

## The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity YEAR C October 16, 2016



This is a week to challenge one of our most basic Christian practices – prayer. But it is also a week to bring together two important things that prayer does for us – writing God’s law on our hearts, and opening us to the coming of God into our lives and our world. The potential for this mix of ideas is tremendous, and the possibilities it offers, not just for preaching, but for real, transforming encounter with God, are many. Those of us who seek to work for justice in our world cannot ignore the place and power of prayer that changes our hearts and leads us into true encounter with God.

As you worship this week, may your prayer be heartfelt, and may it overflow into every action, thought, word and interaction in your life.

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

#### **The Twentyfirst Sunday after Trinity**

*The Sunday between 16 and 22 October Year C*

**Jeremiah 31:27-34**: A prophecy of restoration, of an end to generational curses, and of God’s new covenant with God’s people – written on hearts, not stone.

OR **Genesis 32:22-31**: Jacob wrestles with God, is given a new name, and lives with a limp from that time on.

**Psalms 119:97-104**: A song of rejoicing in God’s laws and instructions and the way they guide and lead to life.

OR **Psalms 121**: God is a help to God’s people, the One who watches over and protects them day and night.

**2 Timothy 3:14-4:5**: Paul encourages Timothy, in the name of the coming Christ, to remain faithful to the Scriptures and to teach God’s message faithfully at all times.

**Luke 18:1-8**: Jesus tells a parable of a poor widow who persistently asks a judge for justice, and he finally relents because of her persistence. Then he muses about whether, when he returns, he will find people of faith on earth.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%2031:%2027-34%0Acw%20Psalms%20119:%2097-104%0A2%20Timothy%203:%2014%20-%204:%205%0ALuke%2018:%201-8](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Jeremiah%2031:%2027-34%0Acw%20Psalms%20119:%2097-104%0A2%20Timothy%203:%2014%20-%204:%205%0ALuke%2018:%201-8)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### COLLECT 1

Grant we beseech thee,  
merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace;  
that they may be cleansed from all their sins,

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and serve thee with a quiet mind:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### COLLECT 2

Merciful Lord,  
Grant to your faithful people pardon and peace,  
that we may be cleansed from all our sins  
and serve you with a quiet mind:  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Heavenly Father, forgive us when we fail to come to you in prayer when peace is absent, and troubled times prevail. Yet you are among us, we are called by your name, and we ask for your help for the sake of our nation and the world.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord God, our only God, you call us your children even while we forget to rejoice and give thanks for all your gifts. Pour out your spirit among us in such abundance that our children will care about your Word, believe you are still active among us, and have a plan greater than human imaginations can fathom.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Holy Spirit, make of us your pilgrim people, willing to walk a new road with you. Remind us that we are always in the presence of the God who cares about our journey.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord Jesus Christ, give us the joy of St. Paul, who, when facing death was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Lord Jesus Christ, let none of us boast about our goodness, for we know that we have all fallen far short of perfection. We know we need your mercy, and we believe that you will give it to us out of love.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

As we are able to love one another on earth, and feel the pains of those who need healing, be the Great Physician for those whom we name before you \_\_\_\_\_.

Loving Christ: **Help us share the faith.**

Listening God, hear our prayers. Amen.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

In the power of the Spirit,  
and in union with Christ,  
let us pray to the Father.

Father in heaven,  
by his blood your Christ has ransomed us to you,  
and has made us a kingdom and priests to you our God.

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As the angels minister to you in heaven,  
strengthen your Church to serve you here on earth.  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
when the angels greeted the birth of your Son  
they sang for joy 'Glory to God and peace on earth'.  
Bless with Christ's peace the nations of the world.  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
your Son has promised to your children  
the care of the guardian angels who look upon your face.  
Protect by your mercy our neighbours, families and friends.  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
you give your angels charge over those who trust in you  
to guard them in all their ways.  
Be with those in trouble ... ,  
rescue them and show them your salvation.  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
your angel declares 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'  
'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit,  
'for they may rest from their labours,  
for they take with them the record of their deeds.'  
Enfold in your love [... and] all who come in faith  
to your judgement seat in heaven.  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father in heaven,  
the angels sing by day and night around your throne:  
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.'  
With Michael, prince of the angels, who contends by our side,  
with Gabriel, your herald, who brings glad tidings,  
with Raphael, the protector, who ministers your healing,  
and with the whole company of heaven,  
we worship you, we give you glory,  
we sing your praise and exalt you for ever.  
**Amen.**

