

Justice from God

Genesis 32:22-31; Luke 18:1-8

Sunday, October 16, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction

In the 1990's Johann Olav Koss was a premier speed skater representing Norway, who won numerous gold medals and several world records in his chosen sport. His training regimen was legendary and considered practically impossible for anyone other than him. But as impressive as Koss was, and is, I want to mention a friend of Koss whose name I can't remember and whose very existence was documented in one brief feature during the 1994 Olympics. He had suffered a disfiguring injury that made it difficult for him to compete, yet he trained relentlessly. He had no chance to win a medal, it was amazing that he competed at all but he simply did not give up. Against all hope, he underwent rigorous training in order to compete at his absolute best, and Koss said that he was his hero because he admired his tenacity so much. According to the Bible, the Lord also admires tenacity, with a parable that echoes an Old Testament event that tells us to pray, and to never stop praying, and that God may wait long, but when He acts, He acts quickly.

- Set the Stage

Jacob wrestles with the angel, and he is commended for his tenacity
To set the stage, we begin with the passage in Genesis (32:22-31) in which Jacob, soon to encounter his brother Esau, the one he cheated, and this after he has spent years dealing with a father in law who tried to cheat him over and over. Jacob is at the end of himself, terrified and unsure what to do when he crosses a ford at the Jabbok River and wrestles with an angel. They compete all night and near dawn the angel tells him to let go, but Jacob refuses, desperate for a blessing. The angel hits him in the hip and in dislocating it shows that Jacob was never any match for him, and then tells him to speak his name. Jacob admits that he is what his name describes, a cheat, a dishonest man. Only after does the angel give him a new name-Israel, a prince. Some believe that Jesus Himself may have been the man who wrestled with Jacob, we'll know someday. Meanwhile, Hosea (12:2-6), centuries later, uses this episode with Jacob as an example of how people should pray, they should do so as if the Lord is their only hope, as if they have nowhere else to turn. They should pray with a tenacity that borders on the obsessive and the desperate. That's how they should pray.

The widow pleads with the wicked judge, and is rewarded for her tenacity
Centuries later, Jesus speaks tells His disciples a parable about tenacity, in which a woman seeks the help of a judge who is corrupt and uncaring. Unconcerned about the injustice that she has endured, the judge will do nothing for her but finally agrees to advocate for her simply so she will stop bothering him. If that can be done with an unjust judge, what of the elect of God who pray day and night? Jesus said that God will bear long with such people but will not ignore them. When He does act, He will act quickly. Be vigilant and be tenacious.

- The Main Point

Justice is not guaranteed, and if denied for one, it can be denied for anyone. Tenacious vigilance is required. This passage strongly connects people praying earnestly for other, which we do for people who are sick and suffering. That is appropriate, but shall we do the same for people who are subjected to injustice? In the short years of my life, I have met a man who started a business with his best friend only to discover that his best friend was not above stealing the business

and subjecting his partner to a lawsuit that everyone knew was frivolous, except the judge deciding the case. The false friend got away with it. I met another person whose sister was shot to death in her car, on the driveway to her own home, with a witness who saw clearly that the shooter was the victim's estranged husband, but the estranged husband's lawyer was able to convince a jury that the witness, who had suffered brain trauma in the past, could be trusted even though she could clearly describe what she saw. The estranged husband got away with it. Back over in Bangkok, a court convicted former State Counsellor of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi of yet another charge of corruption. She is now, as a 78 year old woman, faces 26 years in prison. Nobody believes she is guilty. Nobody. Suffering is not hard to find if you look around. The same is true for injustice. What would happen if we asked the Lord to reveal to us people in our lives who have been denied justice one way or another. What would we discover? What would be revealed to us?

- Application & Conclusion

The application is do not take justice for granted. Make it a matter or urgent prayer and be alert to the poor, who are often the victims of injustice. We intercede for nations, for the sick, for the souls of men and women, for people who are suffering, and well we should. Let us add earnest prayer for people who suffer injustice. It is in war-torn countries, it is in countries ruled by force instead of law. And we would be naive if we did not think that people suffer injustice here in our town as well. Pray and be alert. Pray with passion and tenacity, with even a sort of desperation. And it is not by mistake that our Lord connects passionate prayer with people who suffer injustice, for God places a great priority on them. Pray for them as fervently as if you had suffered injustice as well.

Note the Congregational Church in Rhode Island, who ran a family court-watching school.

Conclusion