



17-22 Persistent Prayer-Part 2
Confident in God's Justice
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well I suppose we're in the right building at the right time for me to ask you a probing spiritual question, are we not? So let me ask how is your prayer life? How is your prayer life? How is your time praying every week? Are you getting some good time in prayer? What kinds of things are you praying about? What kinds of things make your prayer lists that you actually pray for every day, sincerely pray for every single day? What kinds of prompts and reminders do you use to be consistent in prayer?

I imagine if we were having that conversation one-on-one I might hear from some people something to the effect of, well Pastor Mike I, you know, want to pray more, I'd like to pray better. I mean my prayer life's not all that it should be but I try to schedule some time, I hope many of you would say that, schedule some time to pray and focus on that. I pray a lot, like, throughout the day but I don't always get that prayer time in that I would like to. But I do have some things I pray for every day. Maybe, if you're biblically astute you'd say, well I like to use even some of the elements that Jesus talked about in the Lord's Prayer, the disciple's modeled prayer, and I try to have things that I'm praying about that reflect my worship of God, I try to, you know, the "hallowed be thy name" category. I just want to tell God he's great. I try to be thankful for the things that he's done. I work on doing some of that. I certainly pray for my daily bread. I have several things in my work life, in my home life that are a concern to me and my family, they have needs and I'm concerned about their lives and I love them and I do pray for them. I probably pray for them every day, Pastor Mike. Those are some things that hit my list every day. Of course I find myself praying, and sometimes not just in my scheduled prayer time but throughout the day, for forgiveness, I confess my sins, I get convicted by the Spirit of things I've done that I know are not right and thoughts I've had and habits. I come to God at night and tell him I'm sorry and I ask for his forgiveness. I'll even pray that section of the Lord's Prayer where I don't want to be led into temptation and I'll say to God just protect me and keep my feet on the right path and keep me focused on doing what's right and guard my steps. I pray those things. And if I interrupted you at that point and said, "What about that line in the model prayer of Christ that says, 'Your Kingdom Come?' That request. How's that request coming along?" Some might say, "Well, I don't know. I guess I've said it before, or occasionally I'll say it or sometimes I'll try to get that feeling of Maranatha, I want Christ to come. I guess I try that.

But I would suppose if I had a one-on-one conversation with everybody in the room, that might be one that's very difficult for people to say, "Yeah, I pray for that. And that's a regular part of my prayer. I sincerely have that as a part of my prayer life every day." I think that might be a neglected part of what Jesus, obviously, if you think through that list, would have us prioritize right up at the top, right after worshipping God and confessing that God is great. I mean, here's the next thing, "Your Kingdom Come."

Well, I'd like to help you with that part of your prayer life today. If you're a Christian, I know that you know you need to pray. You probably know that you need to pray better and you need to pray more consistently, you need to pray more sincerely and I just want to focus on that one line right there and say, certainly I'd like you and I to leave this building, this week praying more the way Christ would have us pray as it relates to that simple request.

Now the next line in the model prayer of Jesus is, you might remember, "Your will be done on earth



as it is in heaven." That's kind of an overlapping statement that affects not only what the Kingdom Come means that the Kingdom of Christ would come and Jesus would come back, and then of course his will will be done on earth. But we know that we are, as Christ said, salt and the light in this world, and I suppose some of the prayers are based on that, aren't they? That you want to be someone who promotes what is good in your workplace, in your family, in your neighborhood and you'd like to restrain evil, to use some biblical concepts there. My life should be that preserving agent like salt and I want my life to be that and that's good.

But I want you to realize that beyond just having that sense of wanting to be a good person, restraining evil and promoting what is righteous in our sphere of influence, there is the ultimate priority at the top of Christ's prayer list that we would be praying every day for his kingdom to come. That's more than just throwing the line out or just thinking, "Well, I hope Christ comes back." As a matter of fact what I'd like to see as we study in Luke, as we've reached the 18th chapter of Luke, to see that these first eight verses are primarily an unpacking of that one line of the Lord's Prayer. The first eight verses of Luke Chapter 18 are really telling us what it would look like and feel like to really be praying sincerely and consistently. Not just every day, but day and night for the Lord's kingdom to come.

I'd like you to turn there and find the context so that you can just at least be convinced as I speak to you this morning that this is indeed the immediate contextual setting for this statement about prayer.

This is not just a passage where Jesus is saying, hey, let's talk about your prayer life. He's talking about one particular kind of praying. So go back up in Chapter 17, if you would, scroll up to where we started the conversation in verse 20 when the Pharisees came saying, "Hey, when's the kingdom of God going to come?" Now, again, we know they kind of had a bit of a chip on their shoulder and they were envious and jealous of Jesus and his following. So that probably was not a sincere question or if it was, it was a question of, at least, accusation that if you're a king, then where's your kingdom? As we study this a few weeks back we recognize that, that they weren't good-hearted always in their questions and most the time they were bad-hearted in their questioning of Christ. But here they were saying something that is a very biblical question. "Hey, if you are the king, if you are the king that has arrived on this earth, if you're the messiah of the Old Testament, then there should be a kingdom, there should be a domain. You should have made everything right in our society. And if you're the king, then where's the kingdom? And if you are the king, then when is it coming?" And so that's how we started this topic. Now two verses later, after basically saying to the Pharisees, listen, I'm the king and you're never going to know what the kingdom is until you get connected with me.