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### POST COMMUNION

Father of light,  
in whom is no change or shadow of turning,  
you give us every good and perfect gift  
and have brought us to birth by your word of truth.  
May we be a living sign of that kingdom,  
where your whole creation will be made perfect  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### PRAYERS

God of power and justice,  
like Jeremiah you weep over those  
who wander from you,  
turn aside to other gods,  
and enter into chaos and destruction.  
By your tears and through your mercy,  
teach us your ways  
and write them on our hearts  
so that we may follow faithfully  
the path you show us. Amen.

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers, God of power,  
and through the ministry of your Son  
free us from the grip of the tomb,  
that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being

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and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you  
with body, mind, and spirit  
through loving your creation  
and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion  
and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.  
Holy One,  
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards  
of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.  
We offer these prayers of love  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
Loving God,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and draw us closer to you,  
that the whole world may be one with you  
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.  
Life-giving God,  
heal our lives,  
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,  
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,  
hear our prayers  
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,  
but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

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O God, Spirit of righteousness,  
you temper judgment with mercy.  
Help us to live the covenant written upon our hearts  
so that when Christ returns  
we may be found worthy  
to be received by grace into your presence. Amen.

Holy One,  
we lift our eyes to you in hope and awe.  
Grant that we may reject all apathy of spirit,  
all impatience and anxiety,  
so that, with the persistence of the widow,  
we may lift our voice again and again to seek your justice. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

#### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

There are two related themes running through the readings this week. The first is that of God's word written on the heart (Jeremiah), offering guidance and life (Psalm 119), as the basis for teaching and the Christ-following life (2 Timothy), and expressed in the parables of Jesus. The second is that of God's coming to God's people – in a night-time wrestling match with Jacob (Genesis), as a help and protection for the Psalmist (Psalm 121), as the coming judge (2 Timothy), as the God who comes to bring justice to God's people in Jesus' parable, and as the Christ who will return in Jesus' musings at the end of the Luke passage. Of course, the idea of prayer is also found in many of these passages as well – and is, perhaps, what brings the other two themes together. On the one hand we long for God and seek God's presence, God's justice and God's protection. On the other hand, God longs to come to us, offering us guidance and life through God's word, God's law, written on our hearts. In prayer we express our longing, and we open ourselves to God's presence and purpose. As we pray, God's word is truly written on our hearts, and the God of justice breaks into our human experience with justice, life and divine principles for full and meaningful living. The power of this theme of prayer as the meeting place for God and people is that it is not just the pray-er that is changed by the encounter, but the world in which the pray-er then lives and acts out the prayer each day.

#### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** In the practical world of justice-bringing, prayer can feel like a rather impractical and ineffectual pursuit. If we seek to bring pressure to bear on leaders or groups with whom we disagree through prayer, in the hopes that God will somehow swoop in and bring about the changes we pray for, then we are little more than delusional, and our prayer is indeed impractical and ineffectual. If, however, we seek to be changed by God's coming to us as judge, challenger and guide, if we seek to open our hearts in order that God's law may be written on them, and we can live the justice we seek to bring, then our prayer is a powerful, transformative act. In this sense, no work of justice is complete without prayer. Interfaith dialogue must call us to pray together; engagement with political and social processes must be done prayerfully; protest action, where necessary, must express the prophetic nature of prayer; contribution and service must be clothed in prayerful awareness of God's presence and purpose – or we just become another social upliftment movement. Of course, there is a difference between doing things prayerfully and imposing our form or version of prayer on those of other religions or faith communities. In

