

# CHAPTER 18

## LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

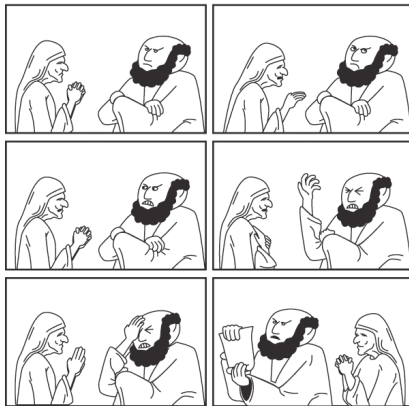


What happens to believers when the culture and circumstances around them do not support their faith life? This was the reality of St. Luke’s community. More and more, this is becoming the reality for Christians in the world today. Luke encourages his listeners to live fully in the presence of God. He calls us all to be men and women of prayer. It is through a prayerful stance that our following of Jesus radiates a faith that endures.

### PARABLES OF PRAYER

A major theme in Luke’s Gospel is prayer. He presents two more parables calling us to be people of prayer. His original audience was mainly gentiles. They lacked the experience and the tradition of prayer that the Jewish community had for centuries. So Luke instructs his community on the centrality of prayer for their lives. Likewise, the disciples were living through great hardship and persecution. He teaches that prayer focuses and strengthens their commitment to Jesus and his mission. Above all he calls the disciple to be persistent in their prayer.

#### **Day 1. Parable of the persistent widow. (Lk. 18:1-8)**



**18:1** Then <sup>1</sup> Jesus <sup>2</sup> told them a parable to show them they should always <sup>3</sup> pray and not lose heart. <sup>4</sup> **18:2** He said, <sup>5</sup> “In a certain city <sup>6</sup> there was a judge <sup>7</sup> who neither feared God nor respected people. <sup>8</sup> **18:3** There was also a widow <sup>9</sup> in that city <sup>10</sup> who kept coming <sup>11</sup> to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ **18:4** For <sup>12</sup> a while he refused, but later on <sup>13</sup> he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, <sup>14</sup> **18:5** yet because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out <sup>15</sup> by her unending pleas.’” <sup>16</sup> **18:6** And the Lord said, “Listen to what the

unrighteous judge says! <sup>17</sup> **18:7** Won’t <sup>18</sup> God give justice to his chosen ones, who cry out <sup>19</sup> to him day and night? <sup>20</sup> Will he delay <sup>21</sup> long to help them? **18:8** I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. <sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith <sup>23</sup> on earth?”

1.	What do you persistently pray for?
2.	Fr. Thomas Judge reflecting on scripture and his own life said. “ <i>The will of God is learned in prayer. There we become courageous.</i> ” How does prayer make you courageous for what you are facing in life?

Luke plainly reveals the main point of the parable in the first verse, “then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always and not lose heart.” He contrasts the contempt of the judge with the love, mercy and justice of the Eternal Judge. The judge in the story is definitely a bad judge. He was expected by his office to render verdicts and dispense justice fairly. This was especially vital for those who could not fend for themselves. The widow is a defenseless person looking for justice. She has nowhere else to turn for help. She may be defenseless but she is definitely determined.

Eventually the judge does the right thing but for the wrong reason. He cares nothing about justice for the widow. But he does care about peace and quiet for himself – not to mention his own safety! “Because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike Me.” determination as well as humor in the widow’s browbeating of the judge.

The attitude of the judge is contrasted with God’s concern for his people. If the widow can get a just response from the corrupt judge imagine how greater will be the response of a loving and just God. Jesus’ parable calls his followers to persistently place their needs before his loving Father. They will receive justice – if not in the present circumstances surely at the Second Coming of the Messiah. The disciples are taught to persevere over the long haul.

## **Day 2: Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. (Lk.18: 9-14)**



**18:9** Jesus <sup>24</sup> also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down <sup>25</sup> on everyone else. **18:10** “Two men went up <sup>26</sup> to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee <sup>27</sup> and the other a tax collector. <sup>28</sup> **18:11** The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: <sup>29</sup> ‘God, I thank <sup>30</sup> you that I am not like other people: <sup>31</sup> extortionists, <sup>32</sup> unrighteous people, <sup>33</sup> adulterers – or even like this tax collector. <sup>34</sup> **18:12** I fast twice <sup>35</sup> a week; I give a tenth <sup>36</sup> of everything I get.’ **18:13** The tax collector, however, stood <sup>37</sup> far off and would not even look up <sup>38</sup> to heaven,

but beat his breast and said, ‘God, be merciful <sup>39</sup> to me, sinner that I am!’ <sup>40</sup> **18:14** I tell you that this man went down to his home justified <sup>41</sup> rather than the Pharisee. <sup>42</sup> For everyone who exalts <sup>43</sup> himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

1. Who is the focus of the Pharisee’s prayer and what was he praying about?

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2. How would you respond to someone who would ask you if you were saved?