And we talked about that in that sermon, verses 20 and 21, that you need to make sure you realize that right now we're in what we call the invisible phase of the kingdom. But Jesus then turns to the disciples so they don't have any confusion about this. In verse 22, if you glance at it, he says to his disciples, "No, the kingdom is coming and it will be visible. You will see it. There will be no denying it when it happens. It will be like the flash of lightning across the sky." And then, if you look, verses 25 and following, he starts now to enlist two Old Testament examples, the example of Noah and the example of Lot. And he says, you know, the day of the Lord is going to be bad news for a lot of people. When Christ's kingdom does come, when the Son of Man does return, when the second advent of Jesus takes place, it will mean judgment for most in that generation and the salvation of the few. Just like Noah and his family, just like Lot and his family, minus his wife, you're going to have the deliverance of some, but for most people it will be judgment. And then he enlists that very familiar phrase, that he uses in other contexts in his teaching, in verse 33, if you're

going to try to save your life, well, then you're going to lose the kingdom. If, by that we mean, you try to be someone who says, "I want to fit in here, I don't want to lose face, I don't want to lose reputation, I want to be a part of this world, I don't want to be making any hassles about my commitments, I don't want to try to shove my religion down anybody's throat, I don't want anybody calling me a Jesus freak." If you want to be fitting in here, you're going to lose the kingdom, you're going to lose your life. But if you're willing to lose your life, as Jesus put it elsewhere, for my sake, for the Gospel's sake, in other words, if you're willing to lose with the world and their opinion of you, well then, you're going to be saved, you'll get the kingdom.

And then in Chapter 18, which really is an unfortunate division in the numbering system of the Bible, that didn't come for hundreds and hundreds of years after the original penning of the Bible, what you've got is a break that makes us think that maybe we have started a whole new entirely different context. Well, look at verse 8.

The last verse that we're going to study this morning. It is still talking about the return of Christ. He puts it this way, last sentence of verse 8, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Well, the Son of Man coming, that's certainly that picture of Jesus coming back, the kingdom coming, it's the reference to Daniel Chapter 7, as we often say, the Son of Man title with the dominion over the earth and all peoples giving their loyalty to Christ, well, that's coming, so we're still talking about that. Well, sandwiched in between it is this discussion about a widow who desperately wants justice. He's basically now comparing the people who live between the expectation of the kingdom and the realization of the kingdom, you're going to live in a world where you're going to do a lot of crying out to a higher authority, to God for justice. Now justice means that things are going wrong and they need to be made right. Injustices, things aren't the way they ought to be. Now, from a righteous biblical perspective, we see that from defining right and wrong biblically and we look around and we see this is not what it ought to be. Just like God looking at the days of Noah and all those people, God says, this is not the world that should be, and in and Sodom and Gomorrah this is not the world that should be. When he comes to straighten things out, that is how the Bible defines the just, here's another way it's translated, the righteous God saying now we're going to make things right. What's crooked is going to be made straight, what's rough is going to be made plain and all the world is going to see the glory of God. Unfortunately, those who have rebelled against me, it's going to be judgment for them but salvation for those that have been loyal to me. That picture of the coming of Jesus is all about people between now and the time that it comes, feeling the injustice and saying, you know what, God we need you to fix our problem.

It's a kind of praying, it's a kind of perspective that's, to use the biblical word or at least the theological word, it's eschatological praying. It's not praying about, I need this thing in my office to get fixed, I need my health to get better, I need, you know, this job promotion, it's about the big issues of the end of time.

"Eschaton" in Greek, is the word for "the end." It's all about praying about the end, the coming of the kingdom.

So let's read our passage this morning. Last week we just took that first sentence there, that first verse, in verse 1, and said many people quote this out of context, misunderstand it, so we thematically looked through the Bible at how not to enlist this verse. Now, we're going to put it back in its context and understand this as Jesus tells the parable and then he explains it. Start in verse 1 again just to give us where we were. "He told them," Jesus tells them, who's that? The

disciples, "a parable to the effect that," now here's the goal, here's what we're supposed to understand from this passage, "that they ought to always pray and not lose heart." So something about persistent praying is on the table now. Now he's going to tell them the context for that persistent praying. It's about people crying out for justice. Take a look at it, he tells a parable, verse number 2, here's our passage for this morning, seven verses, versus 2 through 8. "He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.'" That's one you don't vote for in Orange County, I hope. That's a bad person. He doesn't care about God. In other words, he is the ultimate authority, doesn't defer to any higher authority, doesn't really care for people, he doesn't respect people, he thinks he's better than everybody else. So that's a terrible judge.

"And there was a widow," verse 3. Widows in the first century were a lot more dependent upon the males in their family to go fight their battles in the marketplace. They didn't have the contracts, they didn't have the lawyers. I mean, they had some of that but ultimately, when you were a widow, if you didn't have grown sons to protect your interests and your needs, you didn't have a husband to go out there and fight those battles for you in the marketplace or in some kind of dispute, I mean, she says, "I'm hopeless here about my adversary who is coming against me" and she comes and she cries out to the judge.

Verse 3, "Give me justice against my adversary." Things are wrong, things are not right, I've got someone attacking me unjustly, I need you to make it right. I'm appealing to you. Verse 4. "For a while he refused, but afterwards he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God, nor respect man,' interesting self-reflection here, I'm not doing it for God, I'm not doing it for my fellow man, I'm not doing it because I care for this woman. Yet," verse 5, "Because this widow keeps bothering me I will give her," here's our word again, "justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming. I've had enough.

We can all identify with this. We got a dripping faucet, some kind of e-mail that keeps coming, some kind of squeaky wheel at home or some broken thing and eventually you say, "You are wearing me down. Finally I'll do it." So here's a bad man who has no care or concern for a righteous God, no care or concern for others, he's saying, fine, this woman keeps asking. I'm going to do it. End of parable.

Jesus explains, verse 6. "The Lord said," of course he's speaking to his disciples here, "hear what the unrighteous judge says." If you interested in the original languages of the New Testament, New Testament Koine Greek, you need to understand and underline that word "unrighteous."

It's the same word that we've already read twice, both in verse 3 and verse 5. We can translate that word "justice," we have an unjust judge and he's being asked for justice and he says, "Listen what the unjust judge says." What is he saying? "I'll give you justice." He's doing something that is not even in keeping with his character or his nature.

