

Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.

Then look at what follows—the parable about the widow and the unjust judge—soo-- I can see the parable being about persistence or about justice—but prayer?

Jesus says: *"Listen to what the unjust judge says."* And what does the unjust judge say? I WILL GRANT HER JUSTICE. And then Jesus talks about how if even the *Unjust* judge grants justice, how much more God will grant justice.

So I asked myself, "Self—is this a sermon about prayer—or justice? Am I misunderstanding prayer? Am I not getting the connection between prayer and justice?"

So I started asking people around the office, and people who randomly dropped by: "What is prayer?" Most answers went along the lines of:

- a conversation with God
- being in God's presence—with or without words
- talking to God
- making requests of God.

Sounds good.

At my last church job my boss was a former lawyer. He was fond of telling me to "go do research". Every now and then I can hear this helpful advice rolling around in my head, so I decided to go to the Book of Common Prayer to see what it said about prayer. And I'm going to have you do it too.

Please go to page 856 in the BCP. Really. I'll wait.
And as we can all see- it says: "Prayer is responding to God, by thoughts and by deeds, with or without words."

Notice it doesn't say making requests of God, with or without words.

It doesn't mention conversations or being in the presence of God—though I must admit I like all those definitions.

No-- it says *responding to God, by thoughts and by deeds*. There's a difference between responding and requesting. Isn't that interesting? I was a little taken aback. And I was literally blown away.

So-- we **hear** God, through the scripture and through the life of Jesus, through the teachings of God, we HEAR the voice of the Holy Spirit—and when we do—we have to respond!

It's as if this God presence in our lives is so important—so electrifying—so RIGHT, that it forces a response from us!

And what does that mean—respond? Nod our heads? Quietly acknowledge the veracity of statements?

I wanted to know what respond meant—so I did a little more research. With my good friend Webster. And it says: respond: to reply in answer or words. To make some action as if in answer.

Responding means answering in word or action.

So prayer seems to mean “responding to God, by thoughts and by deeds--with words or action.

So let's listen again to Jesus. He says, *“Listen to what the unjust judge says: “I will give her justice. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.”*

So perhaps prayer and justice really DO go together.

Because when we pray-- when we respond to God —we must act. So: love requires an action, faith requires an action, and now

prayer requires an action. Are we starting to see some correlations here?

When we feel the presence of God, and when we hear the teachings of Jesus -- when we really *resonate* to things that Jesus taught and that God encourages us to do—when we feel the need to love each other and the urge to help each other—the widow and the orphan and the alien and those in need—then we are called to act with justice.

A little Hebrew language trivia: justice and righteousness are actually the same word in Hebrew. Sometimes the word is translated one way and sometimes the other, but both of the definitions are present in the word. When you hear the word “justice” in the bible—realize it also means righteousness, and when you hear the word “righteousness” in the bible, realize it also means justice.

So when we respond to God, when we pray—we respond with righteousness, aka justice. Prayer and justice are indeed connected.

If we pray continually as we feel the motion of God in our lives and in our hearts --we will be the hope of the kingdom in the world-- but only if we pray continually—responding continually to God by thoughts and by deeds, with or without words.

Acting with love. Acting with justice.

Responding to God as if what we believe requires the commitment of our action.

And when we do— when we realize our actions are vitally important--the Son of Man will indeed find faith on the earth.

Amen.