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**3. What is your favorite stance or position when you pray? Kneeling? Standing? Sitting?... Try it now and pray the Lord's Prayer.**

Luke gives us another of Jesus' parables about prayer. It contrasts the prayer of a respectable Pharisee and a despised tax collector. Jesus addresses the story to those who considered themselves saved on looked down upon all others. It instructs his followers on the correct attitude one needs to have when standing before God.

**Traditional Jewish Prayer:** When a faithful Jew in Jesus' time would pray he would stand before God with his arms outstretched, hands opened and eyes closed. Normally he would begin his daily prayer by reciting the SHEMA prayer. The shema is taken from Deuteronomy 6: 4-6.

*"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God and the Lord alone!*

*Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to hear these words which I enjoin on you today."*

He would stand before God in humility and present himself openly to God with all his failings and strengths, nothing hidden from God.

Christian prayer is founded on this stance and attitude. For the faithful Christian the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) is recited.

The Pharisee would be considered an ideal and exemplary citizen. This respected man is confident about his place with God. His prayer of thanksgiving contains a catalogue of his own virtues and deeds. He, not God, is the focus of his prayer. He boasts not in the Lord but about himself. He then builds himself up by comparing himself to the tax collector. The Pharisee's attitude is obvious, "It's all about me!" He really doesn't see his need for a savior in his life. He has done it his way.

On the other hand, the tax collector, because of his profession is considered a sinner and worthy of God's interest. He comes to the same Temple as the Pharisee and in the shadows of the Temple presents himself to God. He is profoundly aware of his sinfulness and need for mercy.

The twist in this parable is that God rejects the "respectable man's prayer" and chooses the "sinner's prayer. The Pharisee is not rejected for his observance of the Law or his deeds. Rather he is ignored because of his attitudes toward God and those around him. Before God, not one can truly stand justified by his own merits.

Jesus' point is clear: One does not receive salvation from God by one's own activity. One does receive salvation through one's acknowledgement of one's sinfulness and need for forgiveness, conversion and guidance. God lifts up the sinner who seeks forgiveness.



**Day 3. Children and the Kingdom. (Luke 18: 15-17)**

**18:15** Now people <sup>44</sup> were even bringing their babies <sup>45</sup> to him for him to touch. <sup>46</sup> But when the disciples saw it, they began to scold

those who brought them.<sup>47</sup> **18:16** But Jesus called for the children,<sup>48</sup> saying, “Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God<sup>49</sup> belongs to such as these.<sup>50</sup> **18:17** I tell you the truth,<sup>51</sup> whoever does not receive<sup>52</sup> the kingdom of God like a child<sup>53</sup> will never<sup>54</sup> enter it.”

1. Why do you think the disciples rebuked the people for bringing their children to Jesus?

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2. How does the spirit of the Samaritan express the true spirit that a disciple needs to have?

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Coming immediately after the parable of the Pharisees and tax collector, this episode about children emphasizes who is really upright in the sight of God. Luke reinforces the attitude that one must have to participate in the Reign of God. Jesus teaches that we do not gain or merit God’s favor by our human achievements. Rather the Reign of God is a pure gift. One is called to receive and participate in it.

The Pharisees and religious teachers held that children could not be examples of the upright because they were incapable of knowing the law. Children were often considered insignificant, even burdens until they could work. To the contrary, Jesus uses the child as a model for the kingdom.

The disciples were doing important things they were traveling with Jesus to the Holy City, Jerusalem. They were ministering with Jesus. It doesn’t mention why they rebuked the people for bringing their children to Jesus. Most likely they had the same attitudes as the Pharisees towards the children. They were seen as insignificant and not worthy of Jesus’ attention.

Jesus makes it clear that not only does the kingdom belong to them but that they are models for adults on how to accept the Reign of God.

An infant can do nothing to merit or win the love of another. A little one can only receive. The child’s wellbeing depends upon the care of another. It is an unmerited love. Before God any person is a helpless as and infant. Salvation is a pure gift flowing from the love of God.

Without saying it Jesus is extolling the openness and sheer receptivity of these little ones. Also, as a small child has no sense of importance or worth so adults must empty themselves of self-seeking pride to become receptive to the Reign of God.