And he said, based on that, a messed up man being worn down by requests. Now, take an argument here from lesser to greater. Look at a person like that who would give in to do the right thing when he's a wrong person, do the just thing when he's an unjust person. "Will not God," the righteous and just one, that's what the word is, he's a righteous God, he's a just God. Obviously, that's the definition of who he is. "Will he not," verse 7, "give justice," there's the third time now we've seen that word, "to his elect," his people, "who," what are they doing? They are praying for his kingdom to come. They "are crying to him day and night. Will he delay long over them?"



Verse 8, "I tell you," here's a very declarative statement, "he will give," for the fourth time in seven verses, "he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on the earth.

This passage is about your prayer life. This passage is about my prayer life. It is about us making sure that we have the right perspective in our prayer life, particularly about one aspect of what Jesus sees as a priority for your prayer life and mine, and that is that we're praying for the coming kingdom. I hope you can say that you'd like to pray the way Jesus taught you to and you want to pray about the coming kingdom.

This particular passage shows us that somebody, when they encounter the injustices of the world, they will go to whatever authority they think might bring them justice and they'll cry out to that authority. And here we have someone who's not dealing with things that she can deal with herself. She's over her head, she has no protection, all she can do is appeal to the magistrate of the day and say, "Help me, I need your justice. You have authority and I need you to fix my problem."

Number one on your outline, when it comes to your praying and my praying this coming week, we need to "let injustice prompt more prayer."

I talked about what is it that you use to prompt and remind you to pray consistently in your life. Well, when it comes to this particular aspect of your prayer life, I'm not just asking you to put up some Post-it note on the dashboard of your car, some 3x5 card near the bezel of your computer at work. I'm asking you to use the everyday experience that I hope every Christian in the room has and that is that you look at this world sometimes and have a visceral and terrible, uncomfortable response to how messed up this place is, and you say that is my biblical prompt to start praying. We need to be praying for the kingdom to come and we start with this. I look into my heart at those poor reactions that I have to the world which, by the way, is a sign of your godliness. Let me say that very clearly as you jot down this reference, Psalm 119, which if you read it, the longest chapter in the Bible, it will take you a little while, it's a very positive chapter. It's about how great God's word is. It's about how refreshing it is to spend time in the word. It's about how the Word of God helps me and sustains me and guides and directs me, it's a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. That comes from this chapter. And I hide the word in my heart so I don't sin against God. That's a verse in this chapter. Although it's a largely positive passage about extolling the virtues of scripture, listen to three verses in this particular chapter that should be the regular experience of every Christian living in a non-Christian world. Everybody who loves righteousness living in a world that exalts what is unrighteous, here's what he says in verse 136, Psalm 119:136. The psalmist says, "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law." Think about that. My eyes, they cry. I feel sorrow, I'm sad because people do not keep your law.

I wonder how many times you have been prompted, by things that you see in this world, to true and sincere sadness, simply because, not that they've wronged you, but they've wronged God. That you think, you know, I love God so much, I want to live for him and it really bums me out that other people don't. I look at people doing things that are against God's rules and I have a jealousy for his honor and I feel bad just because they are disgracing and dishonoring God by their lives.

Here's another verse. I said there were three from this chapter that should be noteworthy in this context. How about this, Psalm 119:158. The psalmist says, "I look at the faithless," those who don't do what God asks. "I look at the faithless with," here's the key word, "disgust." Why? "Because they do not keep your commands." So, I got two emotions here of the reaction to people around him that



don't do what God has asked and they say, first of all, "I feel sadness," and then the visceral description of his feelings, "I feel disgusted." I'm disgusted by the way they malign God, mock God.

One more and I quote this one often, verse 53, Psalm 119:53. The Bible says, "Hot indignation seizes me," that's what the Psalmist says, the poet, "because of the wicked, who forsake your law." Here are three emotions, right here, and I just wonder how often you feel them. "Sorrow" because the world is so messed up, people disobeying God. "Disgust" because people thumb their nose at God and live counter to his rules. And "anger," hot indignation, because you watch people who, as the text says, forsake God's law.

Now you may be of the variety of Christians who think that your job is to insulate yourself from all that is negative, all the things that make you feel bad and all you want to do is just go around saying, "I'm blessed, I'm blessed, I'm blessed. I don't want the negativity, I don't want to read the news, I don't want to read the blogs, I don't wanna look what's going on the world, I just surround myself with positive thinking." That's a very common form of Christianity but it's not biblical Christianity. God would not have you stick your head in the sand and pretend everything's fine in this world. Everything is not fine in this world. And even if you try to hide from the injustice, eventually the injustice of this world will creep into your circle, will it not? It's going to affect your families, it's going affect your life.

And the Bible would remind us that it's a very godly thing for you to have that feeling of frustration over the world. Man, I get it all the time from my colleagues here at work. My wife yesterday pops off this text and she's not normally doing this kind of thing, this news headline that she says, "Look at what's going on. I can't stand what's going in the world."

And my wife is a very nice person but there's hot indignation seizing her yesterday because of a news story. I said, man, she must be looking over my shoulder, reading my notes that I'm preparing for tomorrow's sermon because it's exactly what I'm talking about. It is a good and godly characteristic of your life to feel those things and you should let that kind of feeling of injustice in our world prompt you to start praying.

If your mother was your sixth grade teacher, think that through now. And you had a fabulous mom, you loved her, she was fantastic, just the greatest mom ever. And she now is your teacher and you're looking forward to this because you're thinking this will be a great year. I get my own mom as a teacher.

