

## 16 October 2022: Luke 18:1-8a (Proper 24)

Children know how to ask for things. For most-important things, there is hardly an end to the perseverance shown by children. As a child I would begin my campaign for certain Christmas presents a bit early; usually September would see the opening salvos when the Sears and JC Penney's Wish-books came in the mail. There followed a barrage of hints, bargaining, pleading, anything I thought might work. We can learn something about asking from children; from remembering when we were children and wanted something so much, there was hardly an end to what we might do to achieve our desire.

Jesus told a story about perseverance. A widow is ignored by an unjust, arrogant judge. Jesus' listeners would know that the story's hero is poor. The wealthy paid bribes for speedy judgments. The desperate widow uses her only resource: herself. Her need is crucial: she will do whatever it takes.

Perseverance-in-asking is at the heart of stewardship. Yes, friends, it is that time of year again—stewardship season! Today's Gospel confronts us with this most important way of living our faith. Perseverance-in-asking is the heart of stewardship. However, what I refer to is not when clergy and lay leaders get up to convince, beg, plead, cajole, grovel, whine and badger you to part with a bit of cash for the Church. That's not stewardship. What I mean by perseverance-in-asking as the heart of stewardship, is what we as a faith community continually ask for from God.

Perseverance-in-asking means the object of our asking is so important nothing will deter us. No one perseveres for what they can do without. No one perseveres for an inconsequential outcome. And we do not persevere without others persevering with us.

So, what are we asking for, as a parish? What is of utmost importance? What are you asking from God, for your brothers and sisters at Calvary? What is your heart's desire for our parish? It is not about what you want, just asking for oneself, apart from the rest of us. Asking just for oneself isn't stewardship either.

The many and varied ministries we support in and through the parish operating budget are all in service of something beyond individual desires and particular ministries. We give for the one, great ministry. The one great ministry, a committed Church's true heart's desire is easily stated: Jesus said, "*All power in heaven and on earth is given me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age*" (Mt 28:19-20). We persevere-in-asking for this, that God give us what is necessary to make the one, great ministry more and better here. We are to test all the various ministries in the light of the one great ministry. We are to go out, make followers, bring to Baptism, teach what Jesus teaches us and what we follow in our lives, relying on the abiding mercy of God, always and continually. We are to help feed the hunger, clothe the naked, assist those in need and necessity. This is the object, our persevering-in-asking goal.

The widow in the story is relentless. Jesus tells us that those who "*cry to God night and day*" will be answered. Perseverance is not just a state of mind or a feeling of conviction. Perseverance is action, a continual living out our desire for what God most desires to give us.

For Geri and I stewardship is exciting; this is a great time of year—Stewardship season. I give you a challenge; it is the challenge Geri and I face, as we seek God's will in our commitment to God and to all of you, as we seek each year to give more sacrificially. Here's the challenge: Is the one great ministry of Jesus Christ, which the various ministries at Calvary serve, important enough to persevere in asking God to use our sacrificial giving for the common good of our sisters and brothers, the betterment of our community, and the glory of God? Will we persevere in crying out to God night and day, not only with our lips, but with our time, our talents, and our treasure, begging God to reveal always more of God's beauty, Jesus' love, and the Holy Spirit's renewal among us and through us? I invite you to persevere-in-asking: may our life together at Calvary Church be a relentless asking for what God most desires to give us and all. For surely God will not delay in helping us.

Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.