#### **Day 4. The Rich Man (Luke 18: 18-30).**



**18:18** Now<sup>55</sup> a certain ruler<sup>56</sup> asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”<sup>57</sup> **18:19** Jesus<sup>58</sup> said to him, “Why do you call me good?<sup>59</sup> No one is good except God alone. **18:20** You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”<sup>60</sup> **18:21** The man<sup>61</sup> replied, “I have wholeheartedly obeyed<sup>62</sup> all these laws<sup>63</sup> since my youth.”<sup>64</sup> **18:22** When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still

lack. Sell all that you have <sup>65</sup> and give the money <sup>66</sup> to the poor, <sup>67</sup> and you will have treasure <sup>68</sup> in heaven. Then <sup>69</sup> come, follow me.” **18:23** But when the man <sup>70</sup> heard this he became very sad, <sup>71</sup> for he was extremely wealthy. **18:24** When Jesus noticed this, <sup>72</sup> he said, “How hard <sup>73</sup> it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>74</sup> **18:25** In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle <sup>75</sup> than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” **18:26** Those who heard this said, “Then <sup>76</sup> who can be saved?” <sup>77</sup> **18:27** He replied, “What is impossible <sup>78</sup> for mere humans <sup>79</sup> is possible for God.” **18:28** And Peter said, “Look, we have left everything we own <sup>80</sup> to follow you!” <sup>81</sup> **18:29** Then <sup>82</sup> Jesus <sup>83</sup> said to them, “I tell you the truth, <sup>84</sup> there is no one who has left home or wife or brothers <sup>85</sup> or parents or children for the sake of God’s kingdom **18:30** who will not receive many times more <sup>86</sup> in this age <sup>87</sup> – and in the age to come, eternal life.” <sup>88</sup>

<p>1. What does the rich man have to learn about how one is saved?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>2. What opportunity is Jesus offering the rich man?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>3. Can you name something that you have given up, left behind or given away to follow Jesus?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

“What must I do?

A rich man from the ruling class wants to earn everlasting life. He represents those who believe that salvation is something one can merit by performing deeds. Jesus makes it clear that salvation is a gift from God. Only God is truly good. The rich sees in Jesus a good man not unlike himself. He does not see The Messiah, God’s son.

Jesus guides the rich man hoping to open his eyes. He refers the man to the commandments but mentions only those regarding man’s relationship with man. He does not mention the first three commandments from which all the following commandments receive their meaning. The first three commandments proclaim that God is the source of all life and salvation, worthy of all we are and have.

The rich man has kept the laws of God and felt himself entitled to salvation. He has kept those commandments since he was a boy.

Jesus calls the rich man to the path of salvation. He summons the man to sell his possessions, give the wealth to the poor and follow him. He stuns the man. The rich man must make a decision towards the first steps into salvation or retain his wealth. In his heart the man does not trust God’s way. He will not even share his wealth with the poor. At the same time Jesus gives him a remarkable opportunity to become his disciple. The man decides not to follow Jesus. He cannot put his faith in him. He hears the call of God through Jesus. But he will not respond. He will not follow. He is immobilized by his wealth. He goes away sad. Jesus response to the man’s reaction: “How hard will be for the rich to go into the kingdom of God”

Now it is the listeners and disciples turn to be stunned. “Who, then can be saved?” To them being wealthy was considered a great blessing. It could achieve almost anything. Jesus points out that wealth can become an obstacle in the Christian life. But more importantly, he clarifies that God can make all things possible. It is God who saves.

The dialogue with the rich man shows that there are two ways of entering God’s kingdom:

- 1) One can be like a child and receive it in faith and trust or
- 2) One can acknowledge their sinfulness like the tax collector and humbly rely on God's mercy.

One does not earn the kingdom.

**Day 5. The blind man sees. (Lk. 18:31-43)**



**18:31** Then <sup>89</sup> Jesus <sup>90</sup> took the twelve aside and said to them, “Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, <sup>91</sup> and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. <sup>92</sup> **18:32** For he will be handed over <sup>93</sup> to the Gentiles; he will be mocked, <sup>94</sup> mistreated, <sup>95</sup> and spat on. <sup>96</sup> **18:33** They will flog him severely <sup>97</sup> and kill him. Yet <sup>98</sup> on the third day he will rise again.” **18:34** But <sup>99</sup> the twelve <sup>100</sup> understood none of these things. This <sup>101</sup> saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp <sup>102</sup> what Jesus meant. <sup>103</sup> **Healing a Blind Man****18:35** As <sup>104</sup> Jesus <sup>105</sup> approached <sup>106</sup> Jericho, <sup>107</sup> a blind man was sitting by the road begging. **18:36** When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was going on. **18:37** They <sup>108</sup> told him, “Jesus the Nazarene is

