b. Prayers of the elect, crying out day and night (v. 1, 7)
5a. The judge's fear of a widow's abuse (v. 5)	5b. God will not delay over the elect, but will vindicate them quickly (vv. 7, 8)
6a. The widow is potentially vindicated (v. 5)	6b. A promise that the elect will be vindicated, but with a lingering doubt about their perseverance (faith) (vv. 7, 8)

"Dissonance in Luke 1-8" JBL 121/1 (2002) 107-121 Stephen Curkpatrick

## Luke 18.1-8a

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

<sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

## Luke 18.1-8a

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

<sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

Now where is the focus of this parable?

## Luke 18.1-8a

How do you experience the parable now?



## Luke 18.1-8a

With what other parables does the experience of this one resonate?

- The shepherd seeking the lost sheep
- The woman seeking the lost coin
- The father seeking his prodigal son(s)
- The widow seeking an unjust judge?

Who is the 'God figure' in these parables?

## Luke 18.1-8b

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

<sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

And yet, when the Son of Man comes,  
will he find faith on earth?"

*How does this final verse affect your reading of the parable?*

## Luke 18.1-8b

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

<sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'<sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.

And yet, when the Son of Man comes,  
will he find faith on earth?"

*How does this final verse affect your reading of the parable?*

## Luke 18.1-8b

Now where is the focus of this parable?

How do you experience the parable now?

- *The persistence of a shameful / shameless widow*
- *The repentance of an unjust judge*

## Luke 18.1-8b

Now where is the focus of this parable?

How do you experience the parable now?

*God is like a shameful / shameless widow  
who overcomes our unjustness by  
persistently pursuing us.*

### 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  
Luke 18.1-9

## The Persistent Call of God

*It's God's call, not ours*

*It's promise, not law*

*It's part of what it means to  
live in God's amazing grace*