But you sit there in that classroom and all of sudden you realize your classmates don't have the same feeling. Matter of fact, most of your classmates don't even know that she is your mother but they don't like the teacher because a lot of students don't like their teacher. They give homework, they enforce the rules, they have a bunch of classroom rules. So you find out real quickly that a lot of your classmates, they're looking at your mom and they just don't like her. Matter of fact, she says something, they snicker at each other, they roll their eyes, she turns her back, they make paper airplanes and throw them, they pull out the rubber band, the paper clips and spit wads and it's awful in that classroom. And you watch all these people disregard everything your mom says and then you find them writing notes about your mom. Then you see them writing things, you know, on their lockers, you know, and how awful your mother is. I just wonder if your response would be, "Well, I just try to be positive, you know, I just kind of shield myself from that." You would be sad, you would be disgusted and I hope at some point you'd have a hot indignation over those people. And if you had a really strong dad, I think you'd probably hope that your dad shows up on one of those



days when all that's going on because you want justice. Your mom's a nice mom. She only wants what's best for the students. She's given rules and everyone everyone's disregarding them. You want this made right.

To pray for the kingdom to come is often in the Scripture prompted by you and I simply looking around in our world. Sometimes it touches our lives as it does with the widow, apparently there's an adversary against her that's wronging her. But it doesn't have to be against you, it can be just simply the world in which we live. If you don't pay attention to the world we live in, I'm saying that's an unbiblical perspective. Oh, you don't have to be a news junkie, you don't have to read the news every single morning, you don't have to be someone who's always got their finger on the pulse of every terrible thing that's going on. But you ought not hide from that. "Why? So we can be frustrated? I don't want to be frustrated." I'm not asking to be frustrated. I'm asking you to be a man or a woman of prayer. Psalm 55, for instance, is a good Psalm. I don't have time to take you through it, it's somewhat lengthy. I would have you, this week, though, spend some time in it particularly before you go to your small group.

Just read through Psalm 55 and note how this works. Here's the paradigm, we see it often through the Bible. It's a feeling of injustice in the world. It's a lot of anger and frustration. Then it moves into, in the middle of the psalm, a pouring out of my complaint before God. And then it ends after that prayer with this, I can cast my anxiety on the Lord. I can cast my care, as it's put in that passage, my burden, on God. I know God will sustain us. I know God will not permit the righteous to be shattered or folded or moved as the English Standard Version translation puts it. It's an interesting paradigm. The frustration and indignation and disgust and disappointment with our world that we live in, leads us to this kind of frustration that prompts prayer and that prayer then results in a calm and peaceful heart that says God is in control.

Why? Because I'm praying for what? His justice. Some things I can't deal with in this world. I'm not talking about justice this week, next month, next year because I know some things are beyond anything we can do. Sometimes we pray, put our hand to the plough and try to exact justice but sometimes we just can't. All we can do is wait for God. And that's a paradigm, by the way, that's going to go like this in your life. As a matter of fact, it may be every day you go through this rollercoaster experience of being disgusted, frustrated and angered by the sinful, rebellious world we live in. We take our burden, we cast it to the Lord and then we come out of that with, to put it in the words of Philippians 4, "a peace that surpasses all understanding." That's the end of that discussion on prayer but it starts with this, "Don't be anxious about anything." I'm not asking you to be an anxious Christian. I'm asking you to allow the impetus and the catalyst and the reminder and the prompt of the bad in this world to get you to start praying more consistently. "What am I praying for?" God, Your Kingdom Come. And then God says, I'll give you peace but it's not a peace you ask for once and it lasts the rest of the week or the rest of the month, it may not last but just for the rest of the morning and by the afternoon you're back on it again. "Look how terrible this is. Look how awful this is. Look at what a mockery of God this is. God, I need your kingdom to come. I'm going to cast my anxiety upon you."

Another passage worth studying would be First Peter Chapter 5, when he says, you know there's a lot of suffering in this world. "Your enemy, the devil, he's prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour," and then he says, your brothers all over the world are experiencing this kind of suffering. But it started with this, you need to entrust yourself to God. Put yourself and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. There is a sense of God who is sovereign, who one day will write all the wrongs. And when you do that, he will exalt you at the proper time.



Now, I know a lot of you read that, in the short-term, you see this as a myopic, God will fix this next week, next month, next year. But it's really an eschatological passage. I say that because the passage ends this way, "that his dominion is going to rule."

And his dominion, that's a kingdom word, that's a replacement of this world, the kingdoms of the world with the Kingdom of God and he says, it's forever and ever. So I know what Peter has in mind in that passage is that you and I know that we are losing a battle in this culture but one day he's going to exalt us. Just like Noah on the buoyancy of that flood, just like Lot being taken out of that city in the destruction and just like the people of God in the darkening culture that we live in, are going to escape. And I'm not talking about an escapist mentality but I am talking about the heart that prays what Jesus taught us to pray. Your Kingdom Come. And I want to pray that more often and I don't need a prayer reminder on the dashboard of my car. All I need to do is make the connection between the feelings of injustice and my need to call out to God in prayer.

In Ezekiel 9, the characteristic of the godly was those who groaned at the iniquity in their society. I just wonder if God is looking at this congregation and saying, listen, they've got the marks of godliness. Here's a congregation that groans often because they live in a culture that makes God groan often. It's very important for us to realize the Christian life is not devoid of bad feelings. Matter of fact, it's those bad feelings that often lead us to prayer which then result in peace and that's something that cyclically, in a daily pattern, has to be a part of my thinking in my life and my expectation. It's normal. It's biblical. It's godly.

Back to Luke 18 verses 6 and 7. Here is someone coming continually to the judge, the unrighteous judge, to get justice and he relents, he gives in, he says, "I'll give her justice. I don't want to be worn out by this woman." Amazingly, Jesus, in verses six and seven, compares God, in some way, which really isn't a comparison, it's more of a contrast, to the unrighteous judge, because I never want to compare the righteous God to an unrighteous judge. And nevertheless, Jesus draws a contrast that says that even if an unrighteous judge is going to bring justice to some woman, don't you think God will bring righteousness to his elect? Now, hear what the righteous judge says, he relented, he said yes. Sure, here's your justice. Verse 7, "Will not God give justice to his elect, who cry out to him day and night?" I just want to make sure I'm crying out to him day and night.