passing by.” **18:38** So <sup>109</sup> he called out, <sup>110</sup> “Jesus, Son of David, <sup>111</sup> have mercy <sup>112</sup> on me!” **18:39** And those who were in front <sup>113</sup> scolded <sup>114</sup> him to get him to be quiet, but he shouted <sup>115</sup> even more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **18:40** So <sup>116</sup> Jesus stopped and ordered the beggar <sup>117</sup> to be brought to him. When the man <sup>118</sup> came near, Jesus <sup>119</sup> asked him, **18:41** “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, <sup>120</sup> “Lord, let me see again.” <sup>121</sup> **18:42** Jesus <sup>122</sup> said to him, “Receive <sup>123</sup> your sight; your faith has healed you.” <sup>124</sup> **18:43** And immediately he regained <sup>125</sup> his sight and followed Jesus, <sup>126</sup> praising <sup>127</sup> God. When <sup>128</sup> all the people saw it, they too <sup>129</sup> gave praise to God.

1. Why do the apostles still not understand about Jesus' suffering and death?  


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2. In what ways does the blind man see more than the rich man?  


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3. In what ways does the blind man's request and response to Jesus represent the path of every disciple?

**“LORD, I WANT TO SEE”**

In Luke, geography is important; Jesus is entering the town of Jericho. Jericho is close to Jerusalem, the destiny of Jesus' journey. The final conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities is approaching. Jericho is also significant because it was an important trading

city. Many wealthy people lived there in contrast to the poor blind man. It was a place where the very powerful and wealthy lived next to the very poor.

When Jesus heals the blind beggar it contrast the blind beggar with the many people, like the rich man, have full sight. Yet they do not see Jesus. The healing also shows Jesus' great compassion and his power.

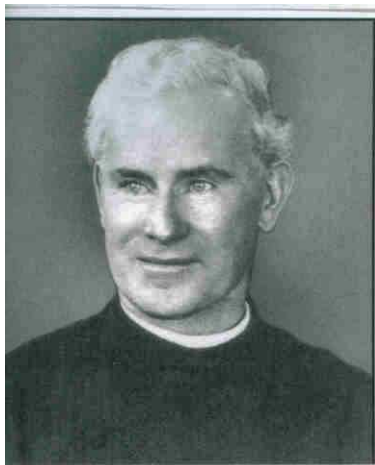
The blind man's request and response shows that own faith is not static. We are always on our way to a deeper faith and commitment to Jesus' mission. Realizing that Jesus was passing by he calls our "Jesus, son of David have pity on me."

Even blind he knows that Jesus is a chosen one. Son of David is a partial understanding of who Jesus is as the Messiah. He is more than a descendent of king David. He is the Son of God.

As the apostles tried to keep the children from Jesus now they try to keep the blind man from interrupting their Lord. However, the blind man will become a model of the discipleship.

- He is persistent
- He knows what he needs.
- He is confident in Jesus' powers
- He sees Jesus.
- When given his sight he follows in Jesus' footsteps.

It is Jesus who enables his disciples to truly see the way of salvation.



### **Fr. Judge and Daily Prayer:**

*The Spirit of God within us, as in His Temple, makes us pleasing to God by the in pouring of his grace and this he gives to help us in the great work of prayer. "Pray without ceasing," the Apostle tells us. (Thes. 5:17) But this we cannot do unless we work in the spirit of prayer. The Holy Spirit urges us to perform all our actions for the glory of God, even the most common, as eating and drinking. Our whole day, then, through him becomes spiritualized.*

*Our prayer should not be narrow, personal prayer; it should reach to the throne of God only after having touched the farthest bounds of God's creation... We should pray for the Church, for the Holy Father, for those ruling in the Church who are battling for religion, that the reign of the Holy Spirit will come in the hearts of men and women; that the Greek and Protestant Churches will return to union with Rome in faith and obedience; we pray for the Holy Father, for sinners and for every need of the Church.*

*Let me sum up: you must be men and women of prayer. Then you will be men and women of charity. We pray and labor for the extension of His kingdom on earth...May you receive the Holy Spirit and ever remain faithful to His inspirations. This is my prayer for you!*

**Fr. Judge: Letter to Pioneer Cenacle members. May 17, 1912. (Meditations, p. 163)**