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this sense, prayer must also be engaged in sensitively and gently. No one can ban prayer from any aspect of our lives (even our schools), because we can always pray in our hearts, which is no less effective. What can be banned – perhaps legitimately – is imposing our way of praying on others in public gatherings or places. The true heart of prayer is welcoming, invitational, inclusive and compassionate, not arrogant, selfish, opinionated or exclusive.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** In our local church communities it seems that prayer tends to take one of two places. Either we work with prayer a little like the spells and wands in a Harry Potter book – where we “wave” our prayer at situations and people, expecting God’s answer to be always dramatic and ‘supernatural’, or we ignore prayer almost altogether, apart from, perhaps, as a ritual practice within our Sunday services, acting as functional atheists as we approach our ministry and witness in the world. This week the Lectionary challenges us to engage with prayer in more meaningful ways than this. In the first instance, we are encouraged to wrestle with God in prayer, to allow our engagement with God to be a way of opening our hearts to the law of God which is to be written on them. This kind of prayer is a transformative practice that confronts our prejudice and self-centredness, while challenging us to allow God’s reign to be the reference for our living and acting. In the second instance we are encouraged to experience prayer as a true encounter with the God who comes to us, with the Spirit who fills and empowers us, and with the transforming acts of God in the world. In this sense, prayer is a way of discerning what God is doing among us and offering ourselves to cooperate with the work of God. These two realities – God’s word taking root within us and God’s coming to us are not separate realities, but are essentially one and the same experience, for which prayer is the vehicle. The question, then, is this: What is God doing (or seeking to do) in our churches and communities? Where do we see evidence of God’s presence, God’s coming, and where does God’s word need to be written on hearts? How can we cooperate with this work of God in ways that bring justice, grace, compassion and the reality of God’s reign into the lives of ordinary God-Beloved people?

### SERMON OUTLINE

**Luke 18:1-8 Jesus told them a parable....** - parable about prayer - *about their need to pray always & not to lose heart.* He focuses on a poor widow facing a judge *who neither feared God nor had respect for people.*

**1. Her Problem** – *some unnamed injustice.. A poor widow would have little finance & no legal aid for court action..*

**2. Her Plea** – v3 *“Grant me justice against my opponent.”* Hers was a hopeless situation... The judge had no interest in justice... Most people would say that she had no chance of success – but still she kept pleading her case...

**3. Her Persistence** - she kept coming to him... Eventually her persistence paid dividends:-  
4For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, 5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” Begrudgingly, he granted her request... So Jesus draws out the spiritual parallel... **A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning....**



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How much more will *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.* God's people must also do their part – like the widow in a constant, faithful, persistence pattern of prayer that *when the Son of Man comes, he will find faith on earth*

By Norman Porteous

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Patina of faith," the Rev. Nils Chittenden, *Sermons that Work*, Episcopal Digital Network  
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/10/02/22-pentecost-proper-24-c-2013/>

"Whose Persistence?" The Rev. Dr. Robert Dunham, *Day 1*  
[http://day1.org/1064-whose\\_persistence](http://day1.org/1064-whose_persistence)

"Is the Bible Inspired?" the Rev. Dr. James C. Howell, *Day 1*  
[http://day1.org/5227-is\\_the\\_bible\\_inspired](http://day1.org/5227-is_the_bible_inspired)

### CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/year-c-proper-24-29th-sunday-in.html), Proper 24, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2013. 2010.  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/year-c-proper-24-29th-sunday-in.html>

"Storypath Lectionary Links: Connecting Children's Literature with our Faith Story,"  
October 20, 2013, Union Presbyterian Seminary. Connections: Jeremiah 31:27-34 and *The Three Questions* by Jon J. Muth, 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 and *Prairie Chicken Little* by Jackie Mims Hopkins, Luke 18:1-8 and *Yours for Justice, Ida B. Wells: The Daring Life of a Crusading Journalist* by Philip Dray.  
<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-october-20-2013/>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html), Ordinary 29, at *word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary* by Larry Broding.  
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

"Persistence in Prayer," Children's Sermon from Sermons4kids.com.  
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/persistence-in-prayer.html>