But once I start doing that, prompting more of that prayer, then I want to pray for his justice and he will not delay long over them. What does that mean?

He's going to solve my problem this week, next month, next year? No, this is about the replacement of the kingdom of the world with the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. This is about us not seeing a world that any longer lives in rebellion against God, but a world in which righteousness dwells. That ought to be our prayer and it's a big prayer and that big categorical prayer starts to affect a lot of the ways I pray about a lot of other things and frankly it takes a lot of things on my prayer list and simply scoots them out of the way.

He's promised this. "Will not God give justice to his elect?" It's going to happen. A lot of people die with their small battles of justice not won, as is often put in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

We die without the promise being fulfilled because the promise is bigger than this life. So we're looking to a city whose builder is God and that is the expectation that you and I should have. That's a big thought, a big prayer, that's setting our minds on things above, that storing up treasure in



heaven, that's living for the next life and not this one. It's not that we're so heavenly minded, we're no earthly good, it's that we're heavenly minded that we start to be very discerning about the good that we pursue.

It's a different mindset. It's a big prayer that has to really replace a lot of small prayers in our life but it's built on a confidence that God will do what he says. He says he will bring it.

Number 2 on your outline, I put it this way. "Let confidence prompt bigger requests." Bigger requests that flow from the biggest request, which is "I want Christ to return." Now if you and I are praying that, as we ought to, crying out day and night, for God to right the wrong of this entire world, you're going to watch it sort through your prayer list.

It's going to change the way that you pray. If you really believe what Matthew 16:27 says, that "the Son of Man has promised to come again with his angels and the glory of his Father, and he will repay each person according to what he's done." If you know that the judge is standing at the door and at any moment he could come back and return and straighten out this world, if you live with the imminent expectation of Christ's return, I assure you it's going to change the way you view your prayer life. It will move from small requests and short term requests to big requests.

Let me illustrate this with a really silly illustration which, if you're a regular here, that's a normal thing, so indulge me again, if you would. You're on an airplane. You've gotten to cruising altitude. The "bing" went off above your head and you can roam about the cabin, that's fine. And all of a sudden, as soon as that happens and you're at 40,000 feet in this cross-country trek, all of a sudden, people from every part of the plane pop up and reveal that they are hijackers and in spite of the best efforts of the TSA they have commandeered your airplane and it has officially been hijacked. And by the sound of what they're saying you recognize there's no doubt this is a suicide mission. They're going to take this plane down and they're going to crash it at some strategic spot. And so now you're on a plane that has been hijacked and then weird things start happening and a lot of the passengers around you start actually sympathizing with the hijackers and you realize that Stockholm Syndrome you've heard about is starting to set in and people are freaking you out because it seems like a majority of people on the plane are all for this. They're convinced.

So as you're flying along and you know that your plane has been hijacked, you get a text, along with everyone else in the airplane. At the exact same time everyone's phone goes off. So, you think I couldn't even get a signal up here and, bam, you pull out your phone and it says, "From the United States Air Force." This is a silly illustration, I realize, but follow me now.

As you read it, it says, "We understand you have been hijacked, it is a suicide mission, don't panic. We are coming to rescue you. Now I know this may sound odd but there is a way for you to be rescued. We have worked for years on this technology, we have perfected it, we have spent a lot of money to perfect it, and we're going to come and we are confident we will save you. But here's what you must do. Reach underneath your seat, each passenger reach underneath your seat. And if you feel, right between your knees, underneath that sea, you're going to find a short little tethered latch. And it's just dangling down there, you didn't notice it but it's there. Now, reach back even further, about four inches further, there is going to be a cable. If you turn your flashlight on your phone and you look under there, it's a red cable, it's a thick cable, it's about an inch thick and it runs across perpendicular to the plane. And that little cable right there, if you take that latch and you hook that tethered latch to that red cable and then you sit in your chair and you tighten your seatbelt, we've perfected this technology. We're going to bring a gigantic United States Air Force jumbo jet, it's



going to fly in close proximity to your doomed plane and we're going to hit a button. And through technology, we don't have time to explain it in the text, you are going to be extracted from the plane, it's going to be one heck of a ride but you're going to get flung over to the jumbo jet and we got refreshments and it's going to be great. Everything's there for you. Comfortable ride, everyone's in first class. It's going to be awesome."

When about that time you're getting that text and you've read to the bottom, you go, "Wow, that's crazy. Did you get that text?" "Yeah, I got that text." And you scroll a little further and it says, "Sincerely, United States Air Force. If you need anything, let us know. We're here to serve." Oh, that's amazing.

So we know I can text the Air Force back. They're on their way. About the time you process the information and you reach under your seat, sure enough, there is the little tethered hook and you reach back further, you get your light out, there it is, a big red cable, about an inch thick. You take that hook, you hook it to that, you tighten your seat, you go, "OK man." You look at your friends, and maybe you're flying with your family and you say, make sure everybody's got it, everybody's good. You've got other people saying, "Well, did you get that text? That's a lie. The government's not coming. No one's coming for you." The hijackers say, "Shut up, don't read that text. It's not true."

And you recognize that the pitch of the plane, we're starting to tilt, we start a descent now, looks pretty steep. I know the captain said we were 40,000 feet but we're going down pretty quickly and you're praying the Air Force will get there. You get an update text, "We're on our way. We're not far. Hang on. Be strapped in. Check your cable."

Then you reread the text and you realize they said, "Hey, if you have any needs or concerns, just text us back." You're sitting there watching the increasing chaos in the cabin of the airplane, you start saying, "Did you read the text? 'If you have any concerns...' I got a few concerns about this flight. When they brought that beverage cart down this aisle earlier. I asked for peanuts. They said we don't serve peanuts anymore. Rotten, old, stale crackers they tried to feed me. You know what? I think flights should have peanuts. Hey honey, I'm going to text the Air Force. They said we could text if we want peanuts on this flight. I bet the flight attendants have a secret stash of peanuts somewhere.

