



## Gathering in the Word

Today's 2 Timothy and Luke 18 Scripture teach us about a vision that GOD acts and takes action in ways that invite us—to bring into alignment—the sharing of GOD's good news of an ***open-spirited Gospel*** that reflects a living and moving GOD, as well as ***prayerful persistence*** in seeking the greatest good and to be a healing community.

We ask ourselves this morning: What role does Scripture play in our Christian life as individuals and as people of TFCCCH? What does GOD have in mind for us?

## Hearing the Word

### **2 Timothy 3:14-4:5** (The VOICE Bible)

<sup>14</sup> So surely you ought to stick to what you know is certain. All you have learned comes from people you know and trust <sup>15</sup> because since childhood you have known the holy Scriptures, which enable you to be wise *and lead* to salvation through faith in Jesus the Anointed.

<sup>16</sup> All of Scripture is God-breathed; *in its inspired voice, we hear* useful teaching, rebuke, correction, *instruction, and* training for a life that is right <sup>17</sup> so that God's people may be up to the task ahead and have all they need to accomplish every good work.

**4** <sup>1</sup>*And now* I bring you this charge before God and Jesus the Anointed, the one *destined* to judge the living and the dead, at His *glorious* appearance and His kingdom:

<sup>2</sup> *go out and* preach the word! Go whether it's an opportune time or not! Reprove, warn, and encourage; *but do so* with all the patience and instruction *needed to fulfill your calling* <sup>3</sup> because a time will come when some will no longer tolerate sound teaching. Instead, they will

live by their own desires; they'll scratch their itching ears by surrounding themselves with teachers who *approve of their lifestyles and* tell them what they want to hear.

<sup>4</sup> They will turn away from the real truth *you have to offer* because they prefer the sound of *fables and* myths. <sup>5</sup> But you *must stay focused and* be alert at all times. Tolerate suffering. Accomplish the *good* work of an evangelist, and complete the ministry to which you have been called.

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2 Timothy invites us to explore the role of Biblical inspiration and authority in our lives and our church. 2 Timothy provides us the opportunity to reflect on what guide our values as well as shapes into the Body of Christ at TFCCCH

We are to remain faithful to a ***living*** tradition. 2 Timothy 3:16 reads,

**All Scripture is GOD-breathed; in its inspired voice, we hear useful teaching, rebuke, correction, instruction, and training for a life that is right, so that God's people may be up to the task ahead and have all they need to accomplish every good work.**

2 Timothy reminds us that Scripture instructs us for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ!

### **Luke 18:1-8 (The VOICE Bible)**

18 Jesus told them a parable, urging them to keep praying and never grow discouraged. The parable went like this:

**Jesus:** <sup>2</sup> There was a judge living in a certain city. He showed no respect for God or humanity. <sup>3</sup> In that same city there was a widow. Again and again she kept coming to him seeking justice: “Clear my name from my adversary’s false accusations!” <sup>4</sup> He paid no attention to her request for a while, but then he said to himself, “I don’t care about what God thinks of me, much less what any mere human thinks. <sup>5</sup> But this widow is driving me crazy. She’s never going to quit coming to see me unless I hear her case and provide her legal protection.”

<sup>6</sup> Did you catch what this self-assured judge said? <sup>7</sup> *If he can be moved to act justly*, won’t God bring justice for His chosen people when they cry to Him day and night? Will He be slow to bring them justice? <sup>8</sup> Mark My words: God will intervene fast with vindication. But here’s the question: when the Son of Man comes, will He find anyone who still has faith?

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**“Beloved,” Luke seems to be saying to us, “this morning our theme is the need to keep on praying and not give up.”** We have two characters: the first is an anti-hero—the judge who is a self-centered narcissist (*excessive love or admiration of oneself, lack of empathy for others*).

This judge gives little or no thought to GOD in the course of his work and really doesn’t care for other people and is arrogant and does not typically see much farther than the tip of his own nose!

Our other character in Jesus' Parable is a widow with a complaint and allegation (*accusation, assertion, charge*). Again and again GOD has made thing clear that the neediest and most vulnerable people were to be cared for way ahead of everyone else. *So—a widow ranked number 2 in the list*—of persons most deserving of very diligent judicial care.

We don't know what her case is about—the unjust judge wanted nothing to do with her. He wouldn't take her case. So the widow decided to become a public nuisance, an annoyance, a pest, pain, irritation—to the judge! It's possible that this widow stalked the man—approaching him in the marketplace when he was buying groceries or waiting for him outside his gym and nailing him the minute he stepped outside of the building, following him into restaurants and loudly asking after her case while the man waited to be seated!

Basically—the widow hit the judge where he lived: his public reputation. Maybe didn't care about other people and had little or no regard for even GOD, but his own ego and image was another matter! This judge *did* care what others thought of *him*.

Jesus says, "***Listen to what the unjust judge says.***"

What does this say about our prayers?

Our Luke 18 lesson this morning makes clear that in the end its not whether or to what extent or in what manner—GOD will rain down justice on the Earth. It's not about whether GOD wants to do that or even whether or

not there are reasons when for some inscrutable reason GOD has to put us off for a while and not answer our prayers.

In Luke 18—Jesus “turns the table on us” and puts the focus back on our faith. We have to assume the best about our GOD’s goodness, aloha, justice, and mercy! By faith we hang on to our belief in all that whether we our prayers **are** answered or **not!**

In the end—we should worry less about GOD’s character and more about the character of our faith! If we stop praying to GOD—how can we expect to help display GOD’s hidden kingdom to one another, the neighborhoods and the world?

## **Doing the Word**

So what is the Word of God for us?

### **1. ONE: WE ARE PEOPLE OF GOD’S WORD!**

- ✓ We discern (*figure out, determine, recognize*) GOD’s word together for every time and place. Our discernment needs to be done all the time.
- ✓ Yes, pastors have a role, but we do this TOGETHER! It has to be community—all of us.
- ✓ Yes, we may disagree—but the Spirit is faithful and we are the Body of Christ at TFCCCH—together!

## 2. **TWO: WE ARE TO BE PERSISTENT IN OUR PRAYERS FOR EACH OTHER, OUR CHURCH, NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE WORLD!**

- ✓ GOD hears our prayers no matter what!
- ✓ There is great wisdom in waiting for the *right time* and trusting GOD to respond to our deepest needs on GOD's timetable that is best for us!
- ✓ Jesus put the focus on prayer back on our own faith! We have to assume the best of GOD's goodness, aloha, justice, and mercy!
- ✓ **GOD is the most generous source of grace and light in the universe!**

## 3. **THREE: FAITH NOT WORKS JUSTIFIES:**

To be persistent in our relationship with GOD will lead to a change in the way we view each other and live with each other. We do good works not to prove ourselves worthy of GOD's aloha. We do good works because good works are expression of a relationship that is persistent – in season and out of season. So let us **take heart:**

- ✓ if you find hope difficult to sustain, remember this has been the experience of men and women of faith in every age—think of people you're your own family or examples here at TFCCCH!
- ✓ if prayer seems barren – a struggle with little reward, know that the persistent attempt is in itself a prayer that GOD will not look down on.

- ✓ and remember our salvation depends not on how we feel but on the gracious love of God!

### **Sent in the Word**

Persistence in conduct, in church teaching, and in prayer marks the church as a dissenter in a world of quick fixes.

Do not give up hope!  
Keep the faith!