You said you can do anything. I mean if you got technology to get me off this plane, I bet you got the power to give me some peanuts on this flight."

Send. OK. "Yeah. And you know what. They also said when I asked for a pillow, we don't have any and I walked thru first class when I got on this plane and I saw pillows in first class. I know this plane has pillows. I'm going to text the Air Force. I'm on this flight, I'm uncomfortable, I don't know how long it's going to be, I might be here a while, I don't know. I'd like a pillow." And your wife goes, "Yeah, you know what, you're going to get your pillow. All they had was Coke products on that cart. I ended up with a diet Coke, I like diet Pepsi. Text them, see if you can get Pepsi. I know we won't be here long but as long as I'm going to be here, I am thirsty, I'd like some Pepsi."

This silly illustration. I warned you it would be silly, right? I just wonder as we're descending on this thing called Planet Earth, on a suicide mission, where the god of this world has taken over, chaos is ensuing, people are standing up telling you not to believe the Word of God. It's not true. Where's the promise of his coming? And you've latched your tether to the red cable of salvation and



you're trusting in Christ to save you. I just wonder when you get the call to say, "Ask and you'll receive, seek and you'll find, knock on the door and the door will be open to you." Just ask me. If you take this thing called the privilege of prayer and you start saying, "You know what? I need peanuts, pillows and Pepsi on this flight." I just wonder how the Air Force is going to respond to that. "What? I expected some questions about the cable, maybe. I expected some questions about how to convince the guy across the aisle to believe the text is true. I expected some kind of request that was much, much bigger than peanuts, pillows and Pepsi.

I just wonder if God looks at our prayers that we are consistently praying. When I said, "What are you praying about everyday?" If you kind of sat up straight and go, "Yeah, there are things I'm praying for every day. I'm feeling good about this question about prayer." But all those things were really the equivalent of peanuts, pillows and Pepsi.

I just wonder if God is looking at our desires to be more fit, to have a raise, to be recognized, to get a bigger house, I just wish we had this vacation, whatever it is you might be praying for. I just wonder if he's going, "What in the world are you guys doing? You're jamming the phone lines with requests like this? Think bigger, pray bigger. Don't you know this world's going to crash?" I know that if you look for it in Scripture you'll see it is everywhere.

It's about storing up treasure in heaven, it's about setting our minds on things above, it's about the fact that everything in this world, Second Peter Chapter 3, is going to burn. If it's going to burn, what sort of people ought you to be, and let me amend that here, just a Mike Fabarez application, and what kind of prayers ought you to be praying? You got to be praying, big prayers about the return of Christ and things related to the return of Christ. How many prayers on your prayer list relate to the end of the world?

I know one that always does, the salvation of people on this planet that have yet to hook their lives to the cable of Christ.

I know that's one that gets God's attention. Because I know the only reason they haven't shown up yet is because God, with his infinite knowledge, looking on this plane, sees that there are some people that need to be latched to that cable that have not reached the place of repentance yet. They still are doubting the text. They don't believe the communication. And they are not yet there. And I know one thing that will get through right to the top of the list in my silly illustration is when you start caring about kingdom priorities, the highest of which is the salvation of your friends and your love ones. Because the Bible says this: the only reason, this is Romans Chapter 2 verse 4, that the patience and forbearance of God should be interpreted in your mind is because he wants people to come to repentance which is almost exactly the way it's put in Second Peter Chapter 3. And that is that the only reason he has not come back yet, the only reason we haven't been ejected yet, the only reason the Rapture the church has not yet happened is because he's wanting people to come to repentance. I know we talked early in Chapter 17 in the series about the kingdom. We talked about working to make more kingdom converts. I'm just asking you today to pray more for the kingdom converts.

I'm asking you to pray for the end of the world but there is a tension in that because I know that he's waiting for one primary thing. I know he's got other things on his docket but God is looking to see people come to repentance.

Let's cry out day and night for kingdom priorities. Romans Chapter 8 would remind us, and that's a



good one to study, we don't have time to look at it, verses 18 through 25. Romans 8:18-25. We ought to be groaning along with the rest of the created world as it's personified in that passage, we can't wait for the redemption of the children of God. Translation in my stupid illustration, we can't wait to get ejected from this planet. In the meantime, though, I'm going to work. Paul said for me to live is Christ to die is gain. I can't wait to get off this dying ship. But when it comes down to it, I'm going to stay on for ministry.

Does that mean there's never a time to get a raise? No! Never a time to excel at work? No! I'm never time to get a bigger house? No, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying don't use prayer as something that limits you to thinking, "Well, if God says he can move mountains, I know what that means, I can get a pile of peanuts right here if I text him. Maybe I can get a hamburger on this flight." Those are silly requests and God may look past that in your immaturity as a Christian but if you're growing in Christ then it's time for a prayer list to grow up. Your Kingdom Come. Crying out day and night for justice, whether the injustice touches us in some poignant way or whether it's just our looking back, as the psalmist did in saying, I can't stand the fact that the world, as Psalm 2 says, is trying to cast off the fetters of God.

Let confidence prompt bigger requests. If you know he's coming back, if you know they're coming to rescue us, pray big.

Number three, verse 8. "I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily." I wish I had time for all of the ins and outs of the language and the words and the word "makrothymeo" in verse 7, which as we can see this in inter-testamental writings, that make it clear we're not just talking about the fact that the time will be short.

That's not the focus of this. Because clearly, it's been 2,000 years and the last sentence of verse 8 clearly gives us a sense it's going to be some time before the Son of Man comes back. He doesn't want to put that out of their minds. He always wants his disciples to feel the imminence of the return of Christ. But clearly he's thinking about the fact that will this thing that goes on whittled down the church until we don't have anybody that has faith any more. So we're not talking about this is going to happen in the next three hours, at least from the perspective of the historic New Testament document that we're looking at. If you follow that, all I'm saying is this: Nothing in this passage has been controverted by the fact that it's been 2,000 years till he's come. But he will come speedily, he will come without delay. He stands at the door and he's not going to creep through the doorway, he's going to rush through the doorway. As it says for those who are lost, it's going to come upon them, here's how it's put in Luke, we'll look at this later in the book, like a trap, it's going to snap.

And for Christians, we've already seen in Chapter 17, it's going to be like a flash of lightning across the sky. Or to put it in the words of Acts 1, he's going to return just the way came, we're going to see him. To put it in the words of First Thessalonians, we're going to meet him in the air. All of this picture of a sudden return of Christ is not controverted by the fact that he's waiting and delaying.

So number three, what I want to say is if what we want, if you look at the bottom of verse number eight, it's to have strong faith until he comes. I put it this way, number three, you need to let the delay, if it's another week, another month, another year or if it's ten years from now, we're going to let that prompt stronger faith in our life. We know that he promised. His batting average is perfect.

I'm going to trust that he's coming back. I'm going to let the delay and the increase of injustice and



the worsening of our culture simply lead me to trust him more. It's going to whittle away the dross in my faith and I'm going to say, I will believe it and I will hope in this to the end.

He's coming, because his promise is good and he's waiting for a good reason. I shared this years ago and pardon me if you've heard it again and I don't want you to psychoanalyze me but I had a recurring dream as a kid that scared me to death.

I went over to North Long Beach where my grandpa lived as I often did, but in my dream I was back in the backyard with my brother playing baseball. We often did. In my backyard, in my house over on east Long Beach, I was good at hopping the fence and sneaking in and my reconnaissance to grab the ball and pop over the fence and come back and I'd done it successfully many times but I'd never been in my grandpa's neighbor's yard. In my dream, we hit the ball over the fence, and so my brother, as he often did, said, you go get it, so I hopped the fence in this dream. And I got up to this six foot fence and you know how we did as kids, get up to the top, sometimes you'd sit on the top and then, if you were daring, you'd jump off. And I landed in his flowerbed, which I realized when my feet hit it wasn't a flowerbed, it was a big gigantic pit of quicksand. This is my dream now. And I start to sink. You know that feeling when you have a dream like that, where you groan and start to yell but you can't yell, you're kind of halfway asleep. I know I probably did this in my sleep, my brother probably heard this often, as I was trying to eke out a scream as the sand goes up around my knees and then my hips and then my abdomen, then my armpits and my hands and I'm like, I'm just about to go under. And the more I got panicked in that dream, I remember looking in this yard, my grandpa's neighbor's yard, I'd never been in it and of course I figured there was only old people in my grandpa's neighborhood, so I pictured this old man that lives there and in my dream he sat there about 15 feet from where I was, rocking in an old rocking chair, as I imagined all old people did, whittling a piece of wood with a knife. I couldn't get his attention, the more I screamed I couldn't get him to look. And finally, just about the time the sand was up to my chin, he turns and looks at me and gives me an evil smile.

And I wake up in a panic and a sweat.

My brother says, "Shut up and go back to sleep." I had that experience so many times as a kid and no one scared me more in my imagination than that evil old man.

And I thought he was evil because he had the power to help me and he wasn't helping me. And when he saw me, I thought you could come over here and help me, but he didn't. And you know why I thought he was evil? Because I thought you have no good reason not to intervene and help me.

Now some people put God on trial when you think about the fact that in verse 8 he says, "Yeah, I'm going to give you justice. I'm going to give it to you speedily." And we think, it's been 2,000 years. And my question to you would be why does God delay? Why is God not coming back?

Why didn't he come back before World War I, World War II? Why didn't he come back before Vietnam, why didn't he come back before the last big problem in your life? Why is he letting us continue to experience the injustice of life and the killing of war and all the things that are going on with abortion and the sexual ethic? Why? Why does he let this happen?

Or to put it in the words of the psalmist, "How long O Lord?" Even in Revelation, that scene in heaven, there under the altar saying how long? Well, the reason God is not the equivalent of the old



man whittling wood and my grandpa's neighbor's backyard, is that God has a great reason for delaying. And I've already stated it. We already know what it is. He wants people to come to repentance.

He's not going to let us drown. It'll feel like it. But he's a good God with good reasons. And you and I need to be confident in that and recognizing that what we need to do is to ask ourselves why we would put God on trial for not coming back earlier and why he lets us languish, it seems, in a wicked and perverse world. When in reality what we ought to be doing is putting ourselves on trial because certainly that's what Christ does in this passage. In the bottom of verse 8, he says, listen, he's going to come back, he will speedily get this done, he's going to rush in, he's going to save you. But I just wonder why you're not trusting me. Why is it that this delay is creating in the people who claim to believe God... Where's faith on earth? Is there anyone going to be trusting in my return? Is anyone going to be crying out day and night continually when I come back? And after 2,000 years, perhaps it's understandable, at least from a human perspective, why so many churches sit around and pray for more peanut piles on their tray table in their doomed seat that... See what I'm saying? We're so focused on this because, "Well, I don't know, Christ says he's coming back but he hasn't."

You need to get back to the place where God says, "Here's what I expect. I expect my people to believe what I said. And even if they have to wait, they need to trust me. They need to be groaning in prayer" as it says in Romans Chapter 8, waiting for the redemption of the body.

Or as Hebrews 10 says, knowing that when he comes, he's going to come and save his people but what we need, I love the words here in Hebrew Chapter 10 verse 36, you're in need of endurance. You've got to keep on expecting it as John put it in John Chapter 1. I love these three words he uses. He says, I'm a partner with you in three things: the "kingdom," I know we are partners in the kingdom, the "suffering," that's the interim between now and the kingdom through many tribulations, and one more thing, and the patient "endurance" of Christ.

What we need to do is living between the first advent and the second. Living at the end of what I assume clearly is the end of the church age. That we are saying, we're going to enter the kingdom, we're partners in the kingdom, we've got a reservation in the kingdom, our latch is hooked to the red cable. But right now it's suffering. And in the midst of our suffering and the prolonging of this age, I'm going to need the patient endurance of Christ. The patient endurance seems like a passive virtue but it's not a passive virtue. It's the ability to tenaciously pursue with great faith a confidence in the promises of God.

To be able to say, you'll find faith in me. I hope we can say, corporately, you'll find faith, the faith, of a persistent praying in this church. We haven't given up hope that you're returning. We haven't turned our attention to praying for the little things in this doomed ship. We are still praying for the rescue that God has promised. I know I often illustrate it with David's life, who was promised the kingdom but it took him over two decades, 22 years, before he actually ascended the throne over both Israel and Judah.

That period of time we say, man, how unjust would it seem from David's perspective to be a fugitive on the run from King Saul when, in fact, in God's mind, he was the king. And I've often illustrated that, sometimes even going through every paragraph from the anointing of David all the way to the inauguration of David over Israel and Judah. We look at that and feel that.

But, you know, we don't have to just go to those examples. The paradigm is everywhere in the



Bible. And that is, it seems very unjust at the present, but you and I need to start thinking about where this ends. That's why Christianity is a forward-looking religion.

Think just of the last week of Christ's life. Think of the last week. By Thursday, what do you have by Thursday night? By Thursday night you have Jesus in handcuffs, you have the Apostles scattered like a bunch of sheep when the shepherd gets struck down. You got them cowering in fear and you got Judas, you got Judas, the criminal in all of this, the betrayer, with a lot of money that night counting it in his house. I mean think about that. And the injustice of the scene by Friday doesn't get any better, it gets worse.

You've got the Holy One, the perfect one, the one that went around doing good, now hanging naked on a cross, being jeered at by the criminal on his side, having Roman soldiers cleaning his blood off their fist after beating him. Having the cowering disciples, among the jeering crowds, watching. You've got the Roman soldiers flexing, you've got the high priest and the scribes sitting back with great satisfaction now that this ridiculous threat who claimed to be the Son of God is now pinned up on a cross, naked and everyone jeering at him on a Roman execution rack.

Couldn't be any more unjust than that.

And yet, you and I read that and we go, "Oh, I know where this is headed." But live for a minute in Thursday, live for just a while in Friday.

But Sunday, right, Sunday Jesus walks out of a grave, not defeated, not coming out of a comma.

He walks out in a resurrected body, having vanquished the enemy, having paid for our sins. We got the disciples, now, the Apostles, vindicated. You have the women, now, in great joy that Christ has been resurrected.

You've got, now, the Roman soldiers cowering and scared. You've got Roman soldiers being paid off so that they can say, "Oh no! What's going to happen. We're going to be in trouble."

You've got the religious leaders, now, scratching their heads and trying to persecute his followers, but, they're on the ropes. You got Judas' dead body strewn about in a potter's field. You've got all the crooked things made straight and the rough places plain. You've got all the things that were unjust now made right, just in a matter of days. You're living in Thursday. Actually, we might be in the middle of Friday at this point, but Sunday is going to arrive and if your focus is not on Sunday, if instead you're there in the middle of the garden trying to say, "Well, how can we make this shadowy experience we have on the fringes of culture just a little more comfortable for us?" You've got the wrong perspective.

If you're there at the cross in the shadow of this crucifixion saying, I know everyone is maligning Christ in our culture but how can we just stay out of everybody's way and not cause any trouble and not jam our religion down people's throats?

You got the wrong perspective. You need to be crying out day and night for Sunday. Your Kingdom Come. We want vindication. Jesus promised the Son of Man will return with his angels in the glory of his Father and he will repay to each one according to what he's done. Either that's true or it's false. If it's true, we've got a lot to look forward to and some praying that needs to be replaced on our list. We need not just simply recite a simple line Your Kingdom Come. We need to mean it.



And it needs to be vibrant and needs to be the fuel for sorting through our prayer life. I hope it's a very common expression from the hearts of our people here at our church as we pray for the return of Christ. Let's pray right now.

God, help us to be much more focused on what's coming. Not that we don't plan and not that we don't work, it's not that we don't become good students and good employees and plan for retirement, all that's fine. We can pray for our daily bread and there's nothing wrong with that, but we ought to be crying out day and night for justice.

God, and there are some aspects of justice we can have something to do with, we can actually make a change, we can be salt and light. But even the best and most effectual Christian in this room recognizes when they get down on their knees after listening to the news, after watching what's going on in our county, and they cry out to the only one who can fix this and they plead for justice, God make it right. What's right is maligned and what's unrighteous has been exalted as it said there in Luke earlier in Chapter 16, what's exalted among men is an abomination to God and this world is messed up. If we were of the world, it would love us as it's own but, Christ, you chose us out of this world and that's why the world hates us. There's a lot of animosity and hostility toward the biblical worldview, toward us as believers and Christians and followers of Christ. We don't want to become martyrs or victims in our own minds. Even if we become literal martyrs, we don't want to have a martyr complex.

We want that to lead us to Psalm 55, praying that makes us pour out our heart to you. Our complaint goes before you, our request and then the resolve and satisfaction of a God who has promised us that he will make it right and a faith that is vibrant and strong that doesn't waver. Give us more of that experience so that the peace that surpasses all understanding can guard our hearts and minds in Christ. Lord, we do pray with the early church for you to come back. And if we ever did look at the context of that passage in First Corinthians 16, we'd see it's not just about we want you to come back because our lives would be better. It's really about the problems in this world need to be rectified. So help us to be sad. Help us to even be disgusted and at times even angry at what's going on and pray that you would send your son to make things right. In the meantime, let us get more people to latch their lives to the only lifeline that's available, and that's Christ's spilt blood on a cross. Make us good, faithful, bold, loving, merciful, evangelists this week, as we anticipate and cry out for your return.

In Jesus